

# Food Labels Exposed

A definitive guide to common food label terms and claims



**A GREENER WORLD**  
Our Food. Our Farms. Our Future. Let's Choose!



## WHAT'S BEHIND THE LABEL?

Let's consider this label for chicken thigh fillets (above). It makes a number of commonly found claims: "Fresh," "All Natural," "All Vegetarian Diet," "No Animal By-Products," "Humanely Raised," "Cage Free," and, finally, "No Hormones or Steroids Added." It all sounds positive. But what exactly do all these terms and claims mean? We think you'll be surprised by the truth...

- ▶ **Fresh:** Legally, this label term simply means the internal temperature of the meat must never go below 26° F (see p. 11).
- ▶ **Natural/all natural:** Research by Consumer Reports reveals 60% of consumers look for the "natural" label claim when shopping, while almost half of consumers mistakenly assume it means the animals live outdoors. Yet this claim has nothing to do with how animals are raised. It simply means the meat contains no artificial ingredients or added colors, and that it was minimally processed. These "all natural" chickens were raised indoors with many thousands of other birds and almost certainly received routine antibiotics to prevent diseases in the stressful, cramped conditions. They never saw natural light or foraged across pastures (see p. 16).
- ▶ **Vegetarian diet:** This label claim indicates the chickens are fed a diet free of animal products. However, as there is no legal definition for this claim and there are no independent checks on farms relating to this claim, we can't know if it is true. It does not mean the hens were raised outdoors on pasture (see p. 19).
- ▶ **No animal by-products:** This term implies no products derived from animals were used in the chicken's feed. But without any legal definition

of what constitutes an animal by-product, a variety of animal-derived ingredients—such as milk or fishmeal—could be fed under this label. As there is no independent on-farm verification, no one will have audited the farm to check if this claim is even true (see p. 16).

- ▶ **Humanely raised:** "Humane" claims are now widely used to convince consumers the food manufacturer is making a special effort in the way animals are raised. However, there is no legal definition or minimum agreed welfare standard for the term "humane," and this claim is increasingly found on products where animals are raised on dirt feedlots or indoors in confinement systems, and where antibiotic use and mutilations, such as beak trimming or tail docking, are routine practices. Without third-party verification to high-welfare standards, you're almost certainly buying industrially farmed products (see p. 14).
- ▶ **Cage free:** You might think this company is making a special concession to animal welfare by raising chickens without a cage. But the truth is all meat birds are raised "cage free." While most laying hens are still raised in cages, broiler or meat chickens are never caged. So this widely-used marketing claim is actually highly misleading to consumers (see p. 8).
- ▶ **No hormones/steroids:** The "no hormones or steroids added" claim is equally misleading. Why? The USDA already prohibits the use of artificial hormones or steroids in all chicken production. So any chicken processor could use this "no hormones or steroids added" claim on their label. It's another meaningless—and very deceptive—claim (see p. 16).

# Introduction

A bewildering range of terms and claims are used by companies to promote food and attract buyers to their products. Common examples you'll find on food packaging labels include "locally grown," "humanely raised," "natural," "free-range," or "sustainably farmed." But what exactly do all these terms and claims *really* mean—and how confident are you that they're even true?

The problem is that while some of these food label terms and claims may have legal definitions that are controlled by government regulation, most are actually completely unregulated and can easily lead to misunderstandings—and misuse. And in many cases the regulated label claims aren't even being properly policed. The reality is that it's hard to know which food label claims you can trust—and which you should avoid.

A Greener World's *Food Labels Exposed* was developed to help you decipher today's food packaging and restaurant menus, providing clear and factual definitions for over 90 of the most common claims and terms used for the production, marketing, and labeling of meat, dairy, eggs, and other farmed products. Also available as a free smartphone app, *Food Labels Exposed* will help you find out what's *really* going on behind the food label, allowing you to make informed food purchases when you are shopping or dining out.

## HOW CAN FOOD LABELS EXPOSED HELP?

*Food Labels Exposed* will help you find out what's *really* behind the label. When it comes to food choices, one of the biggest challenges facing today's consumer is knowing if you can trust a food label. This is especially the case when it comes to the growing number of "self-made" label claims that don't actually

have any clear legal definition that manufacturers must abide by.

Many common label claims—such as "humanely raised" or "sustainably farmed"—fall into this dubious category. As there is no legal definition for these kinds of claims, any food manufacturer can include them on their food labels—even if the meat, dairy or eggs come from intensive confinement systems where the animals are subject to mutilations like beak trimming or tail docking, and given routine antibiotics and hormones.

But even if a label term or claim has a legal definition, it doesn't necessarily mean you can trust it. The problem is that many legally defined label claims aren't always independently checked or verified. Unless the claim is being checked by an independent third party, the integrity of a food label is often only as reliable as the person or company making it. Unfortunately, it's now common for a company or farm supplier to simply have to sign a paper pledge (known as an affidavit) saying they are following certain rules. No other checks are made to ensure the company is telling the truth or if the rules are being followed or properly enforced.

The most trusted food labels will always incorporate independent third-party audits, where farms and suppliers are physically audited at least once a year according to set of published standards, providing the maximum integrity for any claims made to customers. Where possible, you are advised to seek out food label certifications that require third-party audits to ensure your expectations are fully met when it comes to animal welfare, environmental protection, and other food-related issues.

# How to use this guide

## LEGALLY DEFINED—OR NOT?

Where the use of a food label term or claim is legally defined or regulated we provide the official definition in **bold type**—citing the official source.

Where a term or claim is NOT legally defined or regulated we provide an unbiased definition of the term or claim, explaining its limitations and any areas of potential concern.

## IS ANYONE ACTUALLY CHECKING?

It is now common to find a range of label claims or terms relating to the farming practices used, such as the avoidance of antibiotics or hormones, or specific environmental practices, or the high-welfare treatment of animals. Broadly speaking, the terms and claims made on food labels fall into two key categories:




- ▶ **Audited/third-party certified:** Some of the terms and claims used on food labels are audited by an independent third party. This is where an independent auditor visits the associated farm, slaughter plant, or the processing/packing plant to ensure that the food was produced or processed according to specified rules or standards.
- ▶ **Unaudited/no third-party certification:** Many common terms and claims found on food labels are made using a "self-declaration" process. In other words, there is no independent physical verification or audit process to check if the terms or claims used on the label are accurate or consistent—or even true.

When you are trying to evaluate the validity of any label claim it is *very* important to take into account whether or not it has been independently

verified. If you see a food label claim or term with the 'Unaudited/no third-party certification' icon it means there is no independent third-party verification, and you should consider requesting further information from the supplier or food manufacturer to ensure the product really does meet your expectations.

## LEGEND

We have used a range of symbols for each commonly used claim or phrase to show if it is independently verified or not, and to highlight the authenticity of any wider issue(s) the label appears to address, such as the high-welfare treatment of animals or environmental protection.

-  **Audited/third-party certified**  
This symbol is your assurance that terms or claims made on the label have been verified regularly by an independent third party and determined to be true. This includes third-party certifications such as Animal Welfare Approved and Certified Organic.
-  **Unaudited/no third-party certification**  
This symbol shows that the terms or claims are *not* regularly verified by an independent third party. When you see this symbol you should contact the suppliers to find out more about the product or ask further questions to ensure you are happy with the validity of any claims made.
-  **Published protocol**  
A legally defined or agreed definition exists for the term or claim.



