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Food chain contamination underlines the need for country of origin labelling

Parliament's Health Select Committee has decided against recommending country of origin labelling for produce and single-component foods. The New Zealand Manufacturers and Exporters Association (NZMEA) say that country of origin labelling would give better choice to consumers and enhance New Zealand branded items.

The Select Committee reported that country of origin labelling would potentially cost New Zealand some trading income and would limit the choices of New Zealand consumers. However, minority reports from the Green Party and New Zealand First rejected this finding arguing that our trading partners such as Australia, Europe and the United States already have such labelling and it would, if anything, enhance New Zealand's brand overseas.

NZMEA Chief Executive John Walley says, "The fact that our biggest trading partners already require country of origin labelling, and many of our consumers want it, means that any talk of negative impacts are nonsense."

"We need to mark 'made in New Zealand' products and clarify what that means to consumers. The issues around contamination in the food chain and the potential pollution of New Zealand's brand value are a worry."

"The Select Committee's view that country of origin labelling will limit consumer choice is strange. Mandatory origin marking on all products, but particularly on food, enables consumers to make decisions that are important and it provides commercial brand owners something which they can consistently leverage," says Mr. Walley.

"New Zealand claims to lead the world in environmental and food safety standards, so why not take advantage of this image?"