

Essential Guide to USDA Food Labeling

Ninth Edition

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Introduction

Over the last hundred years, as Americans shifted from growing their own food to procuring it in stores, food labels and the information they contain have become increasingly vital to maintaining trust in the nation's food supply.

For almost half that time, Prime Label Consultants (PLC) has represented food manufacturers, helping them to achieve US regulatory compliance and label approval. In so doing, PLC has seen many of the most complex and common labeling issues that inadvertently trip up manufacturers large and small, delaying or sometimes negating their labels' approved status.

PLC has written The Essential Guide to USDA Food Labeling to help industry understand and unpack the complicated and expansive regulations that govern USDA-regulated foods.

Written in common, easy to understand language, the guide provides

- A background on USDA agencies and the regulatory process
- An in-depth overview of the required features of a food label
- Details on essential standards, processing and formulation requirements
- Insight into the intricacies of USDA's approval and oversight process
- Guidance for calculations of restricted ingredients
- Appendices, worksheets and a glossary for more information

Because of the depth and complexity of USDA regulations, this guide does not cover the topic of nutrition labeling or claims. We leave that to the second volume in the series: The Essential Guide to Nutrition Labeling and Claims.

Several sources of information are referred to in the text. We strongly recommend that you keep them handy and look up specific entries as you go through the guide (this will help you become accustomed to regulatory language):

- Code of Federal Regulations Title 9 (Part 200 to end)
- USDA Food Standards and Labeling Policy Book
- FSIS Directives
- FSIS Policy Memoranda

See Appendix II for more information on obtaining these references.

In addition, if your company owns PLC's EZ Form® Nutrition and Label Compliance software, we urge you to take advantage of its many reference features while reviewing

this guide. You will find the program's regulations library, Form 7234-1 editor/generator, and restricted ingredients and claims calculators particularly useful.

Prime Label Consultants' goal in compiling this guide is to provide food industry professionals a comprehensive yet concise reference tool to help ensure USDA label compliance.