

# Is Certification Important for all Businesses



## What is Certification?

Food certifications are issued by third party companies to verify that the products, production methods, or food safety systems used by the product's manufacturer meet a specific standard or claim. There are a variety of certifications and third-party organizations — including religious institutions, private organizations and government bodies — that will evaluate products and processes to see if they meet the specified criteria of the particular certification. . Nearly every product in grocery stores nationwide has some sort of certification.

## Why have a certification?

- A certification can strengthen the confidence customers have in the products they are purchasing, leading to new and repeat customers, as well as potential for higher margins.
- Certification conveys to consumers and the marketplace, as well as to employees and key stakeholders, that a food sector business has successfully met the requirements of a specific set of standards that the particular customers care about.
- Voluntary certifications may assist in gaining a strategic advantage in the marketplace and potentially increase business opportunities.
- Certification claims can be used as a marketing tool when they resonate with consumer values.
- Product certification can represent a sign of food quality to consumers in a specific target market.

## Types of Food Certifications

The following section provides highlights of different types of certifications available.

### 1. Food Safety Certifications

Companies of all sizes are adopting food safety programs to meet expectations of their customers and demonstrate their commitment to safe food. As well, a food safety certification is often required in order to gain market access through many retail chains. It also helps reduce barriers to interprovincial and international trade.

There are many third-party verified food safety certifications, including:

- British Retail Consortium (BRC) Food Safety (<https://brc.org.uk/>)
- Safe Quality Food (SQF) ([www.sqfi.com/](http://www.sqfi.com/))
- Food Safety System Certification (FSSC) 22000 ([www.fssc.com/schemes/fssc-22000/](http://www.fssc.com/schemes/fssc-22000/))
- Canadian Grain Commission Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) (<https://grainscanada.gc.ca/en/industry/grain-safety/hazard-analysis.html>)
- CanadaGAP ([www.canadagap.ca/](http://www.canadagap.ca/))

You can find detailed information explaining the difference between food safety programs at Manitoba Agriculture's [At the Food Processor](http://www.manitoba.ca/agriculture/food-safety/at-the-food-processor/) page (www.manitoba.ca/agriculture/food-safety/at-the-food-processor/).

## Food Safety Consultants

A food safety consultant can help guide a business in the right direction by doing a gap-analysis to identify areas for improvement within a company's operation and to determine what type of certification would be most beneficial. Refer to this [list of consultants](http://www.manitoba.ca/agriculture/food-safety/at-the-food-processor/list-of-food-safety-consultants.html) (www.manitoba.ca/agriculture/food-safety/at-the-food-processor/list-of-food-safety-consultants.html).

### 2. Organic

The organic standards lay out the specifics of organic production, including:

- how livestock must be housed, fed, transported and slaughtered
- how specific crops and produce are to be grown, extracted, processed and stored
- how pests and diseases are to be treated
- which substances, methods and ingredients may not be used
- what environmental factors must be taken into consideration

Organic Producers of Manitoba (OPAM) offers certification under the Canadian Organic Regime (COR) to clients wishing to market products in Canada, the United States and Europe. OPAM is accredited by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

For more information, visit:

- [Organic Producers Association of Manitoba](https://opam-mb.com/about/) (https://opam-mb.com/about/)
- [CFIA labelling Requirements](https://inspection.canada.ca/organic-products/eng/1526652186199/1526652186496) (https://inspection.canada.ca/organic-products/eng/1526652186199/1526652186496)

### 3. Halal

Any food labelled *halal* has to be certified by an organization that ensures it meets Muslim dietary requirements. For animal products, those religious requirements include blessing each animal before slaughtering it by hand in a single cut, ensuring the animal is thoroughly bled and the meat has not been in contact with other meat or pork products or slaughtered in any other manner.

While there are countless products that can be considered *halal*, this certification is mainly directed towards meat, milk, canned food and some additives.

For more information, visit:

- [Canadian Halal Food Certifying Agency](http://www.chfcahalal.com/) (www.chfcahalal.com/)
- [ISNA Halal Certification Services](http://www.isnacanada.com/halal-certification/) (www.isnacanada.com/halal-certification/)
- [Halal Inspection and Certification Canada](https://hiccanada.ca/) (https://hiccanada.ca/)
- [CFIA Method of production claims on food labels](https://inspection.canada.ca/food-labels/labelling/industry/method-of-production-claims) (https://inspection.canada.ca/food-labels/labelling/industry/method-of-production-claims)

#### 4. Kosher

Kosher is a term used to describe food that complies with the strict dietary standards of traditional Jewish law.

