



NC GROWING TOGETHER

Connecting Local Foods
to Mainstream Markets



Retailer Talking Points:

How to Answer Consumer Questions on Local Meats

Common Approvable Claims:



Certified Organic by a USDA National Organic authorized third party certified entity, Grass Fed, Free Range, No Added Hormones, Raised Without Use of Antibiotics, Not fed Genetically Modified Organisms, Pasture Raised, No Animal By- Products...

Some claims are not legally permitted.

Common Un-Approvable Claims:



Certain claims are not allowed if they cannot be verified, they are incorrectly portrayed, and/or they are misleading to the consumer (For ex: all meats contain naturally occurring antibiotics and hormones).

The following are examples of un-approvable claims: Antibiotic Free, Hormone Free, Residue Free, Residue Tested, Naturally Raised, Naturally Grown, Drug Free, Chemical Free, Local, Organic or Organically Raised (if used alone and is not clearly stated by a USDA approved certifying entity)ⁱⁱ...

Claims Must be Accurate and Consistent When Applied to Any Marketing Materials:

All claims involved in marketing materials must match approved label claims. For information on this see the NC Choices Info Brief *Voluntary Labeling Claims Pre-Approval Process*.



Marketing materials include: Brochures, business cards, signs, label, package, website and social media.

Common Claim Questions:

What does "raised without routine use of antibiotics or "no added hormones" mean?



The no added hormone claim describes farms that do not use added hormones or growth promoting drugs to add weight to beef cattle (it is against federal law for pork or poultry to have added hormones, so hormone claims just refer to beef). The raised without routine use of antibiotics claim refers to pork and poultry that have



not been treated with a routine dose of antibiotics to proactively treat disease and promote growth.



What does “no animal by-products in feed” mean?”

This claim assures that the animal was not fed a diet that includes ingredients derived from parts of other animalsⁱⁱⁱ, such as bone meal, feather meal, or egg waste.



What does “raised without GMO feed” mean?

GMOs or “Genetically Modified Organisms” are plants and animals whose genetic make-up has been altered to exhibit traits that they would not normally have, like longer shelf-life, a different color, or resistance to certain chemicals or pests.^{iv} If a product is “raised without GMO feed,” it means that a system is in place that includes traceability, documentation, segregation, and purchasing to ensure a livestock feed free of GMO grains.



What does “Grass Fed” mean?

In order to label a meat product as “Grass Fed,” cattle (and other ruminant animals) shall be feed grass and forage throughout the animal’s lifetime, with the exception of milk consumed prior to weaning^v



Is this a local product? Where does it come from?

This answer will change depending on the retailer. Local refers to a specific geographic region where a product is produced, processed, and sold. The proximity of that geographic area is not regulated within the United States. Local can be defined within state lines, county lines, a national region, etc. Therefore the specifics on this answer will depend on the criteria determined by the retailer when purchasing local product.^{vi}



What does “natural” mean?

The “natural” label is used on meat and poultry that has no artificial ingredients, preservatives, or added color and is only minimally processed^{vii}.

What does “organic” mean?



Organic means the farm product is certified by a USDA approved agency to meet the detailed USDA Organic Standards. These standards include methods that integrate cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity. Synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, irradiation, and genetic engineering may not be used.^{viii}

What does “pasture-raised” mean?



For beef, pasture-raised typically refers to an animal that eats grasses and forage in open pasture and these grasses and forage comprise the majority of their diet. Pasture-raised is not the same as grass fed since approved low-starch supplements can be used in pasture raised management. Supplemental starch is usually fed in the case when forage may be constrained due to seasonal variation, climate, and drought. For pork, pasture-raised typically means the animals lived the majority of their lives on pasture. Pigs do eat grass, but require other feeds to thrive, so pasture-raised refers more to their living conditions rather than their diet.

Is it safe?



USDA and NCDA inspectors enforce laws designed to ensure the meat and poultry products sold to consumers are wholesome, unadulterated, and properly labeled. Inspectors stationed at USDA and NCDA processing facilities inspect animals for disease or abnormalities to include any conditions that would have a negative impact on human health. Any visible contamination is condemned and removed during slaughter.^{ix}

ⁱ Based off of “Labeling Organic Products”, [USDA Agricultural Marketing Service](http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3004446&acct=nopgeninfo), Oct., 2012 <<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3004446&acct=nopgeninfo>>.

ⁱⁱ Based off of “Labeling and Point of Purchase Claims”, [NCDA Meat and Poultry Inspection Division Notice 10-09](http://www.ncagr.gov/meatpoultry/notices/10-09%20Labeling%20and%20Point%20of%20Purchase%20Claims.pdf), 19 Aug. 2009, 1 Sept. 2013 <<http://www.ncagr.gov/meatpoultry/notices/10-09%20Labeling%20and%20Point%20of%20Purchase%20Claims.pdf>>

ⁱⁱⁱ “Animal By-Products Statement”, [Animal Welfare Approved](http://www.animalwelfareapproved.org/standards/animal-byproducts/), 25 Aug. 2013 <<http://www.animalwelfareapproved.org/standards/animal-byproducts/>>

^{iv} “Food Labeling for Dummies: A Definitive Guide to Common Food Label Terms and Claims,” [Animal Welfare Approved](http://www.animalwelfareapproved.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Food-Labeling-for-Dummies-screen-v8-10-26-12.pdf), 2011, 29 Aug. 2013 <<http://www.animalwelfareapproved.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Food-Labeling-for-Dummies-screen-v8-10-26-12.pdf>>.

^v “Grass Fed Marketing Standards” [USDA Agricultural Marketing Service](http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateN&rightNav1=GrassFedMarketingClaimStandards&opNav=&leftNav=GradingCertificationandVerification&page=GrassFedMarketingClaims&resultType=>), 16 Oct. 2007, 11 Sept. 2013 <<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateN&rightNav1=GrassFedMarketingClaimStandards&opNav=&leftNav=GradingCertificationandVerification&page=GrassFedMarketingClaims&resultType=>>>

^{vi} Based off of “Labeling and Point of Purchase Claims”, [NCDA Meat and Poultry Inspection Division Notice 10-09](http://www.ncagr.gov/meatpoultry/notices/10-09%20Labeling%20and%20Point%20of%20Purchase%20Claims.pdf), 19 Aug. 2009, 1 Sept. 2013 <<http://www.ncagr.gov/meatpoultry/notices/10-09%20Labeling%20and%20Point%20of%20Purchase%20Claims.pdf>>

^{vii} As defined in as defined in 21 CFR 101.22, [US Dept. of Health and Human Service Food and Drug Administration](http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/cfrsearch.cfm?fr=101.22), 1 Sept. 2013 <<http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/cfrsearch.cfm?fr=101.22>>

^{viii} “Organic Production and Handling Standards,” [US Department of Agriculture National Organic Program](http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3004445&acct=nopgeninfo), Oct. 2002, Updated 2011, 25 Aug. 2013 <<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3004445&acct=nopgeninfo>>

^{ix} “Inspection for Food Safety: The Basics: Release No. 0055.08,” [US Department of Agriculture Food Safety Inspection Service](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdamediafb?contentid=2008/02/0055.xml&printable=true&contentidonly=true), 29 Aug. 2013 <<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdamediafb?contentid=2008/02/0055.xml&printable=true&contentidonly=true>>