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!
Modern food companies use a bewildering range of terms and claims on their packaging labels to promote food and attract buyers to their products. Common examples include locally grown, humanely raised, natural, free range, or sustainably farmed. But what exactly do all these terms and claims really mean—and how can you know they’re even true?

The problem is that while some of these terms and claims have legal definitions controlled by government regulation, most are completely unregulated and can easily lead to misunderstandings—or misuse. What’s more, most of the regulated label claims aren’t even properly regulated or controlled. The reality is it’s hard to know which food label claims you can trust—and which you should avoid.

*Food Labels Exposed* was developed to help you navigate and decipher today’s food labels and restaurant menus, providing clear and factual definitions for over 100 of the most common claims and terms used for the production, marketing and labeling of meat, dairy, eggs and other farmed products. This guide will help you find out what’s really going on behind the label, so you can make informed choices.
BEHIND THE LABEL

When it comes to food choices, one of the biggest challenges is knowing which food labels you can trust.

The label example on the right includes some of the most common terms and claims you will find on food animal product labels: fresh, natural, humanely raised, cage free, fed a vegetarian diet, no hormones added, no antibiotics added and no animal by-products.

They all sound positive. But what do these terms and claims really mean? We think you’ll be surprised by the truth ...

**Fresh**

Legally, the fresh label term (see page 16) simply means the internal temperature of a meat product must never go below 26°F. Nothing more, nothing less.

**Natural/All natural**

Research by Consumer Reports says 60% of consumers look for the natural label claim (see page 20) when out shopping, while almost half wrongly assume it means the animals lived outdoors on pasture. Yet this claim has absolutely nothing to do with how animals are raised, what they are fed or if they had any access to pasture, for example. It simply means the meat contains no artificial ingredients or added colors, and that it was minimally processed.

**Humanely raised**

There is no legal definition or minimum agreed welfare standard for the humane claim (see page 19). So you’ll find it on food products where animals were raised on dirt feedlots or indoors in confinement systems, and where antibiotic use and beak trimming or tail docking are routine practices. Unless you choose food that has independent third-party verification according to high-welfare standards, you’re probably still buying industrially farmed food animal products.

**Cage free**

If you see a cage free label (see page 11) on chicken meat, you might be forgiven for thinking the company is making a special concession to animal welfare by raising meat chickens without a cage. But while most laying hens are still raised in cages, broiler or meat chickens are never raised in cages. So this widely used marketing claim for chicken is actually highly misleading.

**No animal by-products**

This term implies no products derived from animals were used in the animal’s feed. But because there is no legal definition of what an animal by-product is, a farmer could feed a variety of animal-derived ingredients—such as milk or fishmeal—under this label. And without an independent on-farm verification, no one will have audited the farm to check if this claim is even true (see page 21).

**Fed a vegetarian diet**

This label claim indicates the animals were fed a diet free of animal products. However, as there is no legal definition for this claim, and farms making this claim are not independently audited, we can’t know if it is true. One thing is for sure: this label claim offers absolutely no guarantees the animals were raised outdoors on pasture or range (see page 26).

**No hormones added/administered**

Commonly found on poultry and pork meat labels, the no hormones added claim (see page 21) is highly misleading and deceptive. Why? Because United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations prohibit the use of artificial hormones or steroids in all chicken and pig production systems in the U.S. In other words, any chicken or pork processor could put a no hormones or steroids added claim on their label.

**No antibiotics added/administered**

Some food producers now prohibit antibiotics under their labels, in response to public health concerns about antibiotic use in industrial food animal production. Even though the no antibiotics added label claim (see page 21) is regulated, most farms making this claim are not independently audited. And while some labels do have an audited ‘no antibiotics ever’ requirement (such as Organic), this can encourage farmers to withhold vital treatments.

**Natural/All natural**

Research by Consumer Reports says 60% of consumers look for the natural label claim (see page 20) when out shopping, while almost half wrongly assume it means the animals lived outdoors on pasture. Yet this claim has absolutely nothing to do with how animals are raised, what they are fed or if they had any access to pasture, for example. It simply means the meat contains no artificial ingredients or added colors, and that it was minimally processed.

**Happy Farm Meats**

- Natural
- Humanely raised
- No hormones added
- No antibiotics added
- Cage-free

**FED A VEGETARIAN DIET**

**FED A VEGETARIAN DIET**
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Legally defined—or not?

When it comes to food choices, one of the biggest challenges is knowing which food labels you can trust. This is especially true when it comes to the growing number of ‘self-made’ label claims that don’t have any clear legal definition.

Many common label claims, such as humanely raised or sustainably farmed, fall into this dubious self-made category. This means any food manufacturer can use them—even if the meat, dairy or eggs come from intensive systems where animals are confined on feedlots or indoors, subjected to mutilations like beak trimming or tail docking, and given routine antibiotics and hormones.

Where a food label term or claim is legally defined or regulated, we provide the official definition in italics—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?

Sadly, even if a food label term or claim has a legal definition, you can’t always trust it. That’s because many legally defined label claims are not independently checked or verified.

