

CHAPTER 6



MARKETING LABELS & VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATIONS



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MARKETING LABELS & VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATIONS CERTIFIED ORGANIC



Perhaps one of the most well recognized and highly sought after eco-labels of today is “Organic.” This is a labeling term indicating the growth conditions of agricultural products. Certified Organic products must be grown or raised with biological, mechanical, and cultural practices that “cycle resources, promote soil health and ecological balance, and conserve and enhance biodiversity” and without certain prohibited substances and processes, including synthetic fertilizers or pesticides and genetic engineering. The use of this term and label is protected by federal regulation and overseen by the National Organic Program (NOP).



regulations and are subject to verification. Products produced by non-certified operations cannot be used as organic ingredients in processed products manufactured by another operation, cannot be used as feed for certified organic animals, and may not display the USDA organic seal.

Transitioning to Organic Crop Production

When transitioning to organic production, you must keep records documenting land use and material applications during the 3-year transition period. You must adhere to organic standards during the transition, including not using prohibited inputs such as certain fertilizers and pesticides. For example, if a field was sprayed with synthetic pesticides on August 1st, 2020, then a crop harvested from that field may not be certified as organic until September 1st, 2023.

CERTIFICATION BASICS

Becoming certified organic can help you receive premium prices, access new markets, protect natural resources, and stand out in the marketplace. Farms, ranches, or other agricultural operations wishing to be certified must develop an Organic System Plan (OSP), document their processes to prove they are in accordance with the USDA’s National Organic Program (NOP)’s Organic Regulations, permit annual inspection by a USDA-accredited certifying agency, and pay dues. Applicable records must be kept for at least 5 years. To be eligible for certification, your operation must have been free of prohibited materials for at least 36 months.

Exemptions

Crop and livestock producers who sell less than \$5,000 of organic products annually are not required to apply for organic certification and can promote their products as being produced organically. Producers utilizing this exemption must comply with the organic production and handling and recordkeeping requirements of the USDA organic

CERTIFICATION AGENCIES

Once you’ve met all of the National Organic Program’s Organic Regulations, you can seek certification by an accredited certifying agent. You can choose to work with any of the agents listed on the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service’s website, including the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA). Certified organic producers may use the USDA organic seal and the seal of their registered certifying agent to identify their products as organic. The ISDA seal is shown here. These logos can help you stand out in the marketplace on websites, promotional materials, product packaging, social media, and communications. The ISDA website also includes many helpful resources for crop, livestock, and handlers/processors.



SPECIFIC PRODUCT REGULATIONS

Organic certification regulations vary depending on the products. All specifics, and the mentioned publications, can be found on USDA's website.

Crops

Crop producers must provide plans for soil fertility management, pest prevention, weed management, seed sourcing, sale, and more. USDA's publication, "Guide for Organic Crop Producers" provides additional details.

Livestock

Livestock must be under continuous organic management practices from the last third of the animal's gestation or from hatching to be labeled, sold, or represented as organic. There are some exceptions for poultry and dairy animals—visit the USDA's website, or their "Guide for Organic Livestock Production" for more information.

Handlers & Processors

Handlers and processors can also be certified organic if they use certified organic ingredients and adhere to regulations on processing. These regulations include limitations on commingling organic and non-organic products and cleaning or sanitization products used. There are four distinct labeling categories for certified organic food products: 100% Organic, Organic, Made with Organic [ingredient name], or denoting specific organic ingredients. For more details, visit USDA's website.

COST & FUNDING ASSISTANCE

Cost of certification varies widely depending on the size, type, and complexity of your operation but may vary from a few hundred to several thousand dollars. However, there are several grant programs available to organic producers. The USDA Farm Service Agency administers an Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) to reimburse farmers and handlers for a percentage of their certification fees. Additionally, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides

technical and financial assistance to organic farmers and ranchers to implement conservation practices through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Organic Initiative.

MARKETING LABELS & VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATIONS

ECO-LABELS



Eco-labels are voluntary certifications you can use to communicate your production practices or certain specific product criteria. There are two general types of eco-labels: production-based (which indicates certain production requirements were met) and place-based (which indicates the product was grown within a specific geographic region). Eco-labeling as a practice began in the 1970's and today there are more than 460 types of eco-labels globally. Requirements of the label certification vary greatly and depend on the organization overseeing the eco-label. The use of accurate eco-labels can help you attract more customers and communicate clearly with them about your farm or ranch. Below is an overview of some of the most common eco-labels on the market today. Visit the host site for more details about each certification.

AMERICAN GRASSFED

This label is managed by the American Grassfed Association (AGA), and requires the food products using this label have eaten nothing but their mother's milk and grass or hay for the duration of their lives. Additionally, the label requires the animals were raised on pasture free of confinement and were not treated with hormones or antibiotics. This label can apply to meat products (including those from beef, bison, pigs, lambs, and chicken), dairy products, and eggs.



AMERICAN HUMANE CERTIFIED

This certification, from American Humane, focuses on the treatment of animals. Their standards are based on the five freedoms of animal welfare, which include freedom from hunger and thirst, freedom from discomfort, freedom from pain, injury, and disease,



freedom to express normal and natural behavior, and freedom from fear and distress. The program is open to any producer who meets the standards for raising and handling their animals.

CERTIFIED ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED BY AGW

Operated by independent nonprofit, A Greener World, this label also focuses on animal welfare. This certification is only available to independent farmers, requires that animals are raised on pasture or range, and has specific standards based on animal type. Animals covered include any meat, dairy, and egg producers, as well as working dogs.



BIODYNAMIC DEMETER CERTIFICATION

This certification is managed by worldwide organization, Demeter International, and focuses on farm-production. An addition to Certified Organic, this label has additional requirements around water conservation and farm biodiversity, as well as farm fertility, weed, and pest management. (See *Fact Sheet 6.1 Certified Organic for more information*).



FAIR TRADE CERTIFIED

Fair Trade Certified is managed by Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International (FLO), and in the United States by Fair Trade USA. This label is designed to increase transparency in supply chains, and focuses mainly on imported products or products made from imported ingredients. The certification ensures the sellers or growers of the products, and the envi-



ronment the products are grown or raised in, are treated fairly. Standards include: fair wages paid to workers, safe working conditions, and the banning of child and/or forced labor. In addition, the product or ingredients must be grown or raised in a way that promotes sustainable social, economic, and environmental development.

FOOD ALLIANCE CERTIFIED

This certification, managed by Food Alliance, is designed to be a whole system certification that addresses working conditions, humane animal treatment, and environmental stewardship. The certification is available to crop, livestock, hemp, beverage, and processed food producers, as well as nurseries and packing, processing, and distribution operations. Criteria for certification varies depending on product type, but includes supply chain traceability, the omission of genetically modified crops, and the conservation of resources.



NON-GMO PROJECT VERIFIED

Managed by the non-profit, Non-GMO Project, this label ensures products are completely free of genetically modified ingredients and grown without genetic engineering. The organization has rigorous best practices for GMO avoidance and can be applied to a wide range of final products.



CERTIFIED GLUTEN-FREE

There are a several “certified gluten free” labels on the market, all working to communicate that a product is safe for people with gluten intolerances or celiac disease to ingest. The Food and Drug Administration rule, Gluten and Food Labeling, requires that any food labeled “gluten free” or any variation thereof must have less than 20 parts per million (ppm) of gluten. Some common certifiers include: the Glu-



ten-Free Certification Organization (GFCO), BRCGS Gluten-Free Certification, the Gluten-Free Food Program, and the NSF Certified Gluten-Free.

CERTIFIED HALAL

Halal Certifications indicate that a food is permissible under Islamic law, and therefore consumable by Muslims. Islamic law forbids consumption of products containing pork or alcohol, blood products, certain additives, and meat that has been improperly slaughtered. There are several Halal Certifiers, including American Halal Foundation, Halal Food Standards Alliance of America (HFSAA), and others.



CERTIFIED HUMANE

Run by non-profit Humane Farm Animal Care (HFAC), this certification is concerned with human animal treatment from birth to slaughter. The program requires that animals have sufficient space, resting areas, the ability to engage in natural behaviors, and a nutritious diet. It also prohibits the use of antibiotics, and requires annual inspections of all facilities certified in the program.



KOSHER

Kosher certifications indicate a food does not violate any Jewish dietary laws, and therefore is consumable by any person whose religion is Judaism. Jewish dietary rules prohibit shellfish, certain meats, and the mixing of dairy and meat products, and has requirements on the slaughter and processing of meat products. There are many Kosher certifiers, including Orthodox Union Kosher and OK Kosher Certification.



CERTIFIED NATURALLY GROWN

Similar to the standards of Organic Certification, this certification focuses on human and environmental health. (See *Fact Sheet 6.1 Certified Organic for more information*). Certified Naturally Grown is a non-profit that facilitates peer to peer farm inspections rather than USDA-approved certifying agencies. This certification prohibits or restricts the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs).



SALMON SAFE

This independent certification program focuses on the management of riparian areas and water use, erosion and sediment control, water quality preservation and biodiversity conservation. The certification can apply to farms, ranches, dairies, vineyards, or orchards that border riparian areas as well as those located upland with the potential of downstream impacts. Assessors are able to certify for both this label, and Trout Safe (see below) in a single visit.



TROUT SAFE

An extension of the Salmon Safe certification, Trout Safe is based in the Inland Northwest and focuses on the protection of water quality, overall watershed health, and habitat restoration. The label can be used on many operations that border rivers or have upstream impacts, including farms, dairies, ranches, and vineyards. The organization focuses on six key areas: riparian area management, water use management, erosion and sediment control, integrated pest management and water quality protection, animal management, and biodiversity conservation.





MARKETING LABELS & VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATIONS **IDAHO PREFERRED**

IDAHO PREFERRED® PROGRAM

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture's Idaho Preferred® program was established in 2003 to identify and promote agricultural products grown, raised, or crafted throughout the Gem State. The program focuses both on consumer awareness in identifying and sourcing local agriculturally derived products, as well as business to business connections and sourcing opportunities for producers through Idaho's markets: direct selling, retailers, distributors, foodservice/restaurants, farmers markets, farm to school, and other supporting organizations. Further, the program fosters connections, cultivates opportunities, and provides educational resources to Idaho producers to help them grow their marketplace.



THE IDAHO PREFERRED LOGO/LABEL

The Idaho Preferred logo serves as a valuable tool for both consumers and business owners, offering verification that a product is local with a direct connection to Idaho's agricultural industry. Only products grown, raised, or processed in Idaho qualify to use the mark. Idaho crafted foods must also contain a specified amount of locally grown or raised ingredients to qualify.

This label directly contributes to the support and growth of Idaho's local economy. By choosing products bearing the Idaho Preferred logo, consumers actively participate in strengthening the economy and supporting local farmers and ranchers. Every purchase of an agriculturally connected item showcases a commitment to sustaining and promoting the agri-

cultural sector from the ground up.

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Producers may participate in the many promotional campaigns offered through the Idaho Preferred® program if the products meet the qualifications below. Idaho Preferred® members can use the Idaho Preferred® logo on their packaging, signs, website, and other promotional materials. The Idaho Preferred® logo lets your current and potential customers know that your products are verified Idaho-sourced, grown, or crafted.

Please review the Rules Governing the Voluntary Idaho Preferred® Promotion Program to determine product eligibility for your specific product. A summary of primary product categories has been copied from the Rules and included below for your reference. Refer to the Idaho Preferred website for current regulations.

Fresh Produce

Fresh produce must be one hundred percent (100%) Idaho grown or raised.

Processed Foods and Beverages

Processed foods and beverages must contain a minimum of twenty percent (20%) agricultural content by weight that has been grown or raised in Idaho; and be processed in the state of Idaho. If a company registered in Idaho uses a co-packing facility and an acceptable co-packing facility is not available in Idaho, the company may request an exception from the Director.

Livestock Products

Livestock products must come from livestock that were born, raised, and harvested in the United States and raised, grazed, fed, or pro-

cessed in Idaho. No livestock that originate from outside the United States may qualify. A producer or processor may have some products that are eligible and some that are not based on the product eligibility determination. Products that are eligible may bear the logo.

APPLICATION AND FEES:

Producer participation is on an annual basis, coinciding with the calendar year. Annual fees are specified in the participation application. For more information and current fees, visit <https://idahopreferred.com/membership/>.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCER IDAHO PREFERRED PROGRAM SUPPORT

- ✓ *Verified Idaho Preferred Logo Use*
- ✓ *Business Development Consulting*
- ✓ *Retail Connections and Promotions*
- ✓ *Food and Trade Show Exhibits*
- ✓ *Exclusive Business/Producer Detail Directory Page*
- ✓ *Educational Programs, Roundtables, and E-courses*
- ✓ *Food Service and Restaurant Connections*
- ✓ *Consumer Events and Sampling Opportunities*
- ✓ *Radio, Print, and Digital Advertising*
- ✓ *Social Media Marketing Collaborations and Connections*
- ✓ *Find Local Digital Directory - Statewide Consumer Product Search Engine*
- ✓ *Farm and Food Finder Digital Directory*
- ✓ *Statewide Wholesale Search Engine*
- ✓ *Digital Communication: Website, State-Wide Guides, Articles, Recipes, Newsletters, and Social Media*
- ✓ *Photography and Videography Opportunities*
- ✓ *Promotional Signage and Materials*
- ✓ *Farm to School*
- ✓ *Holiday Gift Box Campaign*



MARKETING LABELS & VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATIONS

OTHER COMMON LABELS

ANTIBIOTIC FREE

"Raised without antibiotics," "no antibiotics administered," or similar terms means the animal has not received any antibiotics over its lifetime. The USDA only approves the use of the term "no antibiotics added," though sufficient documentation must be provided to demonstrate this. This label can apply to all animal products including meat, milk, and eggs, though all eggs are generally antibiotic free since antibiotics decrease egg production.

CAGE FREE

This term can be applied to eggs and poultry and indicates that the hens or meat birds were not confined to cages during their lifetime. This can mean the birds were allowed to roam a barn, poultry house, or otherwise, and had unlimited access to food and fresh water. This term does not mean the animals had access to the outdoors. The use of this term is not verified except in the case of eggs that are also USDA Grade Shield marked.

FREE RANGE

This term refers to eggs and poultry that were allowed to roam freely in their lifetime, had unlimited access to food and freshwater, and continuous access to the outdoors. USDA Grade Shield marked eggs with this claim will be verified, otherwise there is not regulatory oversight for this term use on eggs. For poultry products, the USDA only requires that outdoor access be made available for an "undetermined period each day."

FRESH

This term is used on poultry products to indicate that the meat was never cooled below 26° F. Labeling of this term on poultry products is regulated by the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

The USDA does not define or regulate the use of the term "fresh" on any other product types.

GRASS-FED

"Grass-fed" means that an animal was fed solely grass or forage for the duration of its life after weaning. This label also requires that the animals have continuous access to pasture during the growing season. Small and very small cattle operations can be certified as grass-fed through the USDA Grass-fed Program.

HORMONE FREE

Hormones are not allowed to be used in the raising of pork, poultry, veal, or exotic meats, so "hormone free" is not permitted for use in these products. "Federal regulations prohibit the use of hormones" is allowed. There is not restriction on hormone use for beef and dairy cattle, so a "hormone free" label on these products indicates the animal was raised without the use of synthetic hormones. See "rBGH and rBST" below. The USDA regulates use of this term.

NATURAL

When used on meat and poultry products, this term is regulated by the USDA and requires that the product does not contain artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives and is minimally processed. There is no regulatory force for the use on this term for dairy products, eggs, or non-animal food products.

PASTURE RAISED

"Pasture-raised," "pastured," or "pasture fed" all mean that animals spent at least some time outdoors on pasture, feeding on grass or forage. However, there are no government standards for this la-

bel, including how much of its life the animal spent on pasture.

PESTICIDE FREE

This term implies that the food was raised without the use of pesticides. However, there is no regulatory force for use on this term. There are certifications, including Certified Organic, that prohibit the use of pesticides and regulate use on the terms.

RGBH-FREE/RBST-FREE

These labels, used on dairy products, are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The label ensures that the dairy cows were raised without the use of the hormone recombinant bovine somatotropin (rBST), also known as recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH). All products with this claim must also include the statement “No significant difference has been shown between milk derived from rbST treated and non-rbST treated cows” as required by the FDA.

UNSPRAYED

This term, along with “no spray,” is used on non-animal products to imply they were grown free of pesticide or herbicide use. This term is not regulated by any agency and does not have any implications on the use of soil applications, seed treatments, or otherwise.



CHAPTER 6: MARKETING LABELS & VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATIONS

WHO CAN HELP

IDAHO SPECIFIC RESOURCES

University of Idaho Extension <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension>

Idaho Cultivating Success

<https://www.cultivatingsuccess.org/idaho>

Idaho Ag Biz

<https://www.uidaho.edu/cals/idaho-agbiz>

Small Acreages & Local Food

<https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/small-farms>

Digital Economy Program

<https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/digital-economy>

Idaho's Rural Business Center

<https://www.idahobiz.org>

Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) <https://agri.idaho.gov/main/>

Agricultural Marketing Service

<https://agri.idaho.gov/main/marketing/>

Idaho Preferred

<https://idahopREFERRED.com/>

ISDA Organic Program

<https://agri.idaho.gov/main/about/about-isda/ag-inspections/organic-certification-program/>

HELPFUL ORGANIZATIONS

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Agricultural Marketing Service

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/>

Food Safety Inspection Service

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/>

USDA Organic

<https://www.usda.gov/topics/organic>

National Organic Program

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/programs-offices/national-organic-program>

Consumers Union Guide to Eco-Labels

www.eco-labels.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Rules Governing the Voluntary Idaho Preferred® Promotion Program

<https://adminrules.idaho.gov/rules/current/02/020104.pdf>

Idaho Preferred Member Application

<https://idahopREFERRED.com/membership/>