For example, to qualify as kosher:

- mammals must have split hooves and chew their cud
- fish must have fins and removable scales
- meat and fowl must be ritually slaughtered in a prescribed manner
- meat and dairy products cannot be cooked or consumed together

Certification that a food is processed in accordance with the requirements of Jewish law, and is approved by a rabbinic agency, verifies that they have checked the products ingredients, production facility and actual production to ensure all ingredients, derivatives, tools and machinery have no trace of non-kosher substances.

For more information, visit:

- [Kashruth Council of Canada \(COR\) \(https://cor.ca/\)](https://cor.ca/)
- [CFIA Method of production claims on food labels \(https://inspection.canada.ca/food-labels/labelling/industry/method-of-production-claims\)](https://inspection.canada.ca/food-labels/labelling/industry/method-of-production-claims)

#### 5. Non-GMO

Non-GMO (genetically modified organisms) means a product was produced without genetic engineering and its ingredients are not derived from GMOs.

Products can be *Non-GMO Project Verified*, which has standards with stringent provisions for testing, traceability, and segregation. Only Non-GMO Project Verified products are allowed to use the verification mark. Importantly, the mark includes the project's URL, where consumers can look up the standard to better understand what it means.

For more information, visit:

- [Non-GMO Project \(www.nongmoproject.org/gmo-facts/non-gmo-project-verified-faq/#:~:text=Non%2DGMO%20means%20a%20product,testing%2C%20traceability%2C%20and%20segregation\)](http://www.nongmoproject.org/gmo-facts/non-gmo-project-verified-faq/#:~:text=Non%2DGMO%20means%20a%20product,testing%2C%20traceability%2C%20and%20segregation)
- [CFIA GMO standards \(https://inspection.canada.ca/food-labels/labelling/consumers/genetically-engineered-foods/eng/1333373177199/1333373638071\)](https://inspection.canada.ca/food-labels/labelling/consumers/genetically-engineered-foods/eng/1333373177199/1333373638071)
- [CFIA \(https://inspection.canada.ca/about-cfia/my-cfia/eng/1482204298243/1482204318353\)](https://inspection.canada.ca/about-cfia/my-cfia/eng/1482204298243/1482204318353)

#### 6. Gluten-Free

For a product to have the *certified gluten free* label, it must be tested and certified every year, according to the requirements of *Gluten-Free Certification Program* (GFCP). The GFCP requires individual products to be tested annually in a process that includes an ingredient review, processing plant inspection and product testing. A manufacturing facility that undergoes a successful third-party audit process will be recommended to the Canadian Celiac Association for certification to be eligible to use the GFCP mark on product packaging and in marketing and advertising materials.

For more information, visit:

- [Canadian Celiac Association](http://www.celiac.ca/food-industry-professionals/certification-information/) (www.celiac.ca/food-industry-professionals/certification-information/)
- [CFIA gluten-free requirements](https://inspection.canada.ca/food-labels/labelling/industry/allergens-and-gluten/gluten-free-claims/eng/1340194596012/1340194681961) (https://inspection.canada.ca/food-labels/labelling/industry/allergens-and-gluten/gluten-free-claims/eng/1340194596012/1340194681961)

## 7. Sustainability

More and more consumers are looking for products that will have minimal impact on the environment. Certification to an industry-specific sustainability standard can demonstrate that its products are safe from a number of environmental concerns, such as being free of contamination or leeching, being energy efficient or having recyclable or biodegradable packaging. If a company is not certified, it does not mean that its products are not safe or sustainable, but third-party validation gives businesses and consumers' confidence in a company's products, providing a competitive edge compared to a business that is non-certified.

In partnership with the Canadian Standards Association, the Competition Bureau (an independent law enforcement agency of the Government of Canada) has released [guidelines for business](http://www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/02701.html) (www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/02701.html) that focus on self-declared environmental claims.

### Are certification programs worth it?

Consumers expect safe and healthy food. It is clear that consumers are seeking brands with reliable commitments to claims that are important to their values, such as organic, non-GMO, gluten free, vegan, ketogenic, free of MSG, plant-based, Fair Trade and more. Consumers are increasingly making food purchasing decisions based on those certifications and are usually willing to pay premium prices for certified products that stand out on the shelf.

[Food in Canada](http://www.foodincanada.com/opinions/certification-programs-are-they-worth-it/magazine) (www.foodincanada.com/opinions/certification-programs-are-they-worth-it/magazine) provides some great questions and insights to evaluate whether the time, money and resources spent to become certified offers a worthwhile return on investment or is simply just nice to have. The decision is ultimately yours.

### For more information

Go to [manitoba.ca/agriculture/food-and-ag-processing/](http://manitoba.ca/agriculture/food-and-ag-processing/)

Email [mbagrifood@gov.mb.ca](mailto:mbagrifood@gov.mb.ca)

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