How do you know which food labels to trust? Broadly speaking, food label terms and claims fall into two key categories:

- **Audited/Third-party certified**
  - Some of the terms and claims used on food labels are audited and verified by an independent third party. This is where an independent auditor visits the associated farm, slaughter plant or processing/packing plant to ensure 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 ‘self-made’. In other words, there is no independent physical verification or audit process to check if the terms or claims used on the label are consistent—or even true.

When you are assessing any label claim, it is important to find out if it has been audited by an independent third party—or not. Unless the claim is checked by an independent third party, the integrity of a food label is often only as reliable as the individual or company making it.

Legend

The following symbols will help you quickly identify whether a term or label claim is independently verified by audit, and whether you can believe any of the claims the label is making about the health, safety, sustainability, or welfare of any animals involved.

**AUDITED/THIRD-PARTY CERTIFIED**

The most trusted food labels in this guide will have this green audited/third-party certified icon. This symbol is your assurance that a term or claim made on the label is regularly verified by an independent third party, and that the claims are consistent over time. Audited/third-party certified labels include well-known food certifications such as Animal Welfare Approved and Certified Organic.

**PUBLISHED PROTOCOL**

This symbol tells you the food label or claim is backed up by a legally defined or agreed definition that is publicly available. If this symbol is absent, there is no such definition—you might want to ask more questions about the product.

**UNAUDITED/NO THIRD-PARTY CERTIFICATION**

Whenever you see a food label claim or term in this guide with this red unaudited/no third-party certification icon, it means there is no independent third-party verification or audit. When you see this symbol you should contact the supplier to find out more about the product or ask further questions to ensure you are satisfied with the validity of any claims made.

**HIGH WELFARE ASSURANCE**

The label makes claims that animals have access to range or pasture at all times (except when animal welfare would be adversely affected) that are independently verified by audit. Feedlots, crates and cages are never used.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSURANCE**

The label makes claims about the impact on the environment that are independently verified by audit to a published set of standards.

**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ASSURANCE**

The label makes claims about the fair treatment of workers and/or communities that are independently verified by audit to a published set of standards.

**LOCAL/REGION SPECIFIC ASSURANCE**

The label makes claims that the product was produced in a certain geographic region/country. However, claims are not independently verified by audit to a set of standards.

**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 welfare of animals at slaughter—including a requirement for pre-slaughter stunning for all animals—is independently verified by audit to a published set of standards.

**NO CONFINEMENT**

The label makes claims that animals have access to range or pasture at all times (except when animal welfare would be adversely affected) that are independently verified. Feedlots, crates and cages are never used.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIM**

The label makes claims about farming’s impact on the environment. However, claims are not independently verified by audit or to a set of standards.

**LOCAL/REGION SPECIFIC CLAIM**

The label makes claims that the product was produced in a certain geographic region/country. However, claims are not independently verified by audit or to a set of standards.

**ANTIBIOTIC USE CONTROLLED CLAIM**

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

**NO SLAUGHTER REVIEW**

The label makes claims that may affect animal welfare. However, the welfare of animals at slaughter is not independently verified or audited annually to a published set of standards, or the independent verification or audit does not require the stunning of animals before slaughter.

**CONFINEEMENT**

The label makes claims about the ability of animals to roam freely on pasture or range. However, there is no independent verification or audit of this claim. Feedlots, crates and cages may also be used.
**Affidavit**

Also known as a ‘self-made’ claim, an affidavit is 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. There is no legal requirement to sign in the presence of a qualified witness, so anyone can sign their own statement. Retailers such as Walmart are moving away from self-made claims and increasingly require audits to ensure integrity and to protect brand value.

**American Grassfed Association**

AGA’s standards are based on several fundamentals:

- **Forage.** An AGA-Certified Grassfed animal is born, raised and finished on open grass pastures where perennial and annual grasses, forbs, legumes, brassicas, browse and post-harvest crop residue without grain are the sole energy sources, with the exception of mother’s milk, from birth to harvest. Hay, haylage, silage, and ensilage from any of the above sources may be fed to animals while on pasture during periods of inclement weather or low forage quality.
- **Caudron.** AGA Certified Grassfed ruminants must graze pasture where they will receive most, if not all, of their nutrition and be allowed to fulfill their natural behaviors and basic instincts of grazing at all times. The only exceptions to this standard are emergencies that may threaten the safety and well-being of the animal or soil, and management practices such as roundups, sorting, shipping and weaning.
- **Animal Health And Welfare.** Mineral and vitamin supplements may be provided free choice to adjust the animals’ nutrient intake and to correct deficiencies in the total diet energy source. The feeding of animal by-products is prohibited, and no antibiotics, ionophores or hormones of any type may be administered.
- **Origin.** Animals eligible for acceptance in the AGA Certified Grassfed program must be born and raised in the United States of America.

AGA’s standards apply to ruminant animals only—beef, bison, goat, lamb and sheep. AGA-Certified producers are audited annually by independent, third parties to ensure continuing compliance with the standards.

