

Mr. Speaker, while I supported the Agriculture Appropriations bill when it was originally considered on the House floor, I was disappointed in the conference committee's failure to maintain some essential programs and I voted against the conference report.

The agreement further delays mandatory country-of-origin labeling for meat or meat products. Congress recognized the importance of this program in ensuring food safety when it passed the 2002 Farm Bill and the need is even more apparent now. It is perplexing why, in a time of mad cow outbreaks and the threat of bioterrorism, we would cut funding for this important program.

I was also disappointed to see a change to the organic standard, that was not performed in a transparent manner. I am hopeful that in the future Congress can work together more productively to pass an agriculture bill that reflects the values of Americans and properly funds the programs that are important to them.