

Organic Certification is probably the most common type of third party certification, especially for fruits, vegetables and dairy. Today, there are many other certifications and labels, from Fair Trade to Salmon-Safe, Certified Vegan and beyond. In addition, many towns, areas and counties have organized “buy local” campaigns that include promotions for local farms and products. Each of these certifications and labels may bring a higher price, but there is no guarantee. Together, they provide opportunities to convey your values and/or practices, build community, and distinguish your product from the competition.

Organic certification has its own fact sheet.

This fact sheet includes information on:

- eco-labels;
- animal welfare labels; and
- Fair Trade and social justice labels.

## Eco-labels

In 1997, the Northwest-based Hartman Group determined that 52% of consumers would purchase a product that was produced in an “earth sustainable” way. Since then, many companies have joined the eco-label movement. An eco-label is a seal or logo that makes a specific claim about a product. In general, the claims have to do with ecologically significant production practices such as avoiding pesticides, reducing fertilizers, caring for wildlife habitat, or alternative energy use. The Consumers Union maintains a comprehensive on-line resource on eco-labels at [www.greenerchoices.org/eco-labels](http://www.greenerchoices.org/eco-labels).

While the “true believers” are highly motivated by their values, Hartman’s research shows that most customers are pragmatic and embedded in larger cultural and economic trends. Eco-labels and certifications tend to appeal to people who are looking for food that supports the environment and is perceived to have a smaller carbon footprint. With the proliferation of eco-labels, consumers have become savvier. Consumers respect a standardized, regulated label, and assume that the product meets their expectations based on that label. A 2003 study from the Leopold Center at Iowa State University tracks customer perceptions of eco-labels:

[www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/staff/ecolabels](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/staff/ecolabels).

### Salmon Safe

Salmon-Safe Farm Management Certification Program is a third party certification. In Washington State, the program is coordinated by Stewardship Partners. Salmon-Safe works to restore water quality and salmon habitat in Pacific Northwest salmon watersheds. They do this by evaluating farm operations using conservation practices benefiting native salmon. Operations endorsed by its independent, professional certifiers are promoted through retail partnerships by the Salmon-Safe label. Contact [www.salmonsafe.org](http://www.salmonsafe.org) and [www.stewardshippartners.org](http://www.stewardshippartners.org).

## Animal Welfare Labels

A related category of labeling concerns the welfare of farm animals, specifically how they were raised and processed. The USDA has a list of animal audits and welfare programs on its Web site found through the Animal Welfare Certification Program at <http://awic.nal.usda.gov> (click on “Farm Animals”, and then “Animal Welfare Audits and Certification Programs”). Some organizations focus on farm animals and some advocate for all domestic and wildlife as well. Usually there is a protocol or list of standard practices that the agency has deemed to constitute “humane” practices. There may be an on-site audit and fee involved. If approved, you can they use the certifier’s logo on your product.

Meat producers may also be interested in becoming certified as following certain religious dietary laws, the most common being Kosher or Halal. Each certifier has its own requirements. To get started, see the Meat fact sheet.

The Sustainable Table has produced a consumer-friendly “Glossary of Meat Production Methods” that highlights the different claims, labels and certifications being used in marketing meat. Available free at: [www.sustainabletable.org/spread/handouts/Glossary\\_of\\_Meat\\_Production.pdf](http://www.sustainabletable.org/spread/handouts/Glossary_of_Meat_Production.pdf)

## Fair Trade and Social Justice Labels

Fair Trade and other labels that highlight social justice values distinguish themselves by including or focusing on the rights of people, especially farm workers or in the case of coffee and cacao, marginalized farmers. All Fair Trade labeling is overseen by the Fairtrade Labeling Organization (FLO) in Europe. Each country has members of FLO that work with producers, processors and retailers. The member in the United States is Oakland-based TransFair USA ([www.transfairusa.org](http://www.transfairusa.org)). A wide range of products can be Fair Trade Certified. However, it is usually not domestic fruits and vegetables. For progress and policies for domestic fair trade see the Domestic Fair Trade Association at [www.dftassociation.org](http://www.dftassociation.org).

There are emerging efforts to introduce labels that reflect social justice values, often linking to Living Wage Campaigns and interfaith communities. Harvest for Humanity ([www.aboutharvest.org](http://www.aboutharvest.org)) is one effort in Florida. In the past, United Farm Workers (UFW) produced certified fair trade apples from Washington State.

### The Food Alliance

The Food Alliance is an independent third party that endorses farm and ranch producers as well as food handlers (food processing businesses) to meet program standards in eight areas such as worker conditions, humane treatment of animals, and environmental standards. Handlers and farmers become certified through an audit and inspection process which allows the products of these farms and facilities to carry a seal of approval. For more information contact The Food Alliance at [www.foodalliance.org](http://www.foodalliance.org), call (503) 493-1066, or email: [info@foodalliance.org](mailto:info@foodalliance.org).

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### Recommended Fact Sheet: Organic Certification

For further assistance or to make suggestions on how to improve this fact sheet, please email [smallfarms@agr.wa.gov](mailto:smallfarms@agr.wa.gov) or call (360) 902-2057 or (360) 676-2059.