The AGA standards ensure that animals remain on pasture and are not given any antibiotics or added hormones. However, there are no other welfare requirements, and the animals could still be subject to dehorning, lame ostracization or other painful procedures. There are also no standards to assure welfare at slaughter. AGA allows auditing to be carried out by the farm’s veterinarian or extension agent, as well as by trained auditors working for certification bodies. (See also Grassfed.)

**American Humane Certified**

Definition by American Humane Certified

American Humane’s programs provide a verifiable assurance that products carrying the American Humane Certified label have met rigorous, science-based welfare standards and the animals in the program were humanely raised.

Although American Humane has recently developed a separate, optional free range and pasture standard for laying hens, there is no requirement for pasture access or for any other species in the program and American Humane also certifies caged egg production (as well as cage free indoor poultry). Farming practices are permitted under the pig standards; feedlot finishing is permitted under the beef standards; and beak trimming is permitted in both turkey and laying hen production. American Humane standards require that slaughter is reviewed annually, but there is no requirement for the stunning of all animals before slaughter. While this is a verified claim, the American Humane standards are so low that the label is not recognized as meaningful by consumer advocates.

**Angus** aka Certified Angus Beef

Definition by American Humane Certified

The American Angus Association has registered a definition of Certified Angus beef with USDA that requires the animal to have 90% Angus Genetics or a predominantly (5%) black coat or hide. To qualify, animals must be under 30 months at slaughter and must meet additional meat quality requirements. However, there are no management or welfare requirements. Despite the name Certified Angus Beef, the claim is not actually a certification (rather it is a licensed trademark) and is not audited by a third-party. The terms Angus Beef and Black Angus Beef are also commonly used, but even less regulated.

**Animal Welfare Approved**

aka Animal Care Certified

**Definition by Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW**

Animal Welfare Approved (AWA) audits, certifies and supports independent 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 North American 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 program’s 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’ lifecycle needs from birth to death. AWA is the only label that requires audited high-welfare slaughter practices with pre-slaughter stunning and is also the only label that additionally requires pasture access for all animals.

Animal Welfare Approved (AWA) is a project of A Greener World. AWA is the most highly regarded food label when it comes to animal welfare, pasture-based farming and sustainability. Established in 2006, AWA is the only farm animal welfare program in the US accredited by ISO/IEC 17065—an independent global accreditation that confirms AWA’s standards, policies and audit protocols are credible, transparent and applied consistently to all farms and ranches in the program. (See also Certified Grassfed by AGW and Certified Non-GMO by AGW, optional add-ons to AWA certification.)

**Animal Welfare Review Certified**

aka Animal Care 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. There is no information on whether animals have access to pasture or what the policy is on molits, calf management or antibiotic use. Although beef, dairy and pig farmers may be accredited, at the time of publication the list of certified companies appear to all be dairy farms, while the certification is displayed on products like Costco organic milk packaging.

**Antibiotic free**

**Statement by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)**

The term is not allowed to be used on a label. Antibiotic free is not a permitted label claim. However, some companies still use this description on websites or in blogs. (See No Antibiotics Added.)

**Artisan/Artisanal**

No independent third-party verification, no legal or regulated definition.
Basted/Self-basted

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

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 per pound of product is indicated 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.

Beyond/Better than/ More Organic

No independent third-party verification; no legal or regulated definition

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

Bird Friendly

Definition by Smithsonian Migratory Bird Centre (SMBC)

Bird Friendly is a certification created by the 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 producers to meet organic standards 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.

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 focus 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 agriculture that supports soil health and the diversity of wildlife and beneficial organisms. Biodynamic farmers use methods such as composting, deep plowing, and the use of special plant, animal and mineral preparations to maintain a healthy ecosystem and support a diverse range of wildlife and beneficial organisms. Biodynamic agriculture also places a strong emphasis on holistic thinking and the interconnectedness of all aspects of the farm, from the soil to the crops to the animals to the people who work and live on the farm. Biodynamic agriculture is based on the philosophy of the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner, who believed that the health of the soil is the foundation of healthy food and a healthy society. Biodynamic agriculture uses a wide range of practices, including composting, deep plowing, and the use of special plant, animal and mineral preparations to create a healthy ecosystem and support a diverse range of wildlife and beneficial organisms. Biodynamic agriculture is also characterized by a holistic approach to farming, which takes into account the relationship between all aspects of the farm, from the soil to the crops to the animals to the people who work and live on the farm.

CAFO/AFO

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

Animal Feeding Operations (AFOs) are agricultural operations where animals are kept and raised in confinement. 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 CAFOs, 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

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 CAFOs. If you buy meat, be aware that CAFO facilities vary widely, with huge variations in size, sanitation and welfare practices, as well as antibiotic and hormone administration and environmental measures of ensuring product integrity at the local level. If in doubt, ask the market manager.

