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# The USDA Child Nutrition Labeling Program

## Common Questions

### What is the Child Nutrition Labeling Program?

The Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program is a voluntary Federal labeling program for the Child Nutrition Programs.

### Does the CN Labeling Program apply to all food-based menu planning approaches?

The CN Labeling Program applies to both Traditional and Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning approaches for schools. It also applies to meal patterns in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program. This is because a CN label on a food product shows how the product contributes toward food-based meal pattern requirements.

CN Labeling does not apply to Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP) or Assisted NSMP because these menu planning approaches do not use meal patterns as planning tools. However, CN labeled products may be purchased for meals planned with NSMP or Assisted NSMP because they help define a product.

### Who runs the program?

The CN Labeling Program is run by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in cooperation with the following agencies:

- Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS);
- Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS); and
- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

The program is operated by FNS. Commercial food processing firms submit CN label applications to FNS for approval.

### How does the program work?

The program requires an evaluation of a product's formulation by FNS to determine its contribution toward meal pattern requirements. Once approved, it allows manufacturers to state this contribution on their labels. The program provides Child Nutrition program operators a warranty against audit claims for CN labeled products if the product is used according to the manufacturers directions as printed on the approved CN label.

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### What products are eligible for CN labels?

- Main dish products which contribute to the Meat/Meat Alternates component of the meal pattern requirements. Examples include beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded fish portions.
- Juice and juice drink products containing at least 50 percent full-strength juice by volume. This includes such products as grape drink, fruit punch, frozen juice drink bars, and sherbet.

To carry CN labels, eligible products must:

- have the contribution of the food component(s) determined using yields in the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*;
- have the product formulation and CN label approved by FNS; and
- be produced under inspection.

### Are manufacturers required to CN label products?

There is no Federal requirement that anyone manufacture or purchase CN labeled products. Purchasing decisions are left to the local level. If a CN labeled product is desired, this must be clearly stated in purchasing specifications.

### What are the advantages of using CN labeled products?

- A CN label statement clearly identifies the contribution of a product toward the meal pattern requirements, and it protects you from exaggerated claims about a product.
- A CN label provides a warranty against audit claims if the CN labeled product is used according to the manufacturer's directions.
- A CN label simplifies cost comparison of similar products.

### Do CN labeled products cost more than non-CN labeled products?

CN labeled products may cost more. Special labeling requirements, inspection costs, and extra staff costs to monitor quality control may be contributing factors in CN labeled products costing more than a similar non-CN labeled product. Keep in mind that cost comparison between two meat products should be based on the cost per serving of the specified *contribution* to the meal pattern requirements, not on the *product* cost per ounce or pound.

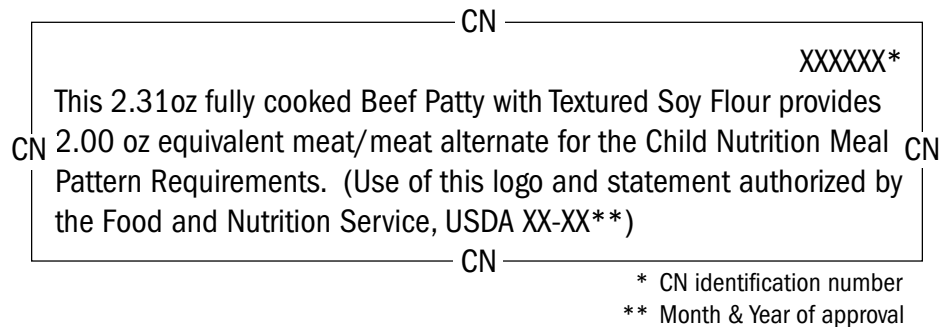
### How do I identify a CN labeled product?

A CN labeled product will always contain the following:

- the CN logo, which is a distinct border;
- the meal pattern contribution statement;

- a unique 6-digit product identification number (assigned by FNS) appearing in the upper right hand corner of the CN logo;
- the USDA/FNS authorization statement;
- the month and year of final FNS approval appearing at the end of the authorization statement;
- plus the remaining required label features: product name, inspection legend, ingredient statement, signature/address line, and net weight.

*A sample CN logo:*



*Note: The X's in the sample CN logo are only used to demonstrate the placement of the CN identification number and the final date. If you receive a CN labeled product containing all X's (or other non-number symbols) or all zeroes as the CN identification number, that label is not a valid CN label. If a CN label is not valid, FNS cannot provide a warranty for its use towards meal pattern requirements.*

**Are CN labeled products more nutritious than similar non-CN labeled products?**

No. A CN label does not indicate that the CN product is healthier or more nutritious than a similar non-CN labeled product. The CN credit statement declares the *quantities* of the creditable food item(s) in a processed food. The quantity of creditable food is used to meet the meal pattern requirements.

