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PRODUCERS • GINNERS • WAREHOUSEMEN • MERCHANTS • COTTONSEED • COOPERATIVES • MANUFACTURERS

July 21, 2015

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the National Cotton Council (NCC), I am writing in regard to H.R. 1599, the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act, which will be considered by the House this week. The NCC is the central organization of the United States cotton industry. Its members include producers, ginners, cottonseed processors and merchandizers, merchants, cooperatives, warehouses and textile manufacturers. A majority of the industry is concentrated in 17 cotton-producing states stretching from Virginia to California. NCC represents producers who cultivate between 9 and 11 million acres of cotton. Annual cotton production, averaging approximately 18 million 480-lb bales, is valued at more than \$5 billion at the farm gate. The downstream manufacturers of cotton apparel and home furnishings are located in virtually every state. Farms and businesses directly involved in the production, distribution and processing of cotton employ more than 230,000 workers and produce direct business revenue of more than \$27 billion. Accounting for the ripple effect of cotton through the broader economy, direct and indirect employment surpasses 420,000 workers with economic activity well in excess of \$120 billion. In addition to the cotton fiber, cottonseed products are used for livestock feed, and cottonseed oil is used as an ingredient in food products as well as being a premium cooking oil.

NCC strongly supports H.R. 1599 as reported by the House Committee on Agriculture. Some interest groups across the country are pushing for state-labeling mandates that will exacerbate consumer confusion and drive up food prices as much as \$500 a year per family of four. However, this legislation will provide a Federal framework to pre-empt these various state-actions and put in place a voluntary food labeling standard for products containing ingredients derived from genetically modified organisms (GMOs). In addition, this bill will also enhance coordination between USDA and FDA, strengthen confidence in the safety of genetically engineered food and products, and provide additional transparency and consumer confidence when a new genetically engineered product is introduced into the marketplace.

The development of innovative technology for farmers and ranchers around the U.S. has allowed consumers to enjoy a variety of diverse food options at low cost. GMOs have been a vital part of our nation's food and fiber supply for the past 20 years with 70-80% of the foods people eat in the U.S containing ingredients that have been genetically engineered. It is imperative that we work to continue to promote the use of these new, innovative technologies within the agriculture community to allow our consumers to receive the safest and healthiest food possible.

In order to ensure consistent, science-based standards for labeling of food and related products, we respectfully ask that you vote "Yes" on H.R. 1599. Thank you for your consideration and support. Please contact me (703-839-5297 or rlangley@cotton.org), Robbie Minnich (202-302-

1315 or rminnich@cotton.org), or Matt Valesko (**202-394-1319** or mvaluesko@cotton.org) if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Reece Langley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Reece Langley
Vice President, Washington Operations