Cage free

For eggs/laying hens

No independent third-party verification; 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 several thousand other birds. Cage free does not explain if the birds have any access to the outside, or whether any outside area provided was pasture or concrete/dirt lot, or if they were raised entirely indoors in overcrowded conditions. Cage housing is permitted to prevent feather pecking.

Certified Grassfed by AGW

Definition by A Greener World

Certified Grassfed by A Greener World (AGW) is an optional, additional accreditation for farmers and ranchers raising cattle, sheep, goats or bison according to Animal Welfare Approved standards of production.

Certified Grassfed by AGW is the only certification and logo in the U.S. and Canada that guarantees food products come from animals fed a 100% grass and forage diet, raised outdoors on pasture or range and/or provided their entire lives with access to the outside. The SMBC, which is part of the National Organic Program, requires that farmers and ranchers maintain 10% of their total acreage for biodiversity. The Certified Grassfed by AGW standards of production go one step further. AGW has detailed standards for providing access to the outside, and specifically requires that all animals have access to the outside for at least one audit cycle. This means that the animals must be allowed to roam and graze, rather than being confined to a small area. The AGW logo is a widely recognized symbol of high standards for animal welfare and sustainability. The AGW certification is awarded to farms and ranches that meet the AGW standards, which include providing access to the outside, as well as other criteria to ensure the health and welfare of the animals. This includes providing access to clean water, fresh air, and natural sunlight, as well as providing a comfortable and stimulating environment. The AGW certification is an independent third-party verification that the animals are raised according to the highest standards of animal welfare and sustainability. The AGW certification is sought after by consumers who are looking for high-quality, sustainably produced meat and dairy products. The AGW certification is a guarantee that the animals are raised according to the highest standards of animal welfare and sustainability, and that the products are produced in a way that is good for the animals, the environment, and the people who consume the products.
applies them to animals from birth through slaughter. Animals are never kept in cages, crates, or tie stalls. Animals must be free to do what comes naturally. For example, chickens must be able to flap their wings and dust bathe, and pigs must have space to move around and root. Animals must be fed a diet of quality feed, without animal by-products, antibiotics or growth hormones. Producers must comply with food safety and environmental regulations. Processors must comply with the American Meat Institute Standards (AMI), a slaughter standard written by Dr. Temple Grandin, a member of HFAC’s Scientific Committee.

Certified Humane is a third-party accreditation that requires ranchers to have outdoor pasture access for at least part of their lives, defines space requirements and bird and animal management, and carries out audits to its published standards. Farrowing and gestation crates for pigs and cages for laying hens are all prohibited. However, Certified Humane still receives a confinement icon as its standards permit the finishing of beef cattle in feedlots and there is no requirement for pasture access for pigs and meat poultry. Laying hens may be caged as cage free indoor, free range or pasture raised. Certified Humane also permits beak tipping of laying hens up to 10 days of age when farmers have had issues with injurious feather pecking. Certified Humane standards require that slaughter is reviewed annually, but there is no standardized definition. However, some companies still use this description of their products on websites or in blogs. Such terms create confusion in the marketplace, as for example antibiotics are not considered chemicals by USDA.

**Certified Naturally Grown (CNG)** products are registered as having been produced in approximate accordance with National Organic Standards. CNG states that their standards on livestock management are stricter than the National Organic Standards and require more time on pasture for all animals. However, this label is modeled on a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). PGS programs differ from third-party audit models like the USDA National Organic Program (NOP), as they employ a peer-review inspection process built on local networks, rather than formal or independent audit. There is therefore no verification by an independent third-party to ensure farms are actually meeting the standards.

**Certified Non-GMO by AGW**

Definition by A Greener World

Certified Non-GMO by AGW is the only food label in North America that helps consumers identify, genetically modified (or genetically engineered) products and support high-welfare, environmentally sustainable food and animal production. Available to farmers, ranchers and food producers, the Certified Non-GMO by AGW label guarantees food products are not only produced without GMO feed, supplements or ingredients, but is the only non-GMO label to offer further assurances about animal welfare and environmental sustainability (the label is an optional addition to Animal Welfare Approved certification).

See also Animal Welfare Approved, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

**Chemical free**

Statement by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

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. However, some companies still use this description of their products on websites or in blogs. Such terms create confusion in the marketplace, as for example antibiotics are not considered chemicals by USDA.

**Cloning**

aka From cloned animals

Meat is dairy

No legal or regulated definition

Cloning is the practice of creating an exact genetic replica of an organism. When used in food animal production, 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. Some third-party certifications, such as Animal Welfare Approved, prohibit cloned animals.

**COOL**

aka Country of Origin Labeling

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

The Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) program is neither a food safety or traceability program but rather a consumer information program. Some 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 lamb, goat, and chicken
- Ground lamb, ground goat, and ground chicken
- Farm raised fish and shellfish
- Wild fish and shellfish
- Fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables
- Peanuts, pecans and macadamia nuts
- Ginseng

The COOL law used to apply to meat from cattle and pigs, but this part of the federal regulation was repealed in 2016. Since that time, some individual states have expressed interest in reinstating Country of Origin Labeling.