### High welfare assurance

The label is recognized by the main web-based food labeling guide\* as having highly meaningful animal care standards and, in addition, includes audited standards to ensure high-welfare slaughter.



### Environmental assurance

The label makes claims that address farming's impact on the environment that are independently verified by audit.



### Family farmed assurance

The label makes claims that the product was raised by a family farmer independently verified by audit.



### Social responsibility assurance

The label makes claims that address fair treatment to workers and/or communities that are independently verified by audit.



### Local/region specific assurance

The label makes claims that the product was produced in a certain geographic region/country that are independently verified by audit.



### Antibiotic use controlled assurance

The label makes claims that antibiotic use is prohibited or significantly restricted that are independently verified by audit.



### Slaughter review assurance

The slaughter process is independently verified or audited annually to a published set of standards.



### High welfare claim

The label makes claims that may affect animal welfare. However, these claims are NOT verified and/or not recognized and/or the label has no audited standards to ensure high-welfare slaughter.



### Environmental claim

The label makes claims that address farming's impact on the environment. However, these claims are NOT independently verified by audit.



### Family farmed claim

The label makes claims that the product was raised by a family farmer. However, these claims are NOT independently verified by audit.



### Social responsibility claim

The label makes claims that address fair treatment to workers and communities. However, these claims are NOT independently verified by audit.



### Local/region specific claim

The label makes claims that the product was produced in a certain geographic region/country. However, these claims are NOT independently verified by audit.



### Antibiotic use controlled claim

The label makes claims that antibiotic use is prohibited or significantly restricted. However, these claims are NOT independently verified by audit.



### No slaughter review

The slaughter process is NOT independently verified or audited annually to a published set of standards.



### Caged egg production

Caged egg production is permitted.

\* The food labeling guide is the Consumer Reports' highly-respected *Greener Choices Eco Labels*.

# Terms and claims



## AFFIDAVIT

No legal or regulated definition.

Defined as a statement where the individual signing takes an oath that the contents are, to the best of their knowledge, true. The affidavit system is sometimes used in meat production to support a company's claims of production methods, like the avoidance of hormones or antibiotics, specific grazing and feeding protocols, or high-welfare management. While an affidavit system may provide some comfort that label claims are factual, such systems do NOT employ independent third-party verification programs that guarantee a claim is truthful. Retailers such as Walmart are moving away from self-made claims and increasingly require audits to ensure integrity and to protect brand value.



## AMERICAN HUMANE CERTIFIED

Definition by American Humane Certified:

**American Humane's program provides a verifiable assurance that products carrying the American Humane Certified label have met rigorous, science-based welfare standards and were humanely raised throughout their life process.**

Despite this statement, the American Humane animal welfare certification supports caged production for chickens as "humane." There are also no requirements for pasture access for any species.



## ANGUS/CERTIFIED ANGUS BEEF

No legal or regulated definition.

The American Angus Association has registered a definition of "Angus" beef with the USDA that requires the animal to have 50% Angus genetics or a predominantly (51%) black coat or hide. Animal must be under 30 months at slaughter and must meet additional meat quality requirements. There are, however, no management or welfare requirements relating to how cattle are raised. The terms "Angus Beef" and "Black Angus Beef" are also commonly used but are even less regulated.

## ANIMAL CARE CERTIFIED

See ANIMAL WELFARE REVIEW CERTIFICATION



## ANIMAL WELFARE REVIEW CERTIFIED

Definition by Validus:

**Validus Animal Welfare Review Certification is awarded to farms that follow stringent animal welfare guidelines. Farms that receive animal welfare certification undergo a detailed assessment and audit of their on-farm animal welfare practices. Certification is awarded to farms which demonstrate compliance with the animal welfare criteria and standards established for their operation.**

The Validus standards are not publicly available, so there is no way of knowing what specific management practices they require. For example, there is no information on whether animals have access to pasture or what the policy is on mutilations or calf management or antibiotic use. Although beef, dairy, and pig standards exist, at the time of writing, the list of certified companies appear to all be dairy farms, while the certification is displayed on (for example) Costco organic milk packaging.

## ANTIBIOTIC-FREE

See NO ANTIBIOTICS ADMINISTERED



## ARTISAN/ARTISANAL

No legal or regulated definition.

The terms "artisan" and "artisanal" imply that products are handmade in small batches. The term is most often used on labels and marketing materials for cheese, bread, pasta, jams, chocolates, confections, sauces, preserves, condiments, beverages, and ice cream, but can also include products from fisheries and other products. However, as there is no legal definition for these terms, anyone could use the term "artisanal"—even if the product is mass produced in a factory. No independent third party verification.



## BASTED OR SELF-BASTED

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service:

**Bone-in poultry products that are injected or marinated with a solution containing butter or other edible fat, broth, stock or water plus spices, flavor enhancers and other approved substances must be labeled as basted or self-basted. The maximum added weight of approximately 3% solution before processing is included in the net weight on the label. Label must include a statement identifying the total quantity and common or usual name of all ingredients in the solution, e.g., "Injected with approximately 3% of a solution of ... [list of ingredients]." Use of the terms "basted" or "self-basted" on boneless poultry products is limited to 8% of the weight of the raw poultry before processing.**



## BETTER BEEF

A&W Food Services of Canada launched their "Better Beef" label in 2013. Ranches must produce beef without added hormones and steroids to supply the label. There are, however, no other requirements on how the animal is raised so beef cattle may still be raised on feedlots and fed a high grain diet. No independent third party verification.



## BEYOND/BETTER THAN/MORE THAN ORGANIC

No legal or regulated definition.

These terms imply that products meet and exceed organic standards. However, no verification of farming methods is either defined or audited to ensure this is the case.



## BIODYNAMIC

Definition by Demeter-USA:

**Biodynamic agriculture goes beyond organic, envisioning the farm as a self-contained and self-sustaining organism. In an effort to keep the farm, the farmer, the consumer, and the earth healthy, farmers avoid chemical pesticides and fertilizers, utilize compost and cover crops, and set aside a minimum of 10% of their total acreage for biodiversity. The entire farm, versus a particular crop, must be certified, and farms are inspected annually. In order for a product to bear the Demeter logo it must be made with certified Biodynamic® ingredients and meet strict processing standards to ensure the purest possible product.**

Biodynamic farming is an approach based on the work of the Austrian philosopher, Rudolf Steiner. In addition to organic practices, such as crop rotation and composting, biodynamic farmers rely on special plant, animal and mineral preparations and the rhythmic influences of the sun, moon, planets and stars. Biodynamic® agriculture is a method of sustainable farming that regards the farm as a self-contained and self-sustaining organism, and encourages farmers to avoid chemical pesticides and fertilizers, utilize compost and cover crops, and promote biodiversity. The Biodynamic® claim is legally defined and audited by the Demeter Association, Inc.



## BIRD FRIENDLY

Definition by Smithsonian Migratory Bird Centre:

**Bird Friendly is a certification created by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center (SMBC), which is part of the National Zoo based in Washington, D.C. SMBC encourages the production of shade-grown coffee, and the conservation of migratory birds, through its "Bird Friendly" seal of approval.**

The SMBC requires that producers meet the requirements for organic certification first, as well as additional criteria to ensure they are maintaining the forest cover that provides habitat for birds and other wildlife. This label is currently only available on coffee.



