

CHILD NUTRITION LABELS AND PRODUCT FORMULATION STATEMENTS

Purchasing food for a Child Nutrition Program can sometimes be a challenge. Not only do buyers have to plan menus that meet federal meal pattern requirements and nutrition standards, but the foods they purchase must also provide quality and value and at the same time be appealing to participants. Buyers must also be able to identify the contribution that a food or food product makes towards meeting meal pattern requirements. The challenge arises when buyers purchase convenience food products that are either breaded, battered, provide a combination of foods or contain a mixture of ingredients because it is difficult to determine these products' contribution to the meal pattern.

Child Nutrition (CN) labels, as well as Product Formulation Statements, can be used by buyers to verify the meal pattern contributions of a convenience food.

CHILD NUTRITION LABELS

Q: What is a CN label?

A: A CN label is a product label which contains a statement that clearly identifies the contribution that product makes towards the CN meal pattern requirements.

Q: Who reviews and monitors CN labels for meat and poultry products?

A: The CN labeling program is administered by Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), a section of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), in cooperation with the following agencies:

- Food Safety and Inspection Service
- Agricultural Marketing Service
- National Marine Fisheries Service

The program is operated by FNS directly with commercial food processing firms.

Q: Does a CN labeled product carry a USDA guarantee?

A: Yes

- A CN labeled product provides a warranty against audit claims, if used according to the manufacturer's directions.
- A CN label statement clearly identifies the contribution of a product toward the meal pattern requirement.

Q: What standard information appears on a CN label?

A: A CN label will always contain the following:

- The CN logo, which is a distinct border.
- The meal pattern contribution statement.
- A six-digit product identification number.
- USDA-FNS authorization.
- The month and year of approval.

Q: How can you identify and track a product with a CN label?

A: All approved CN labels have a six-digit identification number printed inside the CN logo in the upper right hand corner. Each CN labeled product is assigned its own distinct number. No two products should ever have the same number.

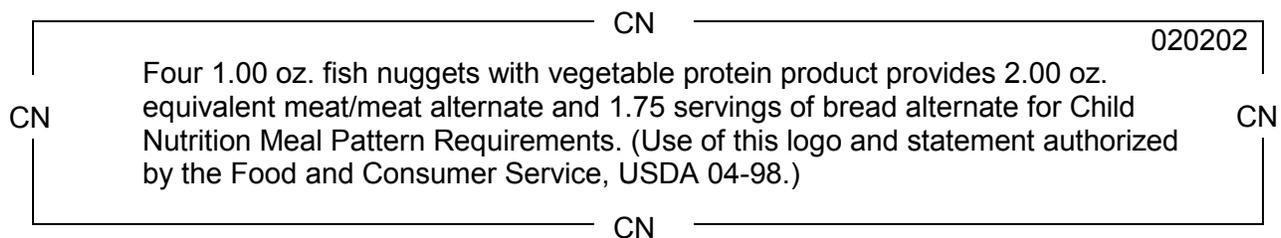
CN LABEL STATEMENT—EXAMPLE

The CN label statement identifies the contribution that a product makes towards meeting child nutrition meal pattern requirements. For example, a convenience main entrée may contribute to one or more of the following meal components:

- Meat/meat alternate.
- Breads/grains.
- Fruits/vegetables.

CN labels on juice drinks and juice drink products will specify their contribution to the fruit/vegetable component.

The sample CN label printed below identifies the contribution that four breaded fish nuggets make towards meeting meal pattern requirement in CN programs.



[View the Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling Program on the USDA website.](#)

Product Formulation Statements

Product formulation statements are developed by manufacturers to provide specific information about their products. They generally include a detailed explanation of what the product contains and the amount of each ingredient in the product by weight. However, there is no standard information required for product formulation statements. Each company can decide what to include. When a product formulation statement is used to determine crediting information for the USDA Child Nutrition Programs, it must:

- Indicate how the product credits toward the USDA meal pattern requirements.
- Document how the manufacturer obtained the crediting information by citing specific Child Nutrition Program resources or regulations such as the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* and USDA policy on crediting foods.
- Be prepared on manufacturer's letterhead with an original signature of a company official and the date of issue.

Unlike a CN label, a product formulation statement does not provide any warranty against audit claims for reimbursable meals. The USDA does not monitor product formulation statements for compliance with the product's actual formulation or stated contribution to the meal pattern requirements.

The sponsor is ultimately responsible if a menu does not meet the meal pattern requirements. When sponsors use product formulation statements to document compliance with the meal pattern requirements, it is the sponsor's responsibility to check the manufacturer's crediting information for accuracy. All creditable ingredients in the product formulation statement must match a description in the *Food Buying Guide*. Sponsors should request supporting documentation from manufacturers, verify its accuracy and maintain this documentation on file.

[View the Sample Product Formulation Statement \(Product Analysis\) for Meat/Meat Alternate \(M/MA\) Products on the USDA website.](#)