**Cured**

Definition by U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

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

**Crate-free**

for pork

No legal or regulated definition

Two types of crate are commonly used in intensive pork production: farrowing crates and gestation crates, defined below. It is important to note, however, that because a label states it is farrowing-crate free does not mean it is gestation crate free, and vice versa. Even if a label 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, Certified Humane and Global Animal Partnership standards.

Gestation crate: A cage or stall in which a sow is confined for the period of pregnancy and in which an animal is restricted from movement. Gestation crates are prohibited under the Animal Welfare Approved, Certified Humane and Global Animal Partnership standards.

**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 Trade Project website at fairworldproject.org

### Farm Check

**Definition by Tyson Foods**

The Tyson Foods Farm Check 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, information on Tyson’s website shows the company’s supply farms are permitted to confine pigs indoors in concrete pens and use farrowing and gestation crates and teeth clipping and tail docking piglets under Farm Check program. For beef cattle, the Farm Check program permits the use of feedlots, while Farm Check also permits intensive indoor meat chicken and turkey production. 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.

### Farm fresh

**No independent-third-party verification, no legal or regulated definition**

Farm fresh is a term commonly found on egg cartons, but may also be found on other foods. It is used to give a favorable impression of the freshness of the product or sense of immediacy—for example, implying that a farmer gathered the eggs early in the morning before rushing them to the store ready for purchase. However, it actually has no meaning or legal definition, and does not address the health and welfare of the animals. Farm fresh eggs can come from caged hens in large industrial facilities or free-range chickens on small family farms, this term is not a point of difference.

### Farmstead cheese

**No independent-third-party verification, 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.

### Feedlot / Feed yard

**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 pathogens. 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 resource-intensive food system. Unless you see the No Confinement logo next to a claim in the chart, there is no legal claim that feedlots are prohibited. (See also CAFO)

### Feed yard

**No legal or regulated definition**

Feed yard is the term commonly used in the poultry industry referring to an area where birds are kept in large densities, often in manure laden pens. Before the birds are slaughtered, they are transported from the feed yard to the processing plant.

### Feedlot

**No legal or regulated definition**

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### Family farmed aka Family farm or Family farming

**No legal or regulated definition**

Generally refers to any farm where the majority of the business is owned by the operator and/or individuals related to the operator by blood or marriage, including relatives who do not reside in the operator’s household. As the vast majority of adults in the U.S. and Canada are family farms, this term is not a point of difference. There is also growing concern this label is being misused by major food corporations to present a disingenuous image of the independence or sustainability of their family farm suppliers. In such cases, the family farmed claim often refers to situations where a family might own the farm, but where all day-to-day livestock husbandry practices are dictated by contracts with a major meat processor, for example. In some cases, particularly intensive poultry and pig production, the animals are also owned by the corporation—not the farmer. The image of family farming is often assumed to suggest local, small scale and pasture-based production. However, this claim means nothing in terms of how animals are managed, that specific practices are employed to protect the environment, the size of the farm or socially responsible practices, for example.

### 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 criteria to ensure all possible areas of socially responsible practices from farm to retail, including labor and trade practices in North America.

### Food Justice Certified

**Definition by the Agricultural Justice Project**

The Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) works to transform the existing agricultural system. We seek empowerment, justice and fairness for all who labor from farm to retail. Central to our mission are the principles that all humans deserve respect, the freedom to live with dignity and nurture community, and share responsibility for preserving the earth’s resources for future generations. We provide farms and food businesses with technical tools to improve work and trade practices from farm to retail, including extensive toolkits and templates, one-on-one technical assistance, and a stakeholder-driven certification program for high bar social justice standards.

Food Justice Certification (FJC) the gold standard for labor and trade practices in North America. Farms of any size and type can become FJC as long as they are either certified organic or engaged in sustainable agriculture. Third-party certifiers and worker organizations carry out the certification and inspection process for the FJC program.

### Food Miles

**No independent-third-party verification, 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 modern food production is associated with processing, packaging, transporting, storing and preparing food, many people want to reduce their carbon footprint by buying food closer to the source—in other words, food that is locally grown and minimally processed. As there is no legal or regulated definition, each food miles claim must be evaluated individually.
Fresh poultry

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

“Fresh” means whole poultry and cuts have never been below 26°F (the temperature at which poultry freezes). This is consistent with consumer expectations of “fresh” poultry, i.e., not hard to the touch or frozen solid.

Frozen poultry

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

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

Fryer roaster turkey

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

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

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs)

Definition by USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) are voluntary audits that verify that fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled, and stored as safely as possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards. GAP & GHP audits verify adherence to the recommendations made in the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s Guide to Minimize Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and industry-recognized food safety practices.

The USDA Guide on which the audits are based only addresses microbial food safety hazards and good agricultural and management practices common to the growing, harvesting, washing, sorting, packing and transporting of most fruits and vegetables sold in an unprocessed or minimally processed (saw) form. It does not cover environmental impacts of fruit and vegetable growing—for example, the use of pesticides and issues of pesticide residue are not considered or addressed.