## CAFO/AFO

Definition by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

**Animal Feeding Operations (AFOs) are agricultural operations where animals are kept and raised in confined situations. AFOs congregate animals, feed, manure and urine, dead animals and production operations on a small land area. Feed is brought to the animals rather than the animals grazing or otherwise seeking feed in pastures, fields or on rangeland. AFOs confine animals for at least 45 days in a 12-month period and have no grass or other vegetation in the confinement area during the normal growing season. Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) are AFOs that fall under one of the EPA's definitions of Large, Medium or Small CAFO's, depending on the number of animals involved, how wastewater and/or manure are managed, and whether the operation is "a significant contributor of pollutants." CAFOs exist in all regions of the U.S. They are concentrated in the eastern seaboard, the plains and the west coast. The total number of CAFOs is estimated to be in excess of 20,000. For more information, visit [www.epa.gov/region07/water/cafo/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/region07/water/cafo/index.htm).**

CAFOs are also known as Confined Animal Feeding Operations, Concentrated Agricultural Feeding Operations, or factory farms. The vast majority of all meat, eggs and dairy products consumed in the U.S. are from CAFO systems. If you buy meat you should be aware that CAFO facilities vary widely, with huge variations in size, sanitation, welfare practices, as well as antibiotic and hormone administration, and environmental measures. CAFOs are prohibited under Animal Welfare Approved standards. For more information on CAFOs, visit [www.sustainabletable.org/868/industrial-agriculture](http://www.sustainabletable.org/868/industrial-agriculture).



## CAGE FREE: for eggs/laying hens

No legal or regulated definition.

As the term implies, hens laying eggs labeled as "cage free" are raised without using cages, but still almost always live inside large barns or warehouses, often with many thousands of other birds. This term does not explain if the birds have any access to the outside, whether any outside area was pasture or a bare lot, or if they were raised entirely indoors in overcrowded conditions. Beak cutting is permitted to prevent feather pecking. No verification by an independent third party *unless* eggs are also covered by an additional claim, such as Certified Humane.



## CAGE FREE: for poultry meat

No legal or regulated definition.

The "cage free" claim is widely used on poultry meat packaging. However, as meat birds are never raised in cages—no matter how intensive the system might be—this claim is highly misleading. Poultry raised for meat under this label are inevitably raised in enclosed barns where tens of thousands of birds are kept in close confinement.



## CERTIFIED FARMERS' MARKET

No legal or regulated definition in many states.

Some states offer or require certification of farmers' markets to ensure that products sold are produced by the farmers themselves. In 2009, these states included California, Nevada and Texas. Most of the nation's producer-only farmers' markets establish their own rules and methods of ensuring product integrity at the local level. Ask the market organizer about the rules which apply to your nearest farmers' market.



## CERTIFIED GREENHOUSE

Definition by Certified Greenhouse Farmers:

**The Standard is in support of the definition of greenhouse grown vegetables as set forth by the Certified Greenhouse Farmers (CGF):**

**A fully enclosed permanent aluminum or steel structure clad either in glass or impermeable plastic for the controlled environmental growing of certified greenhouse/hothouse vegetables using together computerized irrigation and climate control systems, including heating and ventilation capability; grown in a soilless medium that substitutes for soil (under the greenhouse/hothouse); using hydroponic methods; Integrated Pest Management and without the use of pesticides.**

Farms must additionally hold food safety certification before they can be Certified Greenhouse growers.

While this certification has some standards for environmental management, intensive greenhouse or hothouse production can involve very high energy consumption for heating and lighting, and can result in significant greenhouse gas emissions.



## CERTIFIED NATURALLY GROWN

Definition by Certified Naturally Grown:

**Certified Naturally Grown is a non-profit organization offering certification tailored for small-scale, direct-market farmers and beekeepers using natural methods. CNG producers don't use any synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides or GMO seeds, just like organic farmers. Certified Naturally Grown is an independent program not affiliated with the NOP.**

Certified Naturally Grown (CNG) products are registered as having been produced in approximate accordance with National Organic Standards. This term is modeled on a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). PGS programs differ from third-party inspector models like the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP), as they employ a peer-review inspection process built on local networks rather than a formal or independent audit. There is no verification by an independent third party.



## CHEMICAL-FREE

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service:

**The term is not allowed to be used on a label.**

"Chemical free" and "no chemicals added" are not official marketing claims, as there is no standardized definition. Such terms create confusion in the marketplace, as (for example) antibiotics are not considered chemicals by USDA.



## CLONING/MEAT OR DAIRY FROM CLONED ANIMALS

No legal or regulated definition.

Cloning is the practice of creating an exact genetic replica of an organism. Cloning has many negative implications for animal welfare—for example, the mortality of newborn clones is very high—and potentially threatens the genetic diversity of our food supply. At present, dairy cattle are the most commonly cloned animals. Food products from cloned animals are currently allowed to enter the food system unlabeled. Cloned animals are NOT permitted under Animal Welfare Approved standards.



## CLOSED-HERD

No legal or regulated definition.

Closed-herd implies that all animals—or at the least all females—are bred from the original herd, and no animals are purchased from outside breeders or other sources to incorporate into the herd or flock. This system reduces the risk of bringing in new disease and allows the farmer to select and promote characteristics such as longevity, easy birthing and ability to thrive outdoors from the best of their own animals.



## CONVENTIONAL

No legal or regulated definition.

The term "conventional" usually refers to standard agricultural practices that are widespread in the industry. It can (but does not necessarily) include the use of pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, mono-cropping, feedlot and confinement systems, antibiotics, hormones and other chemical approaches. Conventional farming in the U.S. may also include the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).



## COOL (COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING)

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service:

**The Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) program is neither a food safety or traceability program but rather a consumer information program. Food products, both imported and domestic, must meet the food safety standards of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The COOL law requires retailers to notify their customers of the country of origin for all commodities covered under this law. Foods that must be labeled with their country of origin are:**

- ▶ Muscle cuts of beef (including veal), lamb, pork, goat, and chicken
- ▶ Ground beef, ground lamb, ground pork, ground goat, and ground chicken
- ▶ Farm raised fish and shellfish
- ▶ Wild fish and shellfish
- ▶ Perishable agricultural commodities
- ▶ Peanuts, pecans and macadamia nuts
- ▶ Ginseng



## CRATE-FREE

No legal or regulated definition.

Two types of crates are commonly used in intensive pork production: farrowing crates and gestation crates, defined below. It is important to note, however, that just because a label states that it is farrowing-crate free does not mean that it is gestation-crate free, and vice versa. Even if a product is labeled "crate-free" it does not mean the animals were raised outdoors.

- ▶ **Farrowing crate:** A cage or other strictly enclosed space in which a sow is confined to give birth to and suckle her piglets, and where the sow's movements are restricted so she cannot turn around or otherwise have free movement. Farrowing crates are prohibited under Animal Welfare Approved standards.
- ▶ **Gestation crate:** A cage or stall in which a sow is confined for the period of pregnancy and in which she has restricted options for movement. Gestation crates are prohibited under the Animal Welfare Approved standards.



