



# Sustainability Certifications and Label Claims

*The Healthy Food in Health Care Program* is a national initiative of [Health Care Without Harm](#) that works with hospitals across the country to help improve the sustainability of their food services. One of hospital food services' greatest areas of innovation and advancement is the increased procurement of sustainably produced food. Hospitals as well as many other institutional purchasers are looking for products that have meaningful third-party certifications and label claims. As hospitals continue to increase procurement of these products they have indicated the need for better identification and ability to track their purchasing through their mainline distributors. Below you will find two tables containing third-party certifications and USDA/FDA label claims that are indicators of sustainability for which hospitals are looking. Additional guidance on using these certifications and labels in sustainable food purchasing initiatives can be found at the [Healthy Food in Health Care](#) website.

*A common definition of sustainable is* - products produced in a manner that limits the harm to the environment, public health and animal welfare and promotes societal and economic well-being. Third-party certification or the presence of USDA/FDA approved label claims are the best indicators of the sustainability of a product.

## Third-Party Certifications

**Third-party certifications** are rules and compliance methods and measurements that are developed by external, independent groups. Products holding a third-party certification are evaluated by an external organization to ensure that they are in compliance with the certification standards.

<u>Third-Party Certification &amp; Meaning</u>	<u>Product Categories with Certification</u>
<p><b>Certified Organic</b> - Products must meet the federal organic standards as determined by a USDA-approved certifying agency. Organic foods cannot be grown using synthetic fertilizers, chemicals, or sewage sludge; cannot be genetically modified; and cannot be irradiated. Organic meat and poultry must be fed only organically-grown feed (without any animal byproducts) and cannot be treated with hormones or antibiotics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meat</li> <li>• Poultry/Eggs</li> <li>• Dairy</li> <li>• Vegetables</li> <li>• Fruit</li> <li>• Grains/Legumes</li> <li>• Coffee/Tea</li> <li>• Fruit Juice</li> <li>• Sugar</li> <li>• Nuts</li> <li>• Oils</li> <li>• Wine</li> </ul>
<p><b>Food Alliance Certified</b> -Farmers/Producers must use safe and fair working conditions, humane livestock handling practices, cannot use hormones or non-therapeutic antibiotics, cannot use or produce GMOs, reduce pesticide use, implement water and soil conservation and habitat protection practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meat</li> <li>• Poultry/Eggs</li> <li>• Dairy</li> <li>• Vegetables</li> <li>• Fruit</li> <li>• Grains/Legumes</li> <li>• Nuts Oils</li> </ul>
<p><b>Animal Welfare Approved</b> – Animals must be able to behave naturally and be in a state of physical and psychological well-being. Requires animals to be raised on range or pasture, prohibits dual production (i.e., raising animals under both an industrialized, factory-farm system as well as an alternative, higher-welfare system), certifies only family farmers, high standards for animal welfare.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beef &amp; Dairy Cattle</li> <li>• Pork</li> <li>• Poultry – chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese</li> <li>• Bison</li> <li>• Sheep</li> <li>• Goats</li> </ul>
<p><b>Certified Humane Raised &amp; Handled</b> - Meat and dairy products are raised humanely. No growth hormones or non-therapeutic antibiotics used. Food, living, environmental, and slaughter standards in place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meat</li> <li>• Poultry/Eggs</li> <li>• Dairy</li> </ul>

<b>Marine Stewardship Council</b> – Certified products come from and can be traced back to sustainable fisheries. Sustainable fisheries are those that ensure that the catch of marine resources are at the level compatible with long-term sustainable yield, while maintaining the marine environment’s bio-diversity, productivity and ecological processes, and take into account relevant laws, responsible management, and social considerations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fish</li> </ul>
<b>Fair Trade Certified</b> – Mainly used for small farms or farm co-ops/unions made up of small farms that works to ensure that farmers and farm workers in developing nations receive a fair price for their product; have direct trade relations with buyers and access to credit; and encourage sustainable farming methods, without the use of a dozen of the most harmful pesticides, and forced child labor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grains</li> <li>• Fruit</li> <li>• Coffee/Tea</li> <li>• Sugar</li> <li>• Cocoa/Chocolate</li> <li>• Nuts</li> </ul>
<b>Rainforest Alliance Certified</b> –Products have been grown using environmentally responsible management practices including integrated pest and disease management practices, soil and water conservation, fair labor treatment practices and good community relations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit</li> <li>• Coffee/Tea</li> <li>• Cocoa/Chocolate</li> </ul>
<b>Protected Harvest</b> - Certifies that crops have been raised with integrated pest management (IPM). Certain pesticides are prohibited and GMOs are explicitly prohibited.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruits</li> <li>• Vegetables</li> </ul>
<b>Salmon Safe</b> – Aimed at protecting salmon streams from farm run-off through good soil, water, and vegetation management that reduces chemical use and sustains resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit</li> <li>• Vegetables</li> <li>• Beef</li> <li>• Lamb</li> <li>• Milk</li> <li>• Eggs</li> <li>• Wine</li> </ul>
<b>Bird Friendly</b> – Coffee is grown using shade management practices, ensuring the provision of habitats for birds. Available for organically produced coffee only.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffee</li> </ul>

### USDA & FDA Label Claims

**USDA/FDA approved label claims** hold a consistent definition as to the intended meaning of the label claim and have been approved by either the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) or Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Producers that have products carrying label claims are required to provide documentation that demonstrates claim compliance to the appropriate regulatory agency.

<u>USDA/FDA Label Claims &amp; Meaning</u>	<u>Product Categories with Label Claim</u>
<b>Raised without Antibiotics</b> - Animals must not have received any antibiotics at any point during their lifetime.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meat</li> <li>• Poultry/Eggs</li> <li>• Dairy</li> </ul>
<b>Raised without Hormones</b> - Animal did not receive added hormones at any point during its lifetime.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beef</li> <li>• Lamb</li> </ul>
<b>100% Grass-Fed</b> - Raised on a lifetime 100% grass-fed diet. Must have access to pasture most of the growing season and cannot be fed grain or grain crops.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beef</li> <li>• Lamb</li> </ul>
<b>rBGH/rBST–Free</b> or something to the effect of “our farmers pledge not to use rBGH or rBST”/“Our farmers pledge not to use artificial hormones” – Milk used in dairy products comes from cows not treated with rBGH/rBST.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dairy</li> </ul>
<b>No Genetically Engineered Ingredients</b> – The product was made with ingredients that were NOT derived from genetically engineered/modified (GE/GM) organisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processed foods that contain corn, soy, canola and their derivatives</li> </ul>