GAPs/GHPs

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Grasped

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

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Grass Fed program for small and very small producers

No independent third-party verification. No legal or regulated definition.

Green fed

No independent third-party verification. No legal or regulated definition.

Heriloom

No independent third-party verification. No legal or regulated definition.

Halal or Zabiah Halal

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

Heritage

No independent third-party verification. No legal or regulated definition.

Home grown

No independent third-party verification. No legal or regulated definition.

Humane

No independent third-party verification. No legal or regulated definition.

Humans handled

Definition by Meyer Natural Foods.

Inspected: USDA

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

Irradiation

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

Integrated pest management (IPM)

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

Grass finished

No independent third-party verification. No legal or regulated definition.

Hen or Tom turkey

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

Irradiation

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

Inspected: custom/exempt

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

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Irradiation

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Inspected: custom/exempt

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).
A GREENER WORLD

Food Labels Exposed

Locally grown

For meat to bear the Kosher label, animals "Kosher" may be used only on the labels Inspection Service (FSIS): sausages. FDA, USDA requires the listing on the foods are similar to the FDA’s regulations, with irradiated ingredients or on spices. Irradiation’ or ‘treated with radiation,’ and the amount of radiation used can vary raising the temperature of the food, killing microorganisms without 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 include 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. Although FDA requires labeling on whole irradiated fruits and vegetables, there is no requirement to use the treated with irradiation statement on processed foods made with irradiated ingredients or on spices. USDA rules regarding labeling of irradiated foods are similar to the FDA’s regulations, but only apply to meat and poultry. Unlike FDA, USDA requires the listing on the package of any irradiated meat ingredients in multi-ingredient products, such as sausages.

Kosher

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS): “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 and according to Kosher principles.

Locally grown

No independent third-party verification, No legal or regulated definition

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS): 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).

No additives

No independent third-party verification, No legal or regulated verification

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS): No additives is a general claim that a product has not been enhanced with the addition of natural or artificial additives. USDA and FDA define and regulate additives; however, as there is no USDA definition of the specific term—or how it is used—anyone using the term may or may not be referring to this legal regulation.

Natural or All natural

No independent third-party verification, No legal or regulated definition

No antibiotics added/ No fed animal by-products
definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS): The term "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.

No antibiotics added

No independent third-party verification, No legal or regulated definition

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS): 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. Antibiotics are routinely given to intensively farmed cattle, hogs, sheep and chickens to prevent or manage diseases, and to promote growth. Although USDA is accountable for proper use of no antibiotics’ label 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 Organic, American Grassfed Association and Global Animal Partnership. Under such programs, animals that become sick and are treated with antibiotics cannot be sold using the certification label. A ban on antibiotics might seem like a good thing. Overuse of antibiotics in farming can lead to antibiotic 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 has been treated with antibiotics under a particular label, and are forced to sell into a lower value market, they may choose to withhold treatment instead, leading to suffering or the further spread of disease. It is worth noting that farmers cannot legally slaughter an animal treated with antibiotics for a specified period, so there could be no antibiotic residue in any meat.

No hormones added

No independent third-party verification, No legal or regulated definition

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS): The term “no hormones 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 hormones. Farmers cannot legally sell milk or eggs from dairy animals and laying birds treated with antibiotics for human consumption for a specified period, so this label claim is misleading.

No hormones added/ administered for beef and dairy cattle

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS): The term “no hormones administered” may be approved for use on the label of beef products if sufficient documentation is provided by the Agency to the producer showing no hormones have been used in raising the animals.

No hormones added/ administered for pork or poultry

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS): 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. It is likely not that the company is making a special concession to animal welfare or human health. 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.

Non-GMO Project Verified

Definition by Non-GMO Project: The Non-GMO Project is a mission-driven non-profit organization offering a third...
party non-GMO verification program to the standard consumers expect. We are the pioneer and established market leader for GMO avoidance. We have set the industry standard for non-GMO verification since the Butterfield first appeared on store shelves in 2010.

Concerns about genetically engineered crops (or genetically modified organisms, GMOs) have led to the emergence of GMO-free or non-GMO/GE label claims, such as the Non-GMO Project Verified Product program. Given the negative environmental impacts associated with GM crops, such as the significant increase in herbicide use, the objective of the program (to help consumers avoid products containing GMOs) is laudable. However, the Non-GMO Project’s standards do not address any wider environmental or welfare issues associated with intensive livestock farming for example. Without additional third-party assurance, such as Animal Welfare Approved, meat or livestock products displaying the Non-GMO Project logo would only mean any livestock feed was free from GMOs, and could therefore come from animals raised intensively outdoors or finished on feedlots, with all the associated environmental and welfare issues. In addition, the Non-GMO Project’s standards only apply to meat animals themselves and ignore the feed given to breeding stock that are nursing animals that will later be sold as non-GMO meat.