## CURED

Definition by US Food and Drug Administration:

**Meat and poultry are cured by the addition of salt alone or in combination with one or more ingredients such as sodium nitrite, sugar, curing accelerators, and spices. These are used for partial preservation, flavoring, color enhancement, tenderizing and improving yield of meat. The process may include dry curing, immersion curing, direct addition, or injection of the curing ingredients. Curing mixtures are typically composed of salt (sodium chloride), sodium nitrite, and seasonings.**

Cured meat and poultry products include bacon, beef jerky, smoked turkey, sausages, corned beef, pastrami, pig's feet and corned tongues.



## DRY-AGED

No legal or regulated definition.

"Dry-aged" meat (usually beef) is hung in a temperature- and humidity-controlled room for a period of weeks to develop flavor and tenderness. Under controlled temperatures the muscle fibers relax, yielding a less resilient piece of meat that is more tender. Most commercially available meat is "wet-aged," meaning it is wrapped in plastic, vacuum sealed, and then refrigerated for a shorter period of time. No independent third party verification.



## DRY-FARMED

No legal or regulated definition.

Produce grown using a technique that seeks to retain moisture in the soil and to minimize or eliminate the use of irrigation. Dry farming works to conserve soil moisture during long dry periods, primarily through a system of tillage, surface protection, and the use of drought-resistant varieties. Some of the finest wines and olive oils in the world are produced with dry-farmed fruit.

In addition to grapes and olives, a wide range of crops, including tomatoes, pumpkins, watermelons, cantaloupes, winter squash, garbanzos, apricots, apples, and potatoes, are dry farmed in California. No independent third party verification.



## FAIR TRADE

Definition by the Fair World Project (FWP):

**The fair trade movement that FWP is part of shares a vision of a world in which justice and sustainable development are at the heart of trade structures and practices, both at home and abroad, so that everyone through their work can maintain a decent and dignified livelihood.**

**Fair Trade is more than just trading: it proves that greater justice in world trade is possible. It highlights the need for change in the rules and practice of conventional trade and shows how a successful business can also put people first.**

**Fair trade Certifiers and Membership Organizations all agree on these basic fair trade principles:**

- ▶ Long-Term Direct Trading Relationships
- ▶ Payment of Fair Prices and Wages
- ▶ No Child, Forced or Otherwise Exploited Labor
- ▶ Workplace Non-Discrimination, Gender Equity and Freedom of Association
- ▶ Democratic & Transparent Organizations
- ▶ Safe Working Conditions & Reasonable Work Hours

- ▶ Investment in Community Development Projects
- ▶ Environmental Sustainability
- ▶ Traceability and Transparency

A number of different Fair Trade certifiers and membership organizations now exist. Certifiers require an audit before allowing the use of a Fair Trade label; membership organizations, however, only screen submitted information and may not carry out audits. Food Justice Certified and Fairtrade International are examples of certified programs. For more information on Fair Trade certification and membership programs visit the Fair World Project website at [www.fairworldproject.org](http://www.fairworldproject.org).



## FAMILY FARM/ FAMILY FARMED/ FAMILY FARMING

No legal or regulated definition.

Generally refers to any farm where the majority of the business is owned by the operator and individuals related to the operator by blood or marriage, including relatives who do not reside in the operator's household. However, this claim means nothing in terms of how animals are managed or specific practices to protect the environment or size of the farm. Unless the claim is defined and verified by an independent third party, its meaning can vary greatly.

There is some concern this label claim is being misused to present a disingenuous image of the independence of the family farms involved. Many food labels using the "family farmed" claim often refers to situations where the family might own the farm, but where all day-to-day livestock husbandry practices are dictated by contracts with a major meat processor. In some cases, particularly intensive poultry and pig production, the animals are also still owned by the corporation—not the farmer.

Animal Welfare Approved defines a "family farm" as a farm where the family owns the animals, has input into day-to-day management, and derives a share of their livelihood from that farm.



## FARM CHECK

Definition by Tyson Foods:

**The Tyson Foods FarmCheck™ animal well-being program includes third-party on-farm audits, an advisory panel of animal well-being experts from around the country, and support of research on improving animal live production.**

Although Tyson Foods' Farm Check program standards and audit protocols are not publicly available, Tyson's supply farms will be permitted to confine pigs indoors in concrete pens and use farrowing and gestation crates, as well as teeth clip and tail dock their piglets, under the Farm Check program. Tyson claims that third party auditing will be required, but there is no information on whether this will cover every Tyson supply farm every year or a proportion of farms. As Tyson considers its contract growers to be "independent" from the company, Tyson may even carry out the "third party" audit themselves—despite their obvious vested interest in the outcome.



## FARMSTEAD CHEESE

No legal or regulated definition.

A "farmstead cheese" label suggests the cheese is made on a farm using milk produced on that farm. Farmstead cheeses are usually made in relatively small batches, often by hand. However, there is no formal definition for this term and it does not address the farm's husbandry practices or ensure outdoor access for the animals producing the milk, for example. No independent third party verification.



## FEEDLOT

No legal or regulated definition.

A method of fattening cattle and other ruminants where animals are removed from pasture, confined in crowded conditions (usually on a dirt lot), and fed a grain-based diet until they reach market weight. As cattle and other ruminants are not biologically equipped to digest large amounts of grain, this can lead to the proliferation of pathogenic *E. coli* bacteria in the animals' gut (which can cause serious food poisoning outbreaks in humans), as well as other cattle health and welfare issues such as liver lesions. Feedlot systems are criticized for the significant environmental impact associated with the mass production and storage of waste manure, and are recognized as the most environmental resource-intensive food system. Feedlots are prohibited under Animal Welfare Approved standards. (See CAFO.)



## FOOD ALLIANCE

Definition by Food Alliance Certified:

**Food Alliance is a nonprofit organization that certifies farms, ranches, and food processors and distributors for sustainable agricultural and facility management practices. By choosing Food Alliance Certified products, consumers and commercial food buyers support safe and fair working conditions, humane treatment of animals, and good environmental stewardship.**

The Food Alliance livestock certification program uses both fixed and scored inspection evaluation criteria. While farms must comply with all fixed criteria, a farm may become certified based on their "average" score in some key areas. Consumers are encouraged to contact individual Food Alliance Certified producers about specific practices that are not included in the fixed criteria to ensure that all areas of possible concern are being addressed.



## FOOD MILES

No legal or regulated definition.

Claims about food miles relate to the distance traveled by a given food product before you consume it. Since much of the energy used in the U.S. food system is associated with processing, packaging, transporting, storing and preparing food, many people want to reduce their carbon footprint by buying food with fewer "miles"—in other words, food that is locally grown and minimally processed. No independent third party verification.



## FREE-RANGE/ FREE-ROAMING: for poultry meat ONLY

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service

**Producers must demonstrate to the Agency that the poultry has been allowed access to the outside.**

Although "free-range" is a positive sounding term with a legal definition, consumers should be aware that the type of outdoor access provided (such as pasture or dirt lot), the size of the outdoor area, the length of time the birds are required to have outdoor access, and how this must be verified is *not* legally defined and therefore varies greatly from facility to facility. Crowding is not uncommon. This claim provides no assurance of any other high-welfare welfare or environmental management practices. No independent third party verification.



