

Vidalia Vegetable News



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COOL Finally Implemented

Country of origin labeling has finally been implemented in the U.S. This requirement was passed with the previous Farm Bill in 2002, but the legislature postponed its implementation on several occasions. COOL is now required on all imported agricultural products as of September 30, 2008.

The interim final rule for COOL was issued on August 1, 2008. Because of this late date in reference to the implementation date (September 30, 2008) these rules may be amended, but it is unlikely there will be substantial changes to the rules. Certain items are exempt such as food in food service establishments (restaurants and the like), as well as, processed foods. Frozen foods are not considered processed so would be covered by this rule. However, to complicate things a bag of frozen peas and carrots is considered a processed food and would be exempt. Comingled products such as a bin of apples at retail would require all countries listed if the apples were from more than one country.

Growers in this country have wanted country of origin labeling to help with marketing. It has always been felt such labeling would give U.S. growers an edge with consumers. Given a choice it is believed consumers would choose American grown produce. Manufactured items have had COOL requirements for a long time and it has not helped U.S. manufacturers. 'Made in China' or some other country is a common label on many consumer goods. There have been several high profile food contamination cases with several linked to other countries particularly Mexico. In addition, with the melamine contaminated baby formula in China, people may indeed consider country of origin requirements when shopping.

Cucurbit Variety Trial Results

This summer we had variety trials with cantaloupe, watermelon, and pumpkins. The cantaloupe trial had nine entries with two commercial varieties, Athena and Aphrodite. In addition, RML 0409, an experimental line from Rogers Seed was

included in the trial. The remaining six varieties were glabrous (hairless) varieties. The watermelon trial had 15 entries, five from Seminis Seed, six from Shamrock Seed, and four from Rogers. All of the entries were triploid types (seedless). Seven of the watermelon varieties were commercial types, while the remainder were numbered lines from the respective companies. The pumpkin trial had six entries all of which were commercial entries including our new 'Orange Bulldog' pumpkin.

In all cases the experimental design was a randomized complete block design with four replications. Each experimental unit or plot consisted of 10 plants. The spacing in the cantaloupe trial was a six foot between-row spacing with a two foot in-row spacing. The watermelons had a six foot between-row spacing and a four foot in-row spacing. Finally the pumpkins were planted with a 12 foot between-row spacing and a 12 foot in-row spacing.

The pumpkins were direct seeded on 1 April 2008 and harvested on 25 June 2008. The watermelon and cantaloupe plants were grown to transplant size at a local greenhouse. Seed were sown in the greenhouse on 10 March 2008 and plants were transplanted 10 April 2008. Diploid watermelon plants were transplanted at the same time (10 April 2008) and were replanted on 30 April 2008 to insure adequate pollination. Three honeybee hives were placed in the field to insure pollination of all cucurbits. The total area planted with cantaloupes, watermelons, and pumpkins was approximately 3 acres.

Watermelons were harvested on 30 June and 1 July 2008. Each individual fruit was weighed from each experimental unit. This insured both total weight and number were recorded. In addition, two fruit from each plot was measured for length, width, rind depth, soluble solids (sugar content), and flesh firmness. Flesh firmness was measured with a Wagner Pressure Tester fitted with an 8 mm probe. Two firmness measurements were taken per fruit and averaged prior to analysis.

Cantaloupe were harvested on 19, 24, and 30 June 2008. In addition, two fruit from each experimental unit was measured for length, width, flesh depth, soluble solids, and fruit firmness. Finally pumpkins were harvested 25 June 2008. The primary purpose of the pumpkin variety trial was to assess pumpkin storage under controlled atmosphere (CA) conditions so four fruit from each experimental unit was transported to the Vidalia Onion Research Laboratory in Tifton for this purpose.

Attached as an Excel workbook are the results of these trials. The watermelons ranged from 37,068-57,903 lbs/acre with no statistical differences between the entries. The coefficient of variation (CV) was 27%, which is considered quite good for this type of trial.

The cantaloupe trial ranged from 3,222-35,824 lbs/acre with a Least Significant Difference of 6,606 lbs/acre. The CV was 23%. The commercial cantaloupe material yielded better and had larger fruit than the glabrous material. The glabrous entries have no trichomes (hairs), which give these varieties resistance to both

<http://www.caes.uga.edu/commodities/fruits/vidalia/>

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Don't forget the National Alliums Research Conference, December 10-13, 2008

<http://www.caes.uga.edu/events/narc/>