Farm Product Packaging and Labeling

Farms must consider three important factors when packaging product:

1. Are product labels in compliance with the law?
2. Does packaging increase consumer awareness about and loyalty to your farm brand?
3. Are products packaged in containers and cases that minimize damage in transport?

1. Are product labels in compliance with the law?

Label reviews are not required by the Department prior to them being put into the market, but all products sold in NYS are subject to review and shall comply. It is highly recommended that you have your labels reviewed before sending them to print. There is no cost to submit your label to NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets for review.

The label will be reviewed for:

- Product Identity [Standard of Identity, Non-Standardized]
- Grade A status
- Flavor Name
- Net Contents
- Nutrition Facts [Nutrition analysis is not included]
- Name and Address of manufacturer/distributor/packer
- Ingredients [including allergens]
- Construction of the Ingredient List
- Plant number
- Exemptions
- Claims and/or other statements
- Disclosure and/or warning statements
- Optional statements
- Languages
- Country of Origin
- Sizing and spacing
- Location and proper placement

To submit a label for review or ask further questions, contact:

Kathy J. Laviolette
Dairy Products Specialist I
tel. 518.457.8872
tax. 518.485.8730
kathy.laviolette@agriculture.ny.gov

2. Does packaging increase consumer awareness about and loyalty to your farm brand?

The more you distance yourself from direct marketing (i.e. farmers markets, farm stands and CSAs), the more important packaging design is to educate and attract customers. Vegetables
and fruit do not require packaging to convey quality, but dairy and meat and other added value farm products sell themselves oftentimes from their packaging more than anything else.

**Tips for Great Packaging and Label Design**

- **Keep it simple.** Your packaging doesn’t have to tell your whole story. Most logos are just a specific font, color and simple lines
- **Highlight what makes your product special**
- **Rely on tradition,** like colors and shapes people are used to (i.e. the color standards for milk – red is whole, blue is low-fat, purple is skim; red and green are great signifying colors for Italian and Mexican products, etc.)
- **Start with form and function.** Make sure your packaging best preserves your product from farm to store. Does the label stay adhered and clear despite cold temperatures? Is the product properly sealed? Does the packaging increase the freshness or shelf life?
- **Think about convenience to your customer** (i.e. that they can easily consume the product the way it’s meant to be consumed)
- **Use clear containers if you can highlight the appearance of the product’s quality.** In most cases, you’ll want to select opaque or colored containers for dairy products.
- **Invest in high quality product photos,** which means that they are 300 DPI or greater to be used online or in print advertisements.
- **Seek out advice:** This can include hiring a designer or photographer, calling a packaging or label company and asking for product advice, asking your family and friends for feedback or going to your potential buyers and asking their opinions.
- **Check out high quality packaging and label printing at** [http://milkpack.weebly.com](http://milkpack.weebly.com)

**Adding Value with Third Party Certifications and Labels:**
Certain additional labels will help you market your products to target consumers and give you access to wholesale opportunities. Here are some examples:

- **American Cheese Society:** Winners from the annual competition are permitted to add a “winners ribbon” on their packaging. Numerous