

No Antibiotics- In conventional operations, antibiotics are routinely fed to cows, hogs, and chickens to promote faster growth and prevent diseases that run rampant in the cramped conditions in which food animals are kept. “No antibiotics” claims are regulated by the USDA and require ranchers to show documentation. The “USDA Process Verified” shield means the company paid to have the agency verify the claim.

No Hormones- Hormones are used in industrial farming of cows and sheep to increase growth rate or milk production. Some hormones are natural, some are synthetic, and some (like rBGH) are genetically engineered. Like “no antibiotics,” the “no hormones” claim is regulated by the USDA. Documentation must be shown, but the USDA does not routinely test. Hormone use in pork or poultry production is prohibited by the USDA.

Organic- Produced without the use of (most) synthetic pesticides or fertilizers, sewage sludge, or genetically modified organisms. Organic meat, eggs, and dairy come from animals fed only organic feed and given no growth hormones or antibiotics. All products sold as organic must be certified by organizations accredited by the USDA. Certification includes extensive record keeping and annual inspection of fields and processing facilities. Organic products must be made with at least 95% organic ingredients.

Pasture Raised- Implies that meat or poultry comes from an animal that was raised outdoors on pasture. This term is sometimes used by ranchers to differentiate the product from “free-range” products coming from animals raised indoors. This term is unregulated and there is no standard definition.

Pesticide Free- Pesticide free or “No Spray” is an unregulated term that implies that there are no toxic sprays applied, at least not directly on the produce. Unlike the certified organic label, these claims are not verified by a third party. This label can be misleading.

Certified Naturally Grown- The CNG Standards and growing requirements are based on USDA National Organic Program rules. CNG farmers must commit to not using synthetic herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, antibiotics, hormones, or genetically modified organisms. The primary difference between CNG and the USDA Organic program is cost to farmers and paperwork requirements. To ensure that farmers are following their standards, CNG utilizes what is called a “participatory guarantee system” model in which inspections are typically carried out by other farmers, which promotes sharing and is more of a community approach.

Sustainable- This word means different things to different people and is sometimes used loosely. Generally, it means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future. To OTFAM, sustainable means socially just, humane, economically viable, and environmentally sound.

Transitional- Farmers need to practice organic methods for three years on a given piece of land before the products grown there can be certified organic. “Transitional” means that the farmland is in the midst of that transition period toward organic certification.

Vine Ripened/Tree Ripened- These terms are applied to fruit that has been allowed to ripen on the vine or tree. In our industrial food system, fruit is often picked unripe in order to withstand shipping, and then sometimes treated with ethylene gas to “ripen” and soften them. Tree ripening and vine ripening allows the sugars in the fruit to fully develop, yielding better flavor.

*Courtesy of Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA) www.cuesa.org

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A guide to typical terms related to farming practices, animal husbandry, and food processing



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— AND —
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