## FREE-RANGE/ FREE-ROAMING: for any species aside from poultry meat

No legal or regulated definition.

Consumers should be aware that the type of outdoor access provided (such as pasture or dirt lot), the size of the outdoor area, the length of time animals are required to have outdoor access, and how this must be verified is *not* legally defined and therefore varies greatly from facility to facility. Producers are not even required to demonstrate to the USDA that birds and animals have had access to the outside. This claim provides no assurance of any other high-welfare welfare or environmental management practices. No independent third party verification.



## FRESH POULTRY

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service:

**"Fresh" refers to poultry whose internal temperature has never been below 26°F.**



### FROZEN POULTRY

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service:

Temperature of raw, frozen poultry is 0°F or below.



### FRYER-ROASTER TURKEY

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service:

Young, immature turkey usually less than 16 weeks of age, of either sex.



### GAPS: GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

Definition by USDA:

Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) are a collection of recommended principles for on-farm production, post-harvest processing, and storage of food that reduce risks of microbial contamination.

No independent third party verification.



### GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMOS)/ GENETICALLY ENGINEERED/ GENETICALLY IMPROVED FOODS

No legal or regulated definition.

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are plants and animals whose genetic make up has been altered to exhibit traits that they would not normally have, like longer shelf-life, a different color, or resistance to certain chemicals or pests. Some products are now described as "Genetically Improved Foods" or GIFs. These are still the same GMOs, with the same problems.

In general, genes are taken (copied) from one organism that displays the desired trait and transferred into the genetic code of another organism. There are significant concerns about the environmental impact of GM crops, as well as ongoing questions about potential long-term health concerns. Genetic modification is currently allowed in conventional farming. As foods which contain GMO do not have to be labeled, the consumer has no way of knowing whether they are consuming products that contain GMO ingredients, were produced by animals fed GMO feeds or, in the future, came from genetically modified animals.



### GLOBAL ANIMAL PARTNERSHIP

Definition by Global Animal Partnership:

Global Animal Partnership brings together farmers, scientists, ranchers, retailers, and animal advocates with the common goal of wanting to improve the welfare of animals in agriculture.

The Global Animal Partnership (GAP) only has standards for beef cattle, pigs and broiler chickens, with pilot standards for turkeys (at the time of writing). To qualify for the GAP 5-Step Animal Welfare program farmers only have to meet the basic requirements of the Step 1 level. In reviewing this qualification step, the renowned animal scientist, Dr. Temple Grandin, stated that in most cases the standards were the same—or only marginally better—than those found in industrial farming systems.



### GRAIN FED/SUPPLEMENTED/ FINISHED: ruminants

No legal or regulated definition.

Implies animals were fed grain exclusively or as a supplement to a forage diet. Not verified and not necessarily a positive claim in terms of welfare or meat quality. No independent third party verification. (See FEEDLOT.)



### GRAIN-FED/ GRAINFED: poultry

No legal or regulated definition

Grain-fed/grainfed implies that birds were fed a vegetarian diet without actually specifying it. No independent third party verification. (See VEGETARIAN FED.)



### GRASS-BASED FARMING

Definition by USDA

Grass-based production relies on pasture or rangeland to supply the protein and energy requirements of livestock. Grazing and forage feeding replace high grain diets, close confinement and feedlot-finishing during most or all of an animal's lifetime. The producer focuses on pasture plant and soil management, and proper stocking density and rotational grazing.

It is important to note that the use of this term does not infer any other positive animal management practices. The farmer or rancher could use hormones or sub-therapeutic antibiotics or carry out welfare unfriendly practices such as dehorning and still label meat as "Grass-Based Farming." No independent third party verification.

### GRASSFED



i. Definition by USDA:

100% of the diet of grassfed animals consists of freshly grazed pasture during the growing season and stored grasses (hay or grass silage) during the winter months or drought conditions.

This term refers only to the diet of cattle, sheep, goats, and bison. It does not indicate if an animal was given antibiotics or hormones. The USDA definition goes on to state that "if for environmental or health of the animal reasons supplementation can be used if the producer logs the type and amount." In other words, outside of the growing season cattle could be kept off pasture on non-vegetated (dirt) lots and fed harvested forage and supplements, antibiotics, and synthetic hormones and still bear the USDA grassfed label.

Other independent third-party grassfed certifications exist that verify cattle are raised on a 100% forage diet, on pasture without confinement, and with no routine antibiotics or added hormones.



ii. Definition by American Grassfed Association:

All livestock production must be pasture/grass/forage based. Grass and forage shall be the feed source consumed for the lifetime of the ruminant animal, with the exception of milk consumed prior to weaning. The diet shall be derived solely from forage consisting of grass (annual and perennial), forbs (e.g. Legumes, Brassica), browse, or cereal grain crops in the vegetative (pre-grain) state. Animals cannot be fed grain or grain byproducts (starch and protein sources) and must have continuous access to pasture. All livestock produced under this standard must be on range, pasture, or in paddocks for their entire lives. This means that all animals must be maintained at all times on land with at least 75% forage cover or unbroken ground. AGA grassfed ruminant animals must not be confined to a pen, feedlot or other area where forages or crops are not grown during the growing season. Livestock produced under this standard may be fed hay, haylage, baleage, silage, crop residue without grain, and other roughage sources while on pasture during periods of low forage quality or inclement weather. AGA ruminant animals may not be given hormones or antibiotics.

The American Grassfed Association (AGA) grassfed standards are stricter than USDA Grassfed and ensure that animals remain on pasture and are not given any antibiotics or added hormones. However, there are no other welfare requirements for and the cattle could still be subject to dehorning, late castration or other painful procedures. There are no slaughter standards.



iii. Definition by Animal Welfare Approved:

The Certified Grassfed by AWA standards are an optional addition to the AWA beef cattle, meat and dairy sheep, meat and dairy goat, and bison standards. In order for animals to be approved as Certified Grassfed by AWA, they must also be approved under the AWA's species specific standards, which ensure the animals are raised according to the highest welfare and environmental standards.

In order to achieve the additional Certified Grassfed by AWA requirements, the ruminant animals must only be fed a grass and forage diet, with the exception of milk consumed prior to weaning. Animals cannot be fed grain or grain by-products. Like all other Certified AWA livestock, animals must be pasture raised and cannot be confined to feedlots or dirt lots.

The Certified Grassfed by AWA standards ensure that animals are managed to high welfare standards, outdoors on pasture or range, as well as being 100% grassfed for life. In addition, AWA standards prohibit the routine use of antibiotics and hormones and require that animals are only slaughtered in plants that have passed review to AWA standards. (See HIGH WELFARE CERTIFICATIONS: Animal Welfare Approved).



### GRASS-FINISHED

No legal or regulated definition

Not to be confused with "grassfed", this term implies that animals are fed grass and forage for an undefined period before slaughter (the "finishing" period). However, they may actually have been given grains and other non-forage feeds for a large part of their lives. This feeding protocol is not verified and any prohibited feedstuffs and medications are also not defined. In addition, this claim provides no assurance of any other high-welfare welfare or environmental management practices. No independent third party verification.



### GREEN-FED

No legal or regulated definition.

This term implies a difference from "grassfed" and suggests animals are fed green feeds, including vegetables, grass, and other forages. However, this term is not legally defined or independently verified, and is not necessarily a positive claim when it comes to environmental management, welfare, or meat quality. No independent third party verification.