Certified Non-GMO by AGW is the only food label to guarantee food products are not only produced without GMO feed, supplements or ingredients, but also come from animals raised according to the highest animal welfare standards in the industry. (See Certified Non-GMO by AGW)

Non-GMO/GE

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)
The terms “genetically modified,” “genetically engineered GE” or “bio-engineered” are generally synonymous. Labels or labeling may claim that a food or feed ingredients used in the raising of livestock or poultry is not bioengineered when the food or feed ingredients have not been genetically modified through the use of modern biotechnology.

Because FSIS does not have the ability to independently verify claims for ingredients or feed, FSIS has required establishments that make these [non-GMO] claims to comply with standards established by a third-party certifying organization. FSIS currently requires that the third-party certifying organization’s standards be publicly available on a web site and the label or labeling disclose the web site address of the third-party certifying organization. FSIS currently requires that the establishment demonstrate that its claims of third-party certification are truthful and not misleading.

This recent ruling by USDA/FSIS means that non-GMO claims can only be made if the product has been audited by a third-party certification body with clear and transparent non-GMO standards. This is a good thing for consumers who want to be sure the food they are buying really is non-GMO. However, the same concerns noted for the Non-GMO Project apply here. Simply certifying Non-GMO does not address any wider environmental or welfare issues associated with intensive farming. The only third-party label that currently offers a Non-GMO assurance and addresses these wider animal welfare and environmental concerns is Certified Non-GMO by AGW. (See also Certified Non-GMO by AGW and Non-GMO Project Verified)

No nitrates/nitrates

No legal or regulated definition

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

No spray/pesticide free

No independent third-party verification. No legal or regulated definition

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

No till aka minimum till or conservation tillage

No independent third-party verification. 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, with the associated potential environmental impacts.

Omega 3 enriched

No independent third-party verification. No legal or regulated definition

Eggs sold as omega 3 enriched 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. Meat and dairy products from true grassfed animals and eggs from pasture-hens will naturally have higher levels of omega 3 without dietary additions. However, without additional third-party assurance to verify pasture-raised production, eggs sold as omega 3 enriched are highly likely to come from industrially raised hens fed a special diet containing flaxseed.

Organic aka Certified organic

Definition by USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)
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 that can have significant welfare implications for animals—for example, confinement feedlot areas are permitted to fasting organic beef cattle. And while slaughter plants taking organic livestock are audited for certain aspects, such as the type of cleaning products used, they are not audited for welfare practices. For information about the National Organic Program, and use of the term organic on labels, refer to the factsheets ‘Organic Food Standards and Labels: The Facts’ and ‘Labeling and Marketing Information’ from USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

PCO 100% Grassfed *Pennsylvania Certified Organic

Definition by PCO
The PCO 100% Grassfed certification program establishes an optional additional certification scope for operations that are certified organic under the USDA National Organic Program regulations. The program standards apply to producers of ruminant livestock and to handlers of meat and dairy products derived from ruminant livestock.

PCO 100% Grassfed certification is an optional module available to farms that are also certified organic. The standards cover both meat and dairy animals. (See also Grassfed)

Pesticide free

No independent third-party verification. 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.

P quality grade

No legal or regulated definition

For information about the National Organic Program and use of the term organic on labels, refer to the factsheets ‘Organic Food Standards and Labels: The Facts’ and ‘Labeling and Marketing Information’ from USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

Quality grade aka Yield grade

Definition by USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)
The USDA primarily grades meat by the amount of marbling—or intramuscular fat—that’s 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 12th ribs. The top three grades for beef are prime, choice and select. For veal and lamb the top three grades are prime, choice and good. These terms are only valid when 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, lamb, veal and mutton. Pork is not graded with USDA quality grades and although pork may be graded A, B or C, only Grade A products is likely to be seen at retail level.

The grade of the meat does not provide any information on how the animal that produced it was managed. Feedlot beef is more likely to grade prime than grassfed beef because the high corn diet of feedlot finished beef leads to more fat in the meat.

Raw milk cheese

No independent third-party verification. No legal or regulated definition

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 U.S. FDA regulations.

This claim does not give any information about how dairy animals were managed
A GREENER WORLD 

FOOD LABELS EXPOSED

and whether this was an intensive or pasture-based system.

rBST/rBGH free

No independent third-party verification, 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. To avoid consuming these speak third-party certifications that prohibit their use, such as Animal Welfare Approved, Certified Humane or Organic.

Salmon Safe

Definition by Salmon Safe

Founded by Pacific Rivers Council, Salmon Safe is now an independent nonprofit based in Portland, Oregon. Our mission is to transform land management practices so Pacific salmon can thrive in West Coast watersheds.

Salmon-Safe works with farmers to encourage the adoption of ecologically sustainable agricultural practices that protect water quality and wildlife habitat in West Coast salmon watersheds. Operations endorsed by our independent professional certifiers are promoted with the Salmon-Safe label.

The Salmon-Safe farm certification program is focused on management practices in six primary areas: riparian area management, water use management, erosion and sediment control, integrated pest management and water quality protection, animal management, and biodiversity conservation. Our standards were developed over a two-year period with biologists, agronomists, and farmers, and have been tested in the field since the late 1990s at more than 700 farms in Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, and British Columbia across a variety of crops.

