

Kitchen Contents Bear 'USA' Labels

By Dal Grooms

U.S. manufacturers feel much-maligned by the business press, which consistently points out technology advances and productivity increases in developing markets such as China and India. Yet the National Association of Manufacturers just released a letter it wrote to the U.S. House of Representatives noting, "The United States remains the No. 1 manufacturing economy in the world, producing 21 percent of all manufactured products" in the world.

This should give one pause to stop and look at recent purchases of all types made by a typical American family to find what exactly is "Made in the USA."

Let's start in the family room. Electronics? Nope. Made in China, Made in Mexico and Product of Malaysia. In the garage, an American model car reveals it was Made in Mexico. In the closet, clothing items are the fruits of a veritable world tour: Vietnam, Egypt, Kenya, and Mauritius (don't feel bad if you have to google Mauritius to find out where it is!).

Time to stop in the kitchen. Product of USA, Brought to You by California Growers, Kentucky Proud, and Produced and Packaged by New Hampshire Producers are among the labels. That doesn't take into account the fresh products purchased from local growers and farmers or harvested from your own backyard garden. An often-found bonus item is used to cook those American-produced foods, as many outdoor grills also are Made in USA.

When you look at the balance of trade, the products found in the typical American home should come as no surprise. In the 415 months reported on the USDA's Economic Research Service website (since October 1975), only eight months have more ag imports than exports. Our farmers and ranchers know how to produce food that Americans and others around the globe want...and our marketers know how to get it delivered.

As in the manufacturing sector, the number of Americans working on farms has gone down dramatically. For agriculture, the decline started in the 1930s. Despite nearly 80 years of reduced labor inputs, farm production has quadrupled. More importantly, food products produced and packaged in the U.S. are still the primary product on our pantry shelves.

Farmers demonstrate their productivity prowess to consumers on a daily basis. Buying American whenever possible is a mantra for many people, but sometimes finding those products is difficult. When that frustration hits and you wonder, "What does the U.S. make anymore?", take a peak in the pantry. Food—that necessity in life—stored there is most likely grown, produced and packaged right here.