



A GUIDE FOR NUTRITION PROS

Powered by Yerba Madre: Proudly uphold our promise through certifications—rooted in our pledge to honor people and the planet.

MEET KATE GEAGAN, MS, RDN



A Yerba Collective Founding “Soul Mate”



Sustainable Food Systems Expert



Food + Planet Co-Founder



Favorite yerba: Loose Leaf





WELLNESS THAT GOES BEYOND THE SELF



"Wellness starts with personal health, but it doesn't end there. True wellness ripples outward. As dietitians, we have the power to be changemakers- to be part of building a food system that nourishes people, communities, and the world we live in."

– Kate Geagan MS, RDN

WHY UNDERSTANDING CERTIFICATIONS MATTERS

Consumer trust is high:

69% say certifications boost confidence.

The market is strong:

Certified organic sales hit \$70B in 2024, up **7%**

But nearly half of RDs admit limited knowledge of certification labels.

63% don't feel confident explaining them to clients or communities.

(Sources: Mintel; Organic Trade Association; Food + Planet 2024 Dietitian Survey; ULSE)

SO LET'S BREAK IT DOWN

Think of third-party certifications as your data-driven toolkit—and your no-nonsense BFF. They don't just say you're doing good—they prove it, with transparency, accountability, and verifiable data.

INDEPENDENT MONITORING:

Developed and monitored by independent 3rd party organizations (or in the case of USDA Organic, the federal government).

CONSUMER TRUST (AND TRANSPARENCY):

Certifications spell out exactly what practices were followed, building credibility with clients and especially with Gen Z and millennial audiences who demand proof.

What sets certifications apart from a company's self-made claims or feel-good, buzzword-heavy brand talk?

EMPOWERED CLIENT EDUCATION:

Certifications give nutrition professionals a reliable, evidence-based foundation — translating complex standards into clear, trustworthy guidance for clients and communities.

SCIENTIFIC RIGOR:

Set of comprehensive standards and practices, based on leading peer-reviewed research, applied consistently across all products featuring the certification.

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE:

Certifications often involve regular check-ins, like audits and renewals by independent third-party certification agencies, to verify program standards are being met.

3RD PARTY VERIFIED COMMON CERTIFICATIONS TO KNOW



Now let's briefly explore the key certifications...

USDA CERTIFIED ORGANIC:

THE OG OF TRUST



WHY USDA ORGANIC MATTERS:

One of the most widely recognized and trusted certifications by consumers worldwide, the USDA Organic seal is the only organic marketing claim that is protected and regulated by federal law. This certification encompasses a set of cultural, agricultural and biological practices that ensures organic farming remains transparent, trustworthy and true to its roots. Only products with >95% organic ingredients are allowed to use the seal.

KEY STANDARDS AT A GLANCE:

Agricultural Practices

Prohibits synthetic pesticides, herbicides, and synthetic fertilizers. Bans genetically modified organisms (GMOs) at every stage of production.

Soil & Water Stewardship

Farmers must implement organic practices that enhance soil fertility, promote biodiversity, prevent erosion, and conserve water resources.

Animal Welfare

Requires access to pasture, certified organic feed, and humane living conditions. Growth hormones and antibiotics are strictly prohibited.

REGENERATIVE ORGANIC CERTIFIED® (ROC):

THE GOLD STANDARD



WHY ROC MATTERS:

“Regenerative agriculture” is one of the hottest food trends right now—but here’s the catch: it doesn’t have a formal definition. Without standards, brands can use it to mean just about anything. That’s why Regenerative Organic Certified® (ROC) is so critical.

Think of it as “organic plus.” To be ROC, brands must also have USDA Organic and a fair trade certification such as Fair For Life. While there are other regenerative -related certifications in the marketplace, what sets ROC apart is that it’s the only one that requires organic as a prerequisite. It’s considered one of - if not the - highest standards.

ROC Gold goes a step further—awarded only to brands that meet the highest level of achievement across all three ROC pillars.

THE THREE PILLARS OF ROC:

1. Soil Health & Land Management:

ROC requires regenerative practices like no-till farming, cover cropping, crop rotation, and agroforestry/shade-grown systems. These methods rebuild soil biodiversity, increase carbon sequestration, and protect water quality.

2. Animal Welfare:

ROC farms are required to uphold the internationally recognized Five Freedoms of animal welfare. These include freedom from hunger and thirst; discomfort; pain, injury, or disease; fear and distress; and the freedom to express natural behaviors. These standards ensure animals are treated humanely and with respect throughout their lives.

3. Farmer and Worker Fairness:

ROC requires fair wages, safe working conditions, and community investment for all workers in the supply chain.

FAIR FOR LIFE

THE NEXT EVOLUTION OF FAIR TRADE



Fair trade is a global movement to help farmers and producers of food and other raw materials engage in more equitable commercial relationships from charging higher prices for higher valued products, while also adhering to social and environmental standards.

KEY ASPECTS OF THE FAIR FOR LIFE FAIR TRADE STANDARD:

Fair Living Wages & Safe Working Conditions

Fair for Life ensures that workers—like the harvesters behind Yerba Madre’s yerba mate—are paid living wages and fair prices, and provided with safe, ethical working environments. It also ensures farmers receive fair prices for their product.

Social Responsibility

This certification requires brands to actively invest in the well-being of local communities through a shared fund, safeguarding their cultural connection and fostering long-term community development.

Empowerment and Capacity Building

With rigorous standards and regular audits, Fair for Life ensures that ethical trade isn’t just a claim—it’s a standard that cultivates a meaningful relationship with people and communities

CERTIFIED B CORP

WHEN DOING GOOD IS THE BOTTOM LINE



WHAT EVEN IS A B CORP?

Think of B Corp as a company-wide check on whether a brand is really “doing good.” It’s not just about one product or ingredient—the entire business has to meet high standards for impact. B Corp is a global movement using business as a force for good, prioritizing not just shareholders, but all stakeholders: workers, communities, suppliers, and the planet.

THINGS IT MEASURES:

1. Workers

Employees paid living wage, use of contracted and temporary workers, jobs provided to chronically underemployed populations, employee ownership

2. Community

High to low pay ratio, management and board members from underrepresented populations, supplier diversity, percent revenue donated, local purchasing and hiring, outsourced staffing

3. Environment

Greenhouse gas emissions reductions, carbon intensity, waste recycled, recyclable materials used, land area and species protected

4. Customers

Product and supplier quality assurance, how customer feedback is addressed, data privacy

5. Governance

How social and environmental performance is integrated into decision-making, how it’s legally protected (called “mission lock”)

MAKING 3RD-PARTY VERIFIED CLAIMS WORK FOR YOUR CLIENTS

Helping clients understand what different certifications mean can empower smarter, more values aligned food choices. Here's how to keep it honest, relevant, and results-driven:

Center Values, Access and What Matters Most

Ask upfront: What matters most to you when you shop? Health? Planet? Workers? Recommend certifications that match their priorities.

Decode Labels with Confidence

Encourage clients to look for trusted certification seals on packaging. Teach them how to identify meaningful labels versus marketing claims, and explain what those certifications actually guarantee.

Go to the Source

Guide clients using official, globally recognized certifications. This builds trust, helps debunk greenwashing, and encourages deeper cultural awareness through recognized seals like ROC or Fair for Life. Always refer to official certification sources for the most accurate, up-to-date info.



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