

Plant-Based Standards[®]

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose	3
Factors Influencing Diet Tolerability	4

STANDARDS

Plant-Based Label	6
Applicability	6
Guidelines	7
Use of the Plant-Based Label	8
Ingredient Composition	9
Animal-Product Free Requirements	10
Dairy-Free Requirements	11
Artificial Additives and Preservatives	11
Allowed Ingredients List	12

Statement of Purpose

The Plant-Based Certified Program by The Paleo Foundation addresses the growing interest in whole food, plant-based diets globally, which focus on consuming vegetables, fruits, grains, nuts, and seeds. While such diets are associated with numerous health benefits, including improved heart health and reduced chronic disease risk, transitioning to and maintaining a plant-based diet comes with challenges, such as ensuring nutritional adequacy and navigating misconceptions about plant-based eating.

Recognizing that plant-based diets do not inherently guarantee ethical superiority or sustainability, The Paleo Foundation concentrates on their health benefits. Instead, the plant-based certification sets evidence-based standards for nutritious and healthful plant-based products, distinguishing those that support a balanced diet and informed consumer choices. This initiative aligns with our commitment to making specialized diets more accessible and appealing, devoid of dogma.

The Plant-Based Certified Program aims to:

- Provide clear guidelines for whole food, plant-based foods.
- Empower consumers to make health-aligned dietary choices.
- Encourage innovation in the plant-based food sector, promoting products that meet high nutritional, taste, and quality standards.

Our certification serves as a beacon for consumers seeking whole food plant-based options and for producers dedicated to excellence in plant-based nutrition. It represents our commitment to supporting healthy, informed dietary choices within the diverse dietary landscape. The program is a testament to the belief that plant-based eating, when navigated correctly, can offer significant health advantages, which aligns with The Paleo Foundation's broader mission to enhance the practicality and therapeutic potential of specialized diets.



Diet Tolerability

The Paleo Foundation, historically known for its commitment to facilitating healthier, more sustainable dietary choices, acknowledges the growing interest in plant-based diets as a reflection of shifting consumer values. As the foundation ventures into plant-based certification, the focus is not just on delineating what constitutes a plant-based diet but on addressing the broader challenges individuals face in adopting and maintaining such diets.

The four major factors of Availability, Affordability, Palatability, and Convenience are pivotal in understanding these challenges and crafting solutions that enhance diet tolerability. Here's how these factors interplay with the Foundation's mission in the context of a plant-based certification program:

Availability: The geographical and retail landscape significantly influences access to plant-based products. In many areas, consumers might find limited options, confining their ability to adhere to a plant-based diet. The Paleo Foundation's certification program aims to increase visibility and demand for plant-based products, encouraging retailers and manufacturers to expand their offerings. By certifying a broad array of plant-based foods, The Paleo Foundation helps bridge the gap between consumer desire and product availability, making it easier for individuals everywhere to access these foods.

Affordability: Economic factors play a crucial role in dietary choices. Plant-based diets are often perceived as expensive due to the cost of fresh produce and specialty products. The Paleo Foundation's certification can drive market competition, leading to a more diversified product range encompassing various price points. Moreover, by highlighting affordable plant-based options, The Paleo Foundation can demystify the notion that plant-based eating is only accessible to the economically privileged, making it a viable option for a broader demographic.

Palatability: Taste preferences and dietary satisfaction are crucial for the long-term sustainability of any diet. The variability in plant-based product quality and taste can deter individuals from adopting or maintaining a plant-based diet. Through its certification program, The Paleo Foundation sets standards for taste, quality, and nutritional content, guiding consumers towards products that do not just meet their ethical and health criteria but are also enjoyable to eat. This focus on palatability ensures that the switch to plant-based eating is not just a healthful choice but also a delightful culinary journey.

Convenience: In today's fast-paced world, the ease of integrating a diet into one's lifestyle is paramount. Cultural acceptance and the availability of ready-to-eat or easy-to-prepare plant-based options can significantly influence diet adoption. The Paleo Foundation's certification mark serves as a beacon for consumers seeking convenient plant-based foods, ensuring that these options are readily identifiable. This not only aids in the cultural normalization of plant-based diets but also supports individuals in maintaining these dietary choices amidst busy lifestyles.

The Paleo Foundation's certification programs are more than just labels on a package; they are tools for change designed to address the complex web of factors that influence dietary habits. By focusing on Availability, Affordability, Palatability, and Convenience, the foundation directly contributes to enhancing the tolerability of plant-based diets.

These programs serve as a bridge between consumers and high-quality plant-based foods, empowering individuals to make dietary choices that align with their health goals, ethical values, and environmental concerns. In undertaking these initiatives, The Paleo Foundation plays an essential role in nurturing a dietary culture that is inclusive, paving the path toward a future where individual health and dietary diversity are prioritized.

