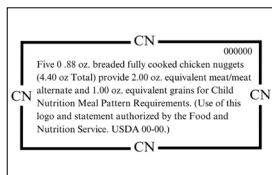


# CN Label vs PFS: Quick Guide



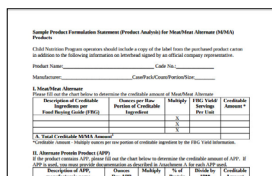
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) operators are responsible for ensuring that meals served meet USDA meal pattern requirements. To verify compliance, certain documentation such as a Child Nutrition (CN) label or a Product Formulation Statement (PFS) may need to be kept on file. These documents help confirm how commercially prepared foods credit toward the meal pattern and maintain program integrity. Understanding these key terminologies and reviewing available resources is essential for accurate recordkeeping and menu planning.

## Terminologies



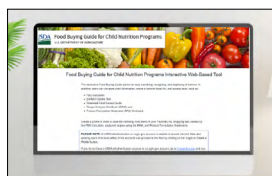
### Child Nutrition (CN) Label

A USDA-approved label on commercial products containing meats/meat alternates, voluntarily submitted by manufacturers, that specifies how the item contributes to the meal pattern in Child Nutrition Programs. Verify CN labels with the CN label verification report which is a document confirming the validity of a product's CN label by checking against the USDA-approved list. It also provides expiration dates, which may differ from the label, and is updated monthly.



### Product Formulation Statement (PFS)

A manufacturer-provided document that details the product's ingredients and calculations to show its creditable meal components.



### USDA Food Buying Guide (FBG)

USDA's free web-based resource for food yield information for all Child Nutrition Programs. It provides guidance on how foods credit toward meal patterns and helps program operators determine the amount of food to purchase and prepare to meet meal pattern requirements.



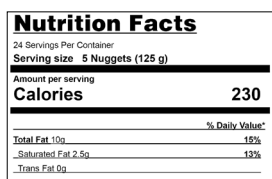
### USDA Exhibit A Grains Tool

A USDA resource that helps Child Nutrition Program operators determine how grain products credit toward the meal pattern requirements.



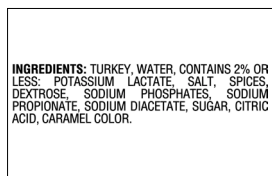
### Commercially Prepared

Any food item that has been altered from its natural state through methods like cooking, freezing, drying or packaging by a commercial facility.



### Nutrition Facts Label

A standardized panel required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on most packaged foods and beverages. It provides essential information about a product's nutritional content, including serving size, calories and nutrients.