### HALAL AND ZABIAH HALAL

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service:

Meat products prepared by federally inspected meat packing plants identified with labels bearing references to "Halal" or "Zabiah Halal" must be handled according to Islamic law and under Islamic authority.

For meat to bear the label "Halal" animals are often (but not always) slaughtered without being pre-stunned. There are organizations which audit and certify for halal practices but definitions and standards vary according to the certifying organization. USDA "Halal" is not audited.



## HEN OR TOM TURKEY

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service:

The sex designation of "hen" (female) or "tom" (male) turkey is optional on the label, and is an indication of size rather than the tenderness of a turkey.



## HEIRLOOM

No legal or regulated definition.

Heirloom crop varieties (also called farmers' varieties or traditional varieties) is a term used for unique plant varieties which are genetically distinct from the commercial varieties popularized by industrial agriculture. Heirloom varieties have been developed by farmers through years of cultivation, selection and seed saving, and passed down through generations. Most heirlooms are varieties that have been in existence for a minimum of 50 years. However, this term does not refer to any specific farming practices, such as avoidance of pesticide or artificial fertilizer. No independent third party verification.



## HERITAGE

No legal or regulated definition.

A term applied to breeds of livestock that were bred over time so they are well-adapted to local environmental conditions, can withstand local diseases, or survive in harsh environmental conditions, for example. Heritage breeds generally have slow growth rates and long productive life spans outdoors, making them well-suited for grazing and pasturing. However, the term "heritage" does not guarantee animals were raised outdoors or any additional high-welfare management practices. No independent third party verification.



## HORMONE-FREE/NO HORMONES

No legal or regulated definition.

This phrase is not permitted for use on the labeling of beef, pork or poultry, as animal proteins contain naturally occurring hormones regardless of the production practice. (See NO ADDED HORMONES.)



## HUMANE/HUMANELY RAISED/HIGH WELFARE

No legal or regulated definition.

Buyers should be cautious about producers making claims of humane or high welfare treatment *without* independent third-party certification (see HIGH WELFARE CERTIFICATIONS). No independent third party verification.



## HUMANELY HANDLED

Definition by Meyer Natural Foods:

Meyer has created its own standardization program for the humane handling of cattle. The Program includes the highest levels of transparency, independence and integrity. The Program focuses on several additional aspects of the production process including traceability, cattle housing, environmental protection, disbudding, castration and transportation. And while Meyer Natural Foods developed the program, it is a USDA FSIS Approved Third Party Certified Process, and requires third party validation. All producers must comply with all standards in order to be certified via the Program.

Although Meyer standards are available to the public, they are fairly basic and it appears that only some are required to gain certification. Many of the standards state that farmers *should* do something, rather than farmers *must* do something. The standards also permit castration at up to 10 months of age and disbudding/dehorning at six months of age—practices that are known to result in welfare issues—as well as confinement on feedlots. Although Meyer states that third party validation is required, it is clear from their standards that only a proportion of sites will be audited each year; the remainder will be certified by affidavit (see AFFIDAVIT).

## HIGH WELFARE CERTIFICATIONS

There is no legal definition for "humane" or "high welfare." However, there are a few credible independent third party agencies that provide certifications to farmers who raise their animals in accordance with specific production practices, such as providing an environment in which they can engage in natural behaviors; being raised with sufficient space where they are able to lie down; having shelter and gentle handling to limit stress, and the provision of a healthy diet without antibiotic growth promoters or hormones. In addition, high welfare labels include a review of slaughter practices as part of their certification procedure. Groups that provide certification to farmers who raise their animals in accordance with specific high welfare production practices include Animal Welfare Approved and Certified Humane.



i. Definition by Animal Welfare Approved:

Animal Welfare Approved (AWA) audits, certifies and supports family farmers who raise their animals according to the highest welfare standards, outdoors on pasture or range. AWA has the most rigorous standards for farm animal welfare currently in use by any United States organization and is the most highly regarded food label when it comes to animal welfare, pasture-based farming and sustainability. All AWA standards, policies and procedures are available on the AWA website, making it one of the most transparent certifications available.

To accomplish the goals of the AWA program, the standards and audit process address every aspect of each species' life-cycle needs from birth to death—AWA is one of only two labels that require audited high-welfare slaughter practices and is the *only* label that requires pasture access for all animals.

Often referred to as a "badge of honor for farmers" and the "gold standard" among farm certifications, AWA has come to be the most highly regarded food label when it comes to animal welfare, pasture-based farming, and sustainability. All AWA standards, policies and procedures are available on the AWA website, making it one of the most transparent certifications available.



ii. Definition by Certified Humane:

The Certified Humane Raised and Handled label assures consumers that the producer meets our standards and applies them to animals from birth through slaughter. Cages, crates and tie stalls are among the forbidden practices, and animals must be free to do what comes naturally. For example, chickens are able to flap their wings and dust bathe, and pigs have the space to move around and root.

Certified Humane is a third party accreditation that requires that ruminants have continual outdoor access, defines space requirements and bird and animal management, and has rigorous auditing to its published standards. One of only two certifications that require audited high-welfare slaughter practices (along with Animal Welfare Approved).

For more information and a comparison of the different welfare standards of various animal welfare certification programs, see Certified Humane's *Comprehensive Standards Comparison Chart* at [www.certifiedhumane.org](http://www.certifiedhumane.org) (select "how we work" tab, then "factsheets").



## INSPECTED: USDA, state, custom/exempt

Definition by USDA:

Inspection refers to which agency oversees a slaughter facility. Both state and federally inspected plants must follow the same guidelines, but state-inspected products may not enter into interstate commerce. Custom/Exempt processing activities are exempt from daily inspection and their products may not enter into commerce.



## INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT (IPM)

Definition by US EPA:

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is the coordinated use of pest and environmental information with available pest control methods to prevent unacceptable levels of pest damage by the most economical means and with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment.

Some programs and labels include IPM as a standard that farmers must meet before certification. However, not all these programs require IPM performance to the same degree, and some programs only incorporate minimal IPM requirements. There is no specific verification program for IPM alone.



## IRRADIATION

Definition by Food Safety and Inspection Service:

Food irradiation is the process of exposing food to radiant energy in order to reduce or eliminate bacteria, therefore making it more resistant to spoilage. Forms of radiant energy include: microwave and infrared radiation, which heat food during cooking; visible light or ultraviolet light, which are used to dry food or kill surface microorganisms; and ionizing radiation, which penetrates deeply into food, killing microorganisms without raising the temperature of the food significantly. Food is most often irradiated commercially to reduce the numbers of pathogenic microorganisms, to extend shelflife, or to eliminate insect pests.

Irradiation is a process of using high-energy Gamma rays, electron beams, or X-rays to kill potential pathogens in food. The amount of radiation used can vary and the number of pathogens affected by irradiation can be variable.

Food that has been irradiated must either have "irradiated" as part of the product name or be labeled with the claim "treated with irradiation" or "treated with radiation," and also display the Radura symbol. The FDA requires labeling on whole irradiated fruits and vegetables. However, the FDA does not require the "treated with irradiation" label on processed foods made with irradiated ingredients or on spices.