Salmon Safe works with regional partners — including the organic certifier Oregon Tilth — to audit and certify farms, parks, golf courses and other businesses that are following their standards to protect land, water, fish and wildlife resources.

Soy free

No independent third-party verification, 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.

Special fed veal

No independent third-party verification; No legal or regulated definition

The majority of veal produced in North America is special fed veal. This term applies to young beef/dairy animals 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 grass/forage as this can affect the color of the meat. Calories 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.

Sulfite free

No added sulfites/contains sulfites for 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.

Sulfured/Unsulfured

No independent third-party verification, 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 independent third-party verification, No legal or regulated definition

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.
• Enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.

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.”

USDA Process Verified Program

Definition by USDA

The Process Verified Program (PVP) involves a comprehensive quality management system review, which allow companies to market their products using the USDA PVP shield. The PVP allows companies to develop their own marketing claims, such as a feeding claim. PVP companies are required to develop a quality manual and AMS verifies the company’s

United Egg Producers certified

Definition by United Egg Producers (UEP)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is committed to working with partners and stakeholders toward sustainability of diverse agricultural, forest and range systems. USDA seeks to balance the goals of:

• Satisfying human needs.
• Enhancing environmental quality, the resource base, and ecosystem services.
• Sustaining the economic viability of agriculture.
• Enhancing the quality of life for farmers, ranchers, forest managers, workers and society as a whole.

Sustaining the economic viability of agriculture involves a comprehensive quality management system review, which allows companies to market their products using the USDA PVP shield. The PVP allows companies to develop their own marketing claims, such as a feeding claim. PVP companies are required to develop a quality manual and AMS verifies the company’s

Transitional

No independent third-party verification, No legal or regulated definition

While some certifiers are beginning to offer transitional certification, transitional is typically an unoffical 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.)

Ensuring the health and well-being of hens is a top priority for U.S. egg farmers, while providing safe, high-quality eggs to you and your family. To ensure egg safety and the highest quality care to hens, the United Egg Producers developed UEP Certified, a voluntary animal well-being program. When you purchase eggs with the UEP Certified seal, rest assured eggs are produced under these guidelines:

• Strict biosecurity measures protect food safety and hen health.
• All employees are trained to treat birds with care at all times, and all sign a code of conduct for proper animal handling.
• An annual compliance audit is conducted by independent third-party inspectors.
• Nutritious feed [with no added hormones], clean water and fresh air are available at all times.
• Programs to induce molt through feed withdrawal are prohibited.
• Hens are provided adequate space based on scientific recommendations.
• Cage free houses include space for nests and perches.

As 87.5% of all hens in the U.S. are kept in cages, the UEP Certified logo is widely found on egg cartons from caged systems. While USDA states their program provides hens with “adequate space,” the actual amount required per bird is between 67 and 96 square inches—or less than a sheet of letter paper per bird. The UEP program also permits beak trimming by infrared methods of conduct for proper animal handling. While providing safe, high-quality eggs to you and your family. To ensure egg safety and the highest quality care to hens, the United Egg Producers developed UEP Certified, a voluntary animal well-being program. When you purchase eggs with the UEP Certified seal, rest assured eggs are produced under these guidelines:

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adherence to those processes through routine audits. Labels require the approval of USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). For example, companies must have a quality policy, conduct internal audits, and continue to strengthen and improve their program. Because of this comprehensive quality management system, companies generally undergo fewer audits each year as compared to other AMS programs. Specific examples of programs verified by USDA PVP are:

- Source verification of animals; genetic traceability, never fed or given hormones, antibiotics, or animal protein in feeds;
- Animal raising claims; feeding claims;
- The USDA PVP is a review and audit service carried out by USDA officials, designed to verify whether a company is meeting their own stated production protocols, rather than an independent definition of a particular food label claim. The USDA PVP logo offers no guarantee of high-welfare or sustainable production practices, for example; it simply verifies a food product is being produced according to the standards a company has committed themselves to meet. Although site audits form part of the USDA PVP accreditation process, in most cases a sample of sites involved in production are reviewed—not all the sites that might supply product.

Vegan aka Certified vegan

No independent third-party verification

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 claim or logo, and even if the logo is used, the program is based on written submissions from the company wanting to display it—not audits.

Vegetarian-fed aka Fed a vegetarian diet

No independent third-party verification

No legal or regulated definition

This claim suggests animals are fed a diet free of animal products. It does not mean animals were raised outdoors on pasture or were fed a 100% grassfed diet, for example.

Vine-ripened aka Tree-ripened

No independent third-party verification

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.
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 growing family of trusted certifications includes Animal Welfare Approved, Certified Grassfed by AGW and Certified Non-GMO by AGW. Each program is designed to have positive and measurable impacts on the environment, society and animals, and to encourage truly sustainable farming practices. AGW’s standards and procedures are robust, transparent and achievable.

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