**Are CN labeled products of a higher quality than non-CN labeled products?**

No. While a CN labeled product is guaranteed to contain a certain quantity of food, it does not indicate that the quality of the food is any different than a non-CN labeled food. Neither does it mean the foods are safer to eat or free of pathogens or allergens.

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**For more information:**

For additional information about the CN Labeling Program, contact:

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Food and Nutrition Service  
Child Nutrition Division  
3101 Park Center Drive – Room 632  
Alexandria, Virginia 22302  
Phone: (703) 305-2609

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**Food Items for  
Further  
Processing**

The yield data for foods in sections 1 – 5 of this guide represent foods that are commonly purchased at the program level. Items presented in this section are intended to be used by industry for further processing. The yield information provided here may also be used in the CN Labeling Program. This information is being provided so that Child Nutrition Program operators are aware of the yields for food items that industry uses for determining the credit of foods for meal pattern requirements. Even though a program may never purchase these items directly, it is important for all programs to have information that will allow them to verify that the processed food items they purchase are credited in a manner consistent with program requirements.

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs  
**Appendix C**  
**Food Items for Further Processing**

**Food Items for Further Processing**

1 Food As Purchased, AP	2 Purchase Unit	3 Servings per Purchase Unit, EP	4 Serving Size per Meal Contribution	5 Purchase Units for 100 Servings	6 Additional Information
<b>BEEF, LEAN FINELY TEXTURED (LFTB)</b>					
Beef, fresh or frozen <b>Lean finely textured beef (LFTB)</b> <i>Raw</i>	Pound	12.9	1 oz cooked lean meat	7.8	1 lb AP = 0.81 lb cooked lean meat
	Pound	8.64	1-1/2 oz cooked lean meat	11.6	
<b>CHICKEN, MECHANICALLY or HAND SEPARATED</b>					
Chicken, fresh or frozen <b>Mechanically or Hand separated</b> <i>Raw</i>	Pound	11.2	1 oz cooked poultry	9.0	1 lb AP = 0.70 lb cooked poultry
	Pound	7.46	1-1/2 oz cooked poultry	13.5	
<b>PORK, LEAN FINELY TEXTURED (LFTP)</b>					
Pork, fresh or frozen <b>Lean finely textured pork (LFTP)</b> <i>Raw</i>	Pound	12.9	1 oz cooked lean meat	7.8	1 lb AP = 0.81 lb cooked lean meat
	Pound	8.64	1-1/2 oz cooked lean meat	11.6	
<b>SEAFOOD</b>					
Seafood, frozen <b>Fish fillet block</b> <i>Raw</i>	Pound	12.4	1 oz cooked fish	8.1	1 lb AP = 0.78 lb cooked fish
	Pound	8.32	1-1/2 oz cooked fish	12.1	
Seafood, frozen <b>Minced fish block</b> <i>Raw</i>	Pound	12.0	1 oz cooked fish	8.4	1 lb AP = 0.75 lb cooked minced fish
	Pound	8.00	1-1/2 oz cooked fish	12.5	
Seafood, frozen <b>Shrimp Minced</b> <i>Raw</i>	Pound	9.28	1 oz cooked fish	10.8	1 lb AP = 0.58 lb cooked cooked minced shrimp
	Pound	6.18	1-1/2 oz cooked fish	16.2	
Seafood, frozen <b>Squid meat block</b> <i>Rings and Tentacles</i> <i>Raw</i>	Pound	11.6	1 oz cooked fish	8.7	1 lb AP = 0.73 lb cooked cooked squid meat
	Pound	7.78	1-1/2 oz cooked fish	12.9	

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<b>TOMATO PASTE<sup>1</sup></b>					
Tomato Paste, canned <sup>1</sup> <b>Medium</b> <i>28% or more, but less than 32% Natural Tomato Soluble Solids (NTSS)</i>	Pound	32.2	1 tablespoon paste (1/4 cup vegetable)	3.2	
Tomato Paste, canned <sup>1</sup> <b>Heavy</b> <i>32% or more, but less than 39.3% Natural Tomato Soluble Solids (NTSS)</i>	Pound	36.8	1 tablespoon paste (1/4 cup vegetable)	2.8	
Tomato Paste, canned <sup>1</sup> <b>Extra Heavy</b> <i>39.3% or more Natural Tomato Soluble Solids (NTSS)</i>	Pound	45.1	1 tablespoon paste (1/4 cup vegetable)	2.3	
<b>TURKEY, MECHANICALLY or HAND SEPARATED</b>					
Turkey, fresh or frozen <b>Mechanically or Hand separated</b>	Pound	11.2	1 oz cooked poultry	9.0	1 lb AP = 0.70 lb cooked poultry
Raw	Pound	7.46	1-1/2 oz cooked poultry	13.5	

<sup>1</sup>If the percentage of Natural Tomato Soluble Solids (NTSS) is not specified for the brand of tomato paste you are using – use the yield data for tomato paste light, 24-28 percent NTSS found on page 2-83.