The USDA's rules regarding labeling of irradiated foods are similar to the FDA's regulations, but only apply to meat and poultry. However, unlike the FDA, the USDA requires that irradiated meat ingredients in multi-ingredient products, such as sausages, must be listed in the ingredients on the package.



## KOSHER

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service:

"Kosher" may be used only on the labels of meat and poultry products prepared under Rabbinical supervision.

For meat to bear the "Kosher" label animals must be slaughtered without being pre-stunned.





## LOCALLY GROWN

No legal or regulated definition.

This term implies food and agricultural products are produced, processed and sold within a certain region, whether defined by distance, state or regional boundaries. However, as the term is unregulated, individuals can define the "locally grown" claim based on their own objectives. No independent third party verification.



## NATURAL/ALL NATURAL

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service:

**A product containing no artificial ingredient or added color and is only minimally processed (a process which does not fundamentally alter the raw product) may be labeled natural. The label must explain the use of the term natural (such as: no added colorings or artificial ingredients; minimally processed).**

As defined by the USDA, the term applies *only* to how meat is processed after slaughter. Often found on meat and livestock product labels, this commonly used term does *not* refer in any way to how animals are raised, so the farming system may have involved feedlot and confinement systems, tail docking and other mutilations, or the routine use of antibiotics, for example. No independent third party verification.



## NATURALLY RAISED

Definition by USDA:

**The naturally raised marketing claim standard states that livestock used for the production of meat and meat products have been raised entirely without growth promotants, antibiotics (except for ionophores used as coccidiostats for parasite control), and have never been fed animal by-products. The voluntary standard will establish the minimum requirements for those producers who choose to operate a USDA-verified program involving a naturally raised claim.**

This definition does not explain if the animals were raised outdoors or confined in feedlots or cages, or any other management practices that might address welfare or environmental management.



## NO ADDITIVES

No legal or regulated definition.

"No additives" is a general claim that a product has not been enhanced with the addition of natural or artificial additives. The USDA and FDA define and regulate additives; however, as there is no USDA definition of the term "no additives" or how it is used, anyone using the term may or may not be referring to this legal regulation. No independent third party verification.



## NO ANIMAL BY-PRODUCTS

No legal or regulated definition.

For meat products this term implies that no products derived from animals have been used in livestock feed. While the term "no animal by-products" might appear self-evident, there is no legal definition of what constitutes an animal by-product, so a variety of animal-derived ingredients, such as milk or fishmeal, may still be included under this label. No independent third party verification.



## NO ANTIBIOTICS: red meat and poultry

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service:

**The terms "no antibiotics added" may be used on labels for meat or poultry products if sufficient documentation is provided by the producer to the Agency demonstrating that the animals were raised without antibiotics.**

In intensive farming systems, antibiotics are routinely given to cattle, hogs, sheep, and chickens, to prevent or manage diseases and to promote growth. Although the USDA is accountable for proper use of these claims, no independent third party verification system is in place.

Some labels in this guide have an audited "no antibiotics ever" requirement in their standards. Examples include Certified Organic and American Grassfed Association. Global Animal Partnership (GAP) standards allow some antibiotic use; however, Whole Foods Market (the only retailer to stock GAP label products) prohibits all antibiotics. Many "Natural" labels often include statements that animals were never given antibiotics. A ban on antibiotics might seem like a good thing: Overuse of antibiotics in farming can lead to resistance, where medically important antibiotics become ineffective when we get sick. However, even with the best management, animals can fall ill and need treatment. If farmers cannot sell an animal that's been treated with antibiotics under a particular label, they may choose to withhold treatment instead. A "no antibiotics ever" approach will not stop antibiotic abuse in food animal production: It will create a two tier system where some animals may have treatment withheld, while others are routinely treated. The solution is the responsible use of antibiotics on *all* farms, where animals are kept in conditions that reduce the risk of illness, but are given treatment only when needed. Labels that work on this basis include Animal Welfare Approved and Certified Humane.



## NO HORMONES ADDED: pork or poultry

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service:

**Hormones are not allowed in raising hogs or poultry. Therefore, the claim "no hormones added" cannot be used on the labels of pork or poultry unless it is followed by a statement that says "Federal regulations prohibit the use of hormones."**

Although hormones cannot be used for raising hogs or poultry some companies still use this label claim to make it appear their products are different from others or that the company is making a special concession to animal welfare or human health. But the reality is that any pork or poultry product could utilize this label claim. Although the company is legally required to include text saying "federal regulations prohibit the use of hormones," this wording often appears in very small lettering at the bottom of the label.



## NO HORMONES ADMINISTERED: beef and dairy cattle

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service:

**The term "no hormones administered" may be approved for use on the label of beef products if sufficient documentation is provided to the Agency by the producer showing no hormones have been used in raising the animals.**

Hormones are commonly used in the commercial farming of animals such as cattle to speed the growth rate or to increase milk production. (In dairy cattle see rBST/rGBH FREE.) Although the USDA is accountable for proper use of this claim, there is no independent third party verification system in place.



## NO NITRATES/NITRITES

No legal or regulated definition.

Nitrites are commonly used to preserve meat and prevent botulism food poisoning. However, some studies link the high intake of nitrites to an increased risk of stomach and pancreatic cancer. Some cured meat and bacon sold as "no nitrates added" may have been cured with ingredients that are still high in nitrates.



## NO SPRAY/PESTICIDE FREE

No legal or regulated definition.

A "no spray" claim implies that no pesticides, herbicides or fungicides are used. However, unlike the term organic, this claim is not verified by an independent third party.



## NO-TILL/MINIMUM TILL CONSERVATION TILLAGE

No legal or regulated definition

A method of planting crops with little or no plowing (or other soil cultivation) to reduce soil erosion. Highly likely to involve herbicides for weed control. No independent third party verification.



## OMEGA 3 ENRICHED

No legal or regulated definition.

Eggs may be sold as "omega 3 enriched" and often come from hens fed a special diet of flaxseed, which is high in omega 3. Omega 3 fatty acids are "good fats" that scientists believe can improve the health of the heart and the brain. True grassfed meat animals and pastured hens will naturally have higher levels of omega 3 without dietary additions. No independent third party verification.



## ON-FARM SLAUGHTER

No legal or regulated definition.

The practice of slaughtering and processing animals at the farm on which they were raised. Some states allow farmers to process animals on-farm for sale to the public, although there may be limits on the number of animals that can be processed.



## ORGANIC/CERTIFIED ORGANIC

Definition by USDA:

**All products sold as "organic" must meet the USDA National Organic Program production and handling standards. Certification is mandatory for farmers selling more than \$5,000 of organic products per year, and is verified by an accredited certifying agency.**

In general, organic production limits the use of chemicals, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, and other inputs. However, it does not strictly define production practices related to space per animal or outdoor access requirements—for example, confinement areas are permitted to fatten organic beef cattle—that can have significant welfare implications for animals.

For information about the National Organic Program and use of the term "organic" on labels, refer to these factsheets from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service:

- Organic Food Standards and Labels: The Facts
- Labeling and Marketing Information



## PASTURED/PASTURE-RAISED

No legal or regulated definition.

Implies that animals were raised outdoors on pasture. However, unless a certification program defines and regulates this term, there is no way to ensure if any claim is accurate. No independent third party verification.

