

GRADING SERVICES FOR THE FOOD SERVICE INDUSTRY

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Dairy Grading Branch offers many services on a voluntary, user fee basis that help provide the assurance of wholesome and high-quality milk and dairy products. The Dairy Standardization and Grading Branches work together to offer assistance with inspecting and grading dairy products.

Dairy products play a vital role in food service operations.

- ☆ Essential for a well-balanced diet
- ☆ Ingredient in many dishes
- ☆ Provide the excellent flavor consumers desire
- ☆ Many varieties of dairy products available

Those involved with food service programs need to know the product characteristics and their potential uses.

Successful use of dairy products in food service depends upon correct purchasing, handling, storage, and serving of these products. Dairy products are perishable, so careful selection and quality control take on added importance

QUALITY Everyone seeks top quality in the products they buy, and AMS can help with that buying decision. The Dairy Standardization Branch has established standards or specifications for many dairy products. Products are inspected and graded according to quality and appearance. When selecting by specific grade, you can expect uniform and consistent taste, feel, appearance, and color of the product.

Before a dairy product can even be inspected, the **Wholesomeness** processing plant must meet USDA requirements for quality and sanitation. A USDA dairy inspector checks basic plant sanitation, incoming raw products, and processing procedures.

Grading According To Grade Standards Or Buyer's Specifications

Products may be graded based on USDA's standards or customers may buy products based on their specific standards. USDA can assist in developing specifications for a food service program. Product evaluation may be tailored to fit a group's particular needs. The group sets the standards for the product, and USDA will evaluate the product according to what is requested.

AMS dairy services can direct food service programs to processors who use the USDA grading system. Buying from recognized companies saves time while assuring consistent high quality in the purchased products.

Grade Labels And Quality Assured Shields





SERVICES AVAILABLE

For more information about USDA dairy services, write to: USDA/AMS/Dairy Programs, Dairy Grading Branch, 2150 Western Court, Suite 100, Lisle, IL 60532-3900 or call the Dairy Grading Branch at 630-810-9999, fax 630-437-5060 or e-mail at Ken.Vorgert@usda.gov.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, or call 800-245-6340 (voice) or 202-720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.

Lot Evaluation: AMS services can be used to inspect the actual supply of products that are bought. For example, a manufacturer's lot, a truckload, or each shipment from a particular processor can be inspected and graded. AMS can inspect any dairy product supply that a food service program is interested in purchasing.

Compositional Analysis: Laboratory service consists of analytical and quality control tests. Services include all chemical and bacteriological determinations needed to evaluate class, quality, condition, and keeping properties.

Condition of Container: AMS also checks the condition of the packaging to be sure that containers properly protect the product and maintain its quality.

Test Weighing: AMS will weigh products to make sure that what was paid for was received.

Dispute Resolution: AMS acts as a mediator between the dairy plant and the buyer if there is a disagreement over quality, condition, or weight.