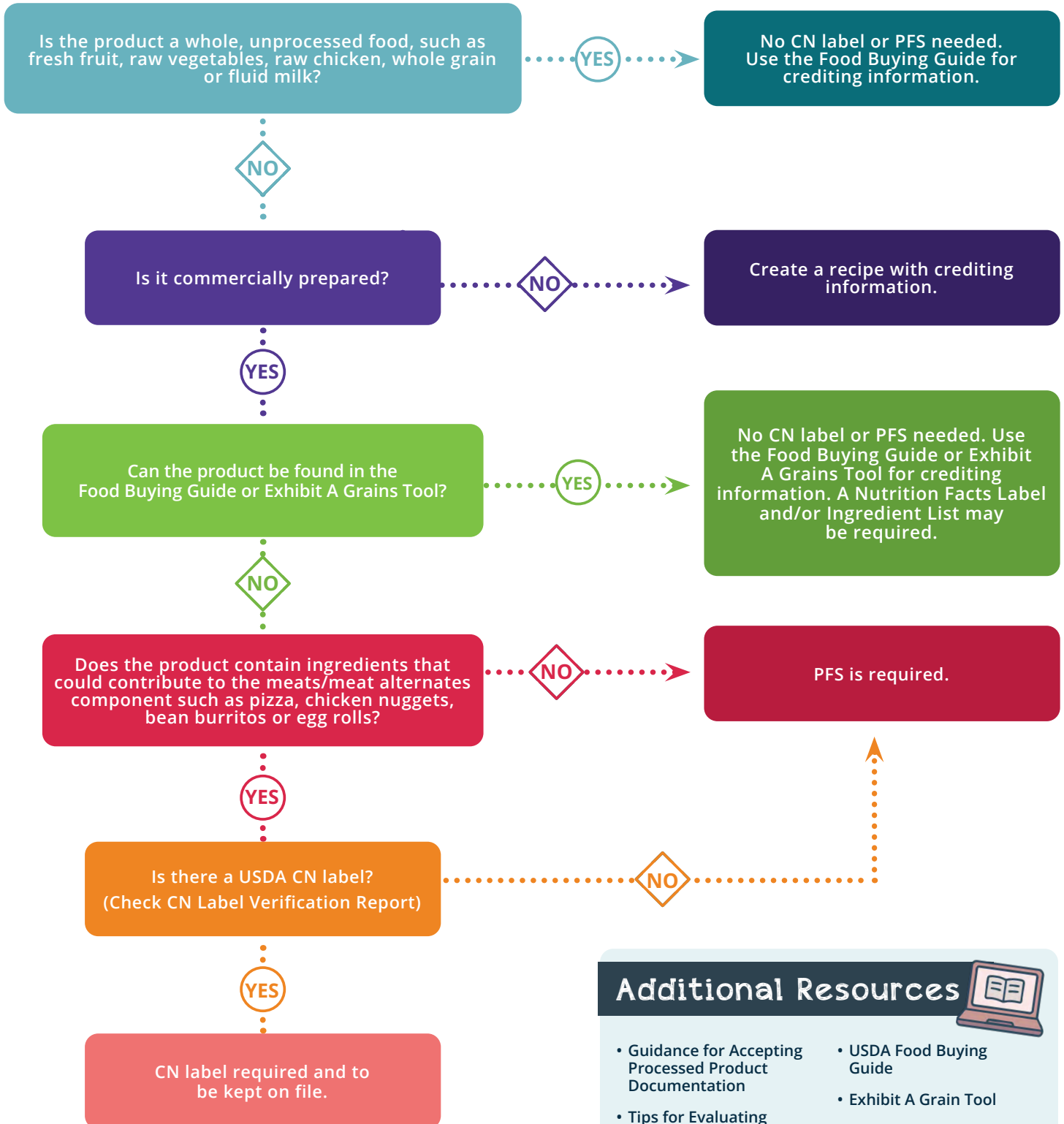
### Ingredient List

A requirement under FDA regulations that is usually placed near the Nutrition Facts label on the package. It lists all ingredients in descending order by weight, starting with the ingredient that weighs the most. In addition, products must clearly indicate if they contain any of the top nine major food allergens.

# IS A CN LABEL OR PFS REQUIRED?



This flow chart helps CACFP operators determine when a Child Nutrition (CN) label or a Product Formulation Statement (PFS) is required to credit commercially prepared food items toward the meal pattern. Use this tool to identify the appropriate documentation, ensure USDA meal pattern compliance and maintain accurate records for monitoring and audits.



### Additional Resources

- Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation
- USDA Food Buying Guide
- Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement
- Exhibit A Grain Tool
- CN Label Verification Report
- CN Label FAQs

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Understanding when a Child Nutrition (CN) label or a Product Formulation Statement (PFS) is required can be challenging, especially with the wide variety of food products available. These FAQs provide answers to questions about commonly used, commercially prepared food items and tips to request CN labels and PFS.

## Do I Need a CN Label or PFS for Commercially Prepared...



Hummus



Canned Peas



Breaded Chicken Nuggets



Ready-to-Serve Vegetable and Pasta Soup



100% Ground Beef Patty  
(no byproducts, cereals, binders or extenders)



Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich  
(purchased pre-made)

Food Buying Guide		✓		✓ <small>Crediting vegetables only</small>	✓	
CN label	✓		✓			✓
PFS	OR ✓		OR ✓	✓ <small>Crediting vegetables and grains</small>		OR ✓

### Do Retail Products Carry CN Labels?

Not usually. Warehouse retail stores may have CN labels on some of their products but no guarantee. Most CN labels are found when purchased through a foodservice vendor or purchased directly from the manufacturer.

### Are Retail Products the Same as Child Nutrition Program Foodservice Products?

Not usually. Foods purchased through foodservice may have different product formulation than what is purchased in retail. You must verify with the manufacturer.

### Tips to Request a CN Label or PFS



- If you have a foodservice vendor, request the CN label or PFS for products that require it in order to credit the food item.
- Directly reach out to the manufacturer by visiting their website. Here are a few steps to help you get to the right person.
  - When contacting the manufacturer, request someone familiar with the Child Nutrition Program.
  - Keep the product packaging to help identify food products that you need a CN label or PFS.
  - Ask how the food item(s) credits towards the Child Nutrition Program.