**PESTICIDE-FREE**

No legal or regulated definition.

Implies that no pesticide residue can be found on the crop. It does not address if pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides were applied at other points in production. No independent third party verification.

**QUALITY GRADE AND YIELD GRADE**

Definition by USDA:

The USDA primarily grades meat by the amount of marbling – or intramuscular fat – that is present. Cuts of meat with the greatest amount of fat within the grain of the meat are awarded the highest grades. Graders evaluate the amount and distribution of marbling in the rib eye muscle at the cut surface after the carcass has been ribbed between the 12th and 13th ribs. The top three grades are prime, select and choice. These terms are only valid if they are accompanied by the USDA shield.

Quality grades serve to identify the eating characteristics of the product. They are a guide to identify the tenderness and palatability of the meat. Quality grades exist for beef, pork, lamb veal and mutton.

**RAW**

No legal or regulated definition.

This term refers to foods, such as milk, cheeses, cider, vinegar, sauerkraut, or almonds, that have not been pasteurized (heat treated) to a minimum of 145°F. No independent third party verification.

**RAW MILK CHEESE**

Definition by Raw Milk Cheesemakers Association:

Cheese produced from milk that, prior to setting the curd, has not been heated above the temperature of the milk (104°F, 40°C) at the time of milking and that the cheese produced from that milk shall be aged for 60 days or longer at a temperature of not less than 35°F (2°C) in accordance with US FDA regulations.

**rBST/rBGH-FREE**

No legal or regulated definition.

rBST (recombinant bovine somatotropin) and rBGH (recombinant bovine growth hormone) are hormones used to boost milk production in dairy cattle. Research suggests their use has serious welfare implications for dairy cattle and have been found to leave residues in the milk. No independent third party verification.

**SOY-FREE**

No legal or regulated definition.

Soy has been shown to transfer through animal feed to food product. Some people wish to avoid soy for diet, allergy or other reasons. No independent third party verification.

**SPECIAL-FED VEAL**

No legal or regulated definition.

This term applies to young beef/dairy animals that are fed controlled liquid diets that maintain the calf in a state of anemia, producing a pale fine-textured meat. Veal calves are unlikely to be offered any forage as this can affect the color of the meat. Calves are generally slaughtered at 15–20 weeks of age. These production systems often provide limited space, with no requirement for bedding or outside access, and are generally considered as providing extremely poor animal welfare. Also referred to as Formula-Fed, Milk-Fed or Nature Fed Veal. No independent third party verification.

**STRESS FREE ENVIRONMENT**

No legal or regulated definition.

The claim that animals are raised in a stress free environment can be found on a variety of meat and poultry products. However, as there is no legal definition or requirements on how the animal is raised, intensively indoor raised pigs and poultry and feedlot beef may still carry this label. No independent third party verification.

**SUB-THERAPEUTIC/  
NON-THERAPEUTIC USE OF ANTIBIOTICS**

No legal or regulated definition.

This term refers to the administration of antibiotics when animals or birds are not sick or injured, but for the purpose of promoting growth or overcoming disease challenges that are inherent in the system of farm management. For example, cattle on feedlots may be given low doses of non-therapeutic antibiotic treatments to try to prevent illness from liver damage due to the grain-based diet they are fed. These practices are now directly linked with the dramatic rise in life-threatening multiple antibiotic-resistant bacteria, and the potential loss of these vital medicines for human health.

**SULFITE-FREE/NO ADDED SULFITES/  
CONTAINS SULFITES: wine**

Definition by The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF)

Sulfite or sulfur dioxide is commonly used as a preservative in wines, but can cause allergic reactions in some individuals. A wine can make the claim "Sulfite Free" if there are no detectable sulfites, or No Added Sulfites – Contains Naturally Occurring Sulfites." However, if the total sulfites in the wine are above 10 parts per million the label must state "Contains Sulfites."

**SULFURED/UNSULFURED**

No legal or regulated definition

Many dried fruits are treated with sulfur to keep them from oxidizing during and after the drying process. This preserves their original color and acts as a preservative. Unsulfured fruits are often dark brown in color.

**SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

No legal or regulated definition.

Sustainable farming is generally considered as farming that is socially just, high welfare, economically viable, and environmentally sound. The term is, however, unregulated and not legally defined. Sustainable agriculture was addressed by Congress in the 1990 Farm Bill. Under that law:

"the term sustainable agriculture means an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long term:

- ▶ Satisfy human food and fiber needs
- ▶ Enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends
- ▶ Make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls
- ▶ Sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and
- ▶ Enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole."

No independent third party verification.

**TRANSITIONAL**

No legal or regulated definition.

"Transitional" is an unofficial term implying that a farm is in the process of moving towards organic certification, and is sometimes used on products produced by farms in transition to organic certification. Farmers must practice organic methods for three years on a given area of land before the products harvested from that land can be sold or labeled as certified organic (see ORGANIC/CERTIFIED ORGANIC). No independent third party verification.

**VEGAN/CERTIFIED VEGAN**

Definition by Vegan Awareness Foundation:

Vegan Awareness Foundation requires that products approved to carry the Certified Vegan Logo must:

- ▶ Not contain meat, fish, fowl, animal by-products (including silk or dyes from insects), eggs or egg products, milk or milk products, honey or honey bee products
- ▶ Involve no animal testing of ingredients or finished product by supplier, producer, manufacturer or independent party
- ▶ Provide supplier verification that animal products were not used in the manufacturing of ingredients
- ▶ Contain no known animal-derived GMOs or genes used to manufacture ingredients or finished products

Not all vegan foods use the "Certified Vegan" logo. No independent third party verification—even if "Certified Vegan" is displayed.

**VEGETARIAN-FED/  
FED A VEGETARIAN DIET**

No legal or regulated definition

Animals have been fed a diet free of animal products. This does not mean animals were raised outdoors on pasture or were fed a 100% grassfed diet. No independent third party verification.

**VINE-RIPENED/TREE-RIPENED**

No legal or regulated definition.

Fruit that has been allowed to ripen on the vine or tree. Many fruits that are shipped long distances are picked while still unripe and firm, and later treated with ethylene gas at the point of distribution to ripen and soften them. This term does not mean the fruit is pesticide-free, organic, non-GMO, sustainable or family farmed. No independent third party verification.



## A GREENER WORLD

Our Food. Our Farms. Our Future. Let's Choose!

With so much negativity around food and farming today, A Greener World serves as a beacon of positive change. We exist to promote and support real-life farming models to the public and to offer practical guidance on achieving truly sustainable livestock farming systems to farmers.

We believe the way we farm, the nutritional quality of the meat, milk and eggs produced, and the impact of farming systems on wildlife, the environment and wider society are all connected. Our goal is to offer a 'one-stop shop' for anyone interested in food, farming, and sustainability, providing simple solutions based on your own personal concerns. We're proud of our reputation among consumer groups, farmers, and the wider food industry as a pragmatic organization driven by practical science and common sense.

Our portfolio of leading farm certifications includes AWA, Certified Wildlife Friendly®, Predator Friendly®, and Certified Grassfed by AWA. Each program is specifically designed to have positive and measurable impacts on the environment, society, and animals, and to encourage truly sustainable farming practices, while remaining realistic and achievable for the farmer.

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