

Organic

Products must consist of at least 95 percent organically produced ingredients (excluding water and salt). Any remaining ingredients must consist of approved nonagricultural substances or inorganically produced agricultural products that are not commercially available in organic form. Organic meat and poultry products mean the animals were reared without regular use of antibiotics and without growth hormones (growth-promoting hormones are not allowed in raising hogs or poultry).

100 Percent Organic

Products must contain only organically produced ingredients (excluding water and salt). Organic meat and poultry products mean the animals were reared without regular use of antibiotics and without growth hormones (growth-promoting hormones are not allowed in raising hogs or poultry).

Made with Organic Ingredients

These processed products must contain at least 70 percent organic ingredients and may list up to three organic ingredients or food groups on the label.

All food must meet specific quality and safety regulations set in place by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), with meat and poultry products tested by the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). Labels do not reflect differences in quality or safety—they only describe the way in which a meat or poultry product was raised or processed.

Use this document to clarify the most common label terms as you select meat and poultry products for your family.

Certified

The term “certified” implies that FSIS and the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) have officially evaluated a meat product for class, grade or other quality characteristics. If used under other circumstances, the term must be closely associated with the name of the organization responsible for the “certification” process (for example, “XYZ Company’s Certified Beef”).

Labels made simple



Understanding meat and poultry labels

Chemical-Free

This term is not allowed to be used on labels.

Free-Range or Free-Roaming

Producers must demonstrate that the poultry has been allowed access to the outdoors. This does not mean that animals were raised outside.

Fresh Poultry

Raw poultry labeled “fresh” has never had an internal temperature below 26°F.

Meat Derived by Advanced Meat/Bone Separation and Meat Recovery Systems

Meat derived from advanced meat/bone separation machinery is comparable to trimmings and meat products derived by hand. Product produced by advanced meat recovery (AMR) machinery can be labeled using terms associated with hand-deboned product. Bones must emerge from AMR machinery essentially intact.

Mechanically Separated Poultry

Produced by separating bone from edible tissue through a sieve under high pressure, this batter-like product must be labeled as “mechanically separated chicken or turkey” in the ingredients statement.



Clearing up a common misconception

The labels you find on meat and poultry items do not reflect differences in food quality or safety. Labels only describe the way in which a meat or poultry product was raised or produced. Unfortunately, some labels can be misleading. Conventional practices—like raising animals with the use of antibiotics to keep them healthy—are considered safe.

Natural

A product may be labeled “natural” if it contains no artificial ingredient or added color and is only minimally processed (the raw product remains fundamentally unaltered). The label must explain the use of the term (such as no artificial ingredients or added colorings). This label designation does not indicate how an animal was raised.

No Antibiotics (red meat and poultry)

The term “no antibiotics added” may be used on labels if the producer sufficiently documents that the animals were raised without antibiotics. The use of antibiotics is a conventional production practice—animals raised without antibiotics do not produce a safer or higher-quality product than those raised in a conventional manner.

No Hormones (pork or poultry)

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

No Hormones (beef)

The term “no hormones administered” may be approved for use on the label of beef products if the producer sufficiently documents that no hormones have been used in raising the animals.