The meat behind the labels

Many consumers believe that by opting for “grass-fed” meat, they are choosing a more ethical and environmentally sustainable product. However, not only is there no federal government standard for grass-fed labels in the U.S., there is also a lot of ambiguity around what this term—as well as many others—actually means.

Natural products retailers can help consumers understand a product’s sourcing standards by deciphering these commonly used terms:

- **USDA Organic**
  - Animals were fed 100% organic feed and forage (though not necessarily grass), raised with some access to pasture razing and not administered antibiotics or hormones, as certified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

- **Grass Fed Beef**
  - Generally, after weaning, an animal’s main food source is grass or forage. This term does not address the use of antibiotics or hormones or whether the animal was raised in confinement or fattened on grains in a feedlot at the end of its life.

- **100% Grass Fed**
  - Animals were fed only grass or forage. This term does not address how an animal was raised or the quality of its diet. Consumers should also look for terms including pasture-raised, free-range and pasture-grazed, which denote an animal’s access to grazing.

- **American Grassfed**
  - Animals were 100% grass fed, raised on pastures, antibiotic and hormone free and from family farms, as certified by the American Grassfed Association.

- **Certified Humane**
  - **Raised & Handled**

- **Animal Welfare Approved**
  - **By AGW**

- **Animal Welfare Certified**
  - **CertifiedGAP.org**

Third-party certifications pertaining specifically to the humane treatment of animals.