Plant-Based

PROGRAM STANDARDS AND SPECIFICATIONS 2024



U.S. Reg. No.
Pending

1. Plant-Based Label

The “**Plant-Based**” Requirements for the Exclusion of all forms of meat, poultry, fish, dairy, eggs, honey and other animal-derived substances, Artificial Coloring, Artificial Preservatives, Artificial Sweeteners, and Artificial Flavor Enhancers-Free Products are outlined herein. These standards apply to all products certified by The Paleo Foundation for the Plant-Based Program. Only certified Products following these standards are explicitly given the rights to use Plant-Based logos, trademarks, certification marks, or other design marks hereinafter referred to as the “Plant-Based label”.

1.1 **Applicability.** The Plant-Based label was developed and trademark pending by The Paleo Foundation to identify food products that meet the standards of the Plant-Based Diet. **The Plant-Based Label is a certification mark pending registration with the U.S. Trademark and Patent Office**, and its use is only permitted by those who have entered into a contractual agreement with The Paleo Foundation. The Plant-Based Label was designed to establish an easily identifiable mark indicating that a product has met the strictures of a Plant-Based Diet template and merits the use of the Plant-Based Label. Plant-Based requirements may be amended periodically based on current research.

1.2 Guidelines

1.2.1 **Promotional Materials.** The Plant-Based label is allowed to be used on packaging, promotional materials, point-of-purchase materials, websites, sales literature, banners, company stationery, and other advertising materials. Use of the Plant-Based label must comply with the guidelines outlined in this document. If a company wishes to present the logos in a manner other than as described in Statement of Use Guidelines, The Paleo Foundation must approve the request and give permission in writing to the Producer.

1.2.2 **Display.** Producers may display the Plant-Based label only on products that have been certified by The Paleo Foundation.

1.2.3 **Agreement.** Producers must have a contractual agreement with The Paleo Foundation to use the Plant-Based label.

1.2.4 **Stationary.** Producers may only use the trademark on company stationery if the entire product line has been audited and Plant-Based.

1.2.5 **Logo Placement.** If the entire product line has been audited and Plant-Based, producers may display the Plant-Based label on their entire website. If the entire product line was not certified, the Plant-Based label may appear on a page containing the audited and certified Plant-Based products only. Products that have not been audited and Plant-Based are not permitted to appear on the same page as the Plant-Based label, as this could mislead consumers.

1.3 Use of the Plant-Based Label

1.3.1 **Affidavit.** To complete the application process, the applicant must sign an affidavit stating that all answers and statements provided in their application were true to the best of their knowledge.

1.3.2 **Inspection and Audit.** Use of the Plant-Based label is only permitted after audit and certification of the applicant's products by The Paleo Foundation.

1.3.3 **Authorization.** The Paleo Foundation retains the right to inspect the producer's products to verify that all requirements are met.

1.3.4 **Prohibited Use.** Use of the Plant-Based label for any product that does not meet each of the Plant-Based requirements, that has not been audited, or that has not been given explicit permission, is strictly prohibited.

1.3.5 **Misuse.** Misuse of the Plant-Based Label will result in immediate suspension of the agreement and/ or prosecution.

1.3.7 **Orientation.** The Plant-Based label must be :



- ① Upright
- ② Complete
- ③ Clearly Visible

2. Ingredient Composition

2.0.1 **Plant-Based Sources.** All primary and secondary ingredients are derived from plants. This includes fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, seeds, legumes, and plant-based oils.

2.1 **Whole Food Emphasis.** Products certified under these standards shall prioritize whole plant foods, which include unrefined fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, seeds, and legumes. Processing should maintain the food's natural state to the greatest extent possible.

2.2 **Minimally Processed Foods.** The certification encourages the minimization of food processing. Acceptable processing methods include drying, fermenting, blending, and minimal thermal processing that preserves the nutritional integrity of the food. Highly refined foods, including refined sugars, flours, and oils, shall be limited within certified products.

2.3 **Plant-Based Fats.** Certified products should use fats from whole plant sources (e.g., nuts, seeds, avocados) preferentially over extracted oils. When oils are used, they should be of high nutritional quality (e.g. mid-high oleic sunflower oil, extra virgin olive oil).

