



EXPLAINED: Organic Label Requirements

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When applying a label to a product, it's easy to prioritize design, application, and product shape over content. However, organic product labels have regulations designed to ensure that products are produced and marketed in a way that meets specific standards for consumer understanding.

What Does "Organic" Mean?

Simply put, [foods can only be labeled organic](#) when they are certified as organic and no synthetic pesticides or fertilizers are used. Genetically altered or engineered methods aren't allowed. For makeup products, organic means that the ingredients are cultivated and processed without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers.

However, even when products are made with organic ingredients, it doesn't necessarily mean they promote biodiversity or improve soil or water quality. It's important to read labels and understand what each part means. According to the USDS, [organic products must be overseen by a USDA NOP-authorized certifying agent, produced without prohibited methods \(e.g. genetic engineering\), and produced using allowed substances.](#)



EXPLAINING ORGANIC LABELING

The Food and Drug Administration regulates all foods and food ingredients offered for sale in interstate commerce (with the exception of meat, poultry, certain processed egg products and catfish), overseeing label requirements for the Nutrition Facts label. [The National Organic Program](#) (NOP) oversees organic crops and livestock, while the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) oversees the NOP, enforcing their regulations and standards.

In early 2023, the USDA updated organic labeling regulations – the most significant movement in organic labeling since 1990. It now mandates that more businesses in the supply chain have to be organic certified and that any organic product coming to the U.S. must have an import certificate from the USDA's National Organic Program.

FDA Label Requirements

Even though the USDA handles organic labeling, food and drink products must comply with [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) labeling requirements.

Label information from the FDA must include the following:

Principal Display Panel (PDP)	The PDP is the front part of a label that faces the consumer when displayed on a shelf. It contains a statement of identity and a net quantity statement (how much of that product is in that particular package). Generic brands must include the brand's name within the label.
Nutrition Facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serving Size• Calories• Total Fat• Sodium• Total Carbohydrates• Sugar• Added Sugar• Protein• "Not a significant source of..."
Information Panel (IP)	IP information is listed by weight, starting with the heaviest.
National Drug Code (NDC)	The NDC is a three-part number printed on the PDP for pharmaceuticals.
Alcohol by Volume (ABV)	ABV is the percentage of alcohol in the beverage.
Beverage Alcohol Manual (BAM)	A BAM is a 17-item questionnaire measuring an individual's health, alcohol, and drug use.
Certificate of Label Approval (COLA)	COLA ensures alcoholic beverages comply with federal marketing regulations.
Fair Packaging & Labeling Act (FPLA)	FPLA is a set of legal requirements for front-facing labels.

TYPES OF ORGANIC LABELS

In the United States, [four types of organic labels](#) can be used on food products, as defined and regulated by the USDA.

When a product label has a USDA organic seal, the farmers and businesses who played a role in bringing that product to market have met strict standards for growing, processing and handling those products.

100% Organic	Organic
<p>These products must contain only organically produced ingredients, and any processing aids used are also organic.</p> <p>PDP: includes the USDA organic seal and/or 100% organic claims</p> <p>IP: organic ingredients must be identified in the ingredient list, which can be done by calling ingredients "organic" or using an asterisk on ingredients with a note that they are organic</p>	<p>Products with an organic label must contain at least 95% organic ingredients, with the remaining 5% of ingredients allowed to be non-organic as long as they are not on the USDA's list of prohibited substances. Any processing aids used must also be organic.</p> <p>PDP: can include the USDA organic seal and/or organic claims</p> <p>IP: must identify specific organic ingredients by calling them out or using an asterisk</p>
Made With Organic Ingredients	Specific Organic Ingredient
<p>This label means the product contains at least 70% organic ingredients. The remaining 30% of ingredients are allowed to be non-organic, but again, cannot be on the USDA's list of prohibited substances.</p> <p>PDP: can state "made with organic..." but cannot use the USDA organic seal</p> <p>IP: must identify specific organic ingredients by calling them out or using an asterisk</p>	<p>This label can be used on products that contain less than 70% organic ingredients. These products may list up to three specific organic ingredients on the front panel, and those ingredients must be identified as organic on the ingredient list. However, these products cannot use the USDA organic seal.</p> <p>PDP: can not use the USDA organic seal or the word "organic"</p> <p>IP: can only list certified organic items on the ingredient list and the percentage of organic ingredients</p>

TYPES OF ORGANIC LABELS



 100% Organic		Organic Seal Allowed		100% Organic Ingredients		No GMOs		Certification Required
 Organic		Organic Seal Allowed		95% Organic Ingredients		No GMOs		Certification Required
 Made With Organic		Organic Seal NOT Allowed		70% or More Organic		No GMOs		Certification Required
 Organic Ingredients		Organic Seal NOT Allowed		Less Than 70% Organic Ingredients		May Contain GMOs		NO Certification

BECOMING A CERTIFIED ORGANIC BUSINESS

There are several steps in the process of becoming a [certified organic business or farm](#).

- Your business must adopt organic practices.
- Once organic practices are in place, your business will need to choose a USDA-accredited certifying agent.
- After choosing an agent, submit an application and any fees to this agent.
- The agent reviews the application, making sure practices are USDA-compliant.
- An on-site inspection is conducted.
- The agent reviews the application and the inspector's report.
- If all criteria are met, an organic certification is issued.

Certification can cost up to several thousand dollars, but there are [reimbursement programs](#) so you can recoup up to 75% of the costs. Until you're certified organic, you can't represent yourself as so.

CTM Labeling Systems to Apply Your Organic Labels

Once your labels have all the required information, it's time to put them on your products.

At CTM Labeling Systems, we offer a wide range of labeling solutions that cater to every business' unique needs. Our solutions include both semi-automatic and automatic labeling options with a variety of different application methods to choose from.

Your business can trust CTM to provide reliable and efficient labeling solutions that streamline your labeling process.

► [Get in touch](#) today to discover how we can help take your labeling process to the next level.