

Sample Food Labels



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Photo credit (other labels): CarrotNewYork.

Slides Teacher Guide

For each of the sample food labels, ask: *What do you think this label tells us? Do you look for this label (or specific information provided on the label) when you buy or eat food? How does this information affect your food choices?*

Nutrition Facts

- Federal law requires certain foods to bear this label. While it is up to the food companies to accurately list **nutrient** content and ingredients, the government performs random tests to verify that companies are following the rules and regulations.

Ingredients

- This list is always found near the nutrition label.
- Items in the ingredients list must be listed in descending order by weight. For example, the first ingredient listed on a box of corn flakes is milled corn.

USDA Organic

- This label means the food was mostly produced without **pesticides** or synthetic fertilizers.
- The **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)** sets rules for the methods and materials allowable under the label. For example, these rules generally prohibit the use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers on certified organic farmland. To use the organic label, food manufacturers must use a certain percentage of organic ingredients. USDA-accredited organizations verify whether farms and other businesses follow the rules.¹

Natural

- As of 2015, according to **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** standards, the term “natural” means that no artificial colors, flavors, or other synthetic ingredients have been added.² These FDA standards are not enforced. The USDA, however, does regulate the use of the natural label on meat and poultry products.³

Third-party labels

- Some food label claims may be misleading. Labels such as “free range,” for example, may imply that hens are raised outdoors, whereas the reality may be that they have only limited access to a small outdoor area.
- Looking for claims that have been certified by a third-party organization is a step in the right direction for consumers. Some of these certifiers have websites or contact information. The label pictured here shows the “Certified Humane” logo, as well as the certifiers website.

1. USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. *Organic Regulations*. Available at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic>

2. FDA. “Natural” on Food Labeling. 2016. Available at: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/ucm456090.htm>

3. USDA Food Safety Inspection Service. *Food Standards and Labeling Policy Book*. 2005. Available at: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/7c48be3e-e516-4ccf-a2d5-b95a128f04ae/Labeling-Policy-Book.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>