3. Animal Products-Free

3.0.1 **No Animal Products.** Excludes all forms of meat, poultry, fish, dairy, eggs, and other animal-derived substances:

Animal-Free	Gelatin	Lecithin
Plant-based certification excludes all meat, poultry, fish, dairy, eggs, and other animal-derived substances.	Derived from animal collagen, gelatin is not allowed. Plant-based alternatives include agar-agar, pectin, and carrageenan.	While lecithin can be derived from soy or sunflower, it may also come from egg yolks, making it important to verify the source.
Carmine (E120)	Casein	Vitamin D3
Carmine is a red dye made from cochineal insects. Plant-based coloring alternatives include beetroot red, annatto, and paprika extract.	A milk protein often found in "non-dairy" products to improve texture or flavor. It's used in some soy cheeses and coffee creamers, making them unsuitable for a plant-based certification.	Used in fortified foods and supplements, Vitamin D3 can be derived from lanolin (sheep's wool). Plant-based versions should specify that they use lichen or fermented algae as a source.
Omega-3 Fatty Acids	Honey and Beeswax	Shellac
Often sourced from fish oil in supplements and fortified foods. Plant-based omega-3s can be derived from algae or flaxseed.	Common in sweeteners, confectionery, and cosmetics. Strict plant-based standards exclude bee products due to animal exploitation concerns.	A resin secreted by the lac bug, used as a coating or glaze on confectionery, fruits, and in nail polish. A plant-based alternative would avoid such coatings or use carnauba wax instead.
Natural Flavors	Whey	Albumin
Natural flavorings can come from both plant and animal sources, necessitating detailed ingredient sourcing.	A byproduct of cheese production, whey is often found in baked goods, protein supplements, and snacks. Plant-based foods should use plant-derived proteins instead.	The protein component of egg whites, often used as a binder or to improve texture. Plant-based alternatives include soy protein, chia seeds, fava bean, or flaxseed meal.

4. Dairy-Free

4.0.1 **Dairy**. Plant-Based Products must not contain dairy products to be eligible for use of the Plant-Based label. This includes but is not limited to:

Dairy
Cheeses, Milk, Milk Derivatives, Yogurts, Cream, Evaporated Milk, Caseinates

5. Artificial Ingredients

5.0.1 **Artificial Ingredients**. Products must not contain artificial ingredients to be eligible for use of the Plant-Based label. This includes but is not limited to:

Colorings	Preservatives
Coloring Derived from coal, tar, or petroleum; FD&C Blue No.1 , No.2; FD&C Green No. 3, FD&C Red No. 40; FD&C Yellow No. 5, No. 6	BHA and BHT, TBHQ, Hexamine, Tetramine, Sodium Ethyl Parahydroxybenzoate, Potassium Ferrocyanide
Artificial Sweeteners	Artificial Flavor Enhancers
Aspartame, Potassium Acesulphame, Cyclamates, Neotame	Glutamates (such as MSG), Guanylates, Inosinates

6. Allowed Ingredients List

6.0.1 Allowed ingredients. The following ingredients are eligible for use of the Plant-Based label. Allowed ingredients will be amended from time to time as necessary. These ingredients include, but are not limited to:

Vegetables and Fruits	Legumes and Pulses	Nuts and Seeds
All types of vegetables and fruits, including fresh, frozen, and dried forms, are foundational to plant-based products. These provide essential nutrients, fibers, and natural flavors.	Beans, lentils, peas, chickpeas, and other legumes are key sources of protein, fiber, and minerals in plant-based diets and products.	Nuts and seeds, including almonds, cashews, flaxseeds, chia seeds, and hemp seeds, offer protein, healthy fats, and textural elements to plant-based foods.
Grains	Oils and Fats	Sweeteners
Whole grains such as wheat, rice, oats, barley, quinoa, and millet are integral for providing energy, texture, and nutritional value.	Oils derived from plants, such as olive oil, coconut oil, and avocado oil, are included for cooking and flavoring. Solid fats like cocoa butter and shea butter may be used in confectionery and baking.	Natural sweeteners from plants, including cane sugar, beet sugar, agave syrup, maple syrup, birch xylitol, fruit juice, monk fruit, and stevia, are acceptable for adding sweetness.
Plant-based Proteins	Dairy Alternatives	Herbs and Spices
Isolated or concentrated proteins from soy, peas, rice, and other plants are often used to enhance the protein content of plant-based foods.	Milks, yogurts, cheeses, and creams made from soy, almonds, oats, coconuts, and other plants substitute for their dairy counterparts.	Natural herbs, spices, and seasonings are used for flavoring without restrictions unless they involve animal derivatives.

6.0.1 **Allowed ingredients** continued:

Additives	Vitamins and Minerals	Stabilizers
Certain additives and processing aids that are not derived from animals, such as lecithins (from soy), and xanthan gum , can be used for texturizing, stabilizing, and preserving foods.	Fortification with vitamins and minerals is common, especially with nutrients that might be less available in a plant-based diet, such as Vitamin B12, Vitamin D, iron, and calcium. These must be sourced from non-animal origins.	Prebiotic Hydrocolloid Gums , agar, sunflower lecithin, tapioca starch, potato starch, arrowroot, non-egg-derived lecithin, lactic acid, citric acid, ascorbic acid, Tapioca Maltodextrin , Gum Arabic .

For further questions regarding items on this list, or items that are not listed, please contact us at info@paleofoundation.org

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