

USDA Establishes Naturally Raised Marketing Claim Standard

Copies of the standard and more information are available by accessing the AMS Web site at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/SAT>.

WASHINGTON, January 16, 2009 -- The U. S. Department of Agriculture today issued a voluntary standard for naturally raised livestock and meat marketing claims. The standard will be published as a notice in the Federal Register and is titled "United States Standards for Livestock and Meat Marketing Claims, Naturally Raised Claim for Livestock and the Meat and Meat Products Derived from such Livestock."

The naturally raised marketing claim standard states that livestock used for the production of meat and meat products have been raised entirely without growth promotants, antibiotics (except for ionophores used as coccidiostats for parasite control), and have never been fed animal by-products. The voluntary standard will establish the minimum requirements for those producers who choose to operate a USDA-verified program involving a naturally raised claim. USDA analyzed over 44,000 comments from producers, processors, consumers, and other interested parties in the development of this standard.

The segment of the marketplace that includes specific animal raising claims has experienced exponential growth in the past five years. Use of a naturally raised marketing claim standard has the potential to increase the available supply of U.S. meat products eligible for niche marketing programs in the United States, the European Union, and other export markets that require livestock to be raised without the administration of growth promotants.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) works with industry representatives, academia, and other interested parties to establish or revise U.S. standards for nearly 240 agricultural products. Industry uses standards in the marketplace to specify the quality of commodities. Standards facilitate commerce by providing a common language for trade and a means of measuring value in the marketing of agricultural products. Increasingly, livestock and meat producers are using production or processing claims to distinguish their products in the marketplace.

The naturally raised marketing claim standard will be published in the January 21, 2009, Federal Register. This voluntary standard will become effective upon Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval of the related information collection provisions pursuant to the

Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501-3520).

Questions regarding the standard should be directed to Martin E. O'Connor, Chief, Standards, Analysis and Technology Branch, Room 2607, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, D.C. 20250-0254; or by calling (202) 720-4486 or E-mail at Martin.OConnor@usda.gov. Questions regarding participation in USDA-verified programs should be directed to James L. Riva, Chief, Audit, Review, and Compliance Branch, 100 Riverside Parkway, Suite 135, Fredericksburg, VA 22406; or by calling (540) 361-7640 or E-mail at James.Riva@usda.gov.