

Healthier food purchasing standards



HEALTHIER FOOD » PURCHASING GUIDANCE

Products that carry at least one of the following certifications or label claims are reported as “sustainable.” Local products should be reported solely as “local” unless they carry one of the certifications or label claims. Count the product in each category if it is both local and sustainable.

Allowed label claims

The Department of Agriculture allows the following label claims.¹ Note that no third-party audit is required to use these claims without the Process Verified seal. For this reason we strongly encourage purchasers to review the [Official Listing of Approved USDA Process Verified Programs](#).

- Raised without antibiotics/No antibiotics administered/No antibiotics ever/No antibiotics added (meat and poultry products)
- rBGH-free/rBST-free/Our farmers pledge not to use rBGH (dairy products)

Allowed third-party certifications

We have determined these third-party certifications and label claims to be highly meaningful.

General

- [Agriculture Justice Project](#) (meat, fruit, legumes, and grains)
- [Bird Friendly](#) (coffee)
- [Fair Trade Certified](#) (coffee/tea, cocoa/chocolate, sugar, grains/rice, nuts, fruit, juice, non-dairy milk)
- [Food Alliance Certified](#) (beef, lamb, pork, poultry, dairy, eggs, shellfish, grains, legumes, fruit/vegetables, nuts, oils)
- [NON-GMO Project Verified](#) (products containing corn, soy, canola; non-dairy milk)²
- [Protected Harvest](#) (fruits, vegetables)
- [Rainforest Alliance Certified](#) (coffee/tea, cocoa/chocolate, tropical fruit, nuts, juice)
- [Regenerative Organic Certified](#) (full spectrum of food and beverages)
- [Salmon Safe](#) (fruit, vegetables, wine)²
- [USDA Certified Organic](#) (full spectrum of food)

Meat, poultry, and dairy

- [American Grassfed Certified](#) (products from ruminants such as beef, dairy, lamb)

- [Animal Welfare Approved](#) by A Greener World (beef, lamb, broiler chicken, turkey, eggs, dairy)
- [Certified Grassfed by A Greener World](#) (beef, dairy, meat and dairy from sheep and goats and bison)
- [Certified Grassfed by Food Alliance](#) (beef, sheep and goats)
- [Certified Responsible Antibiotic Use](#) (broiler chicken, beef, pork)
- [Certified Humane Raised and Handled](#) (beef, lamb, pork, broiler chicken, turkey, dairy, eggs)
- [Ecological Outcome Verification](#) (beef, pork, bison, sheep, goat, dairy)
- [Global Animal Partnership](#) Steps 1-5+ (beef, broiler chicken, eggs, turkey, pork, bison, sheep, goat)
- [Soil Carbon Initiative](#) (beef, pork, bison, sheep, goat)

Seafood

- [Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested](#) (finfish, shellfish)
- [Marine Stewardship Council](#) (wild and domestic species only)
- [Monterey Bay Aquarium, Seafood Watch](#),³ Best Choice List (wild and domestic species only)

Notes

1. *American Humane Certified,* “*Natural,*” and “*Cage-Free*” are NOT allowed claims.
2. *This certification addresses important sustainability considerations but needs to be present in conjunction with another listed third-party certification to be accepted.*
3. *Seafood Watch isn’t a certification but criteria-based recommendations, updated quarterly. Refer to [our purchasing guide](#).*

Local

Grown/raised and processed within 250 miles of your facility. For processed foods with multiple ingredients, including breads and other bakery items, only products with the majority of ingredients (>50% by weight) grown/raised and processed within the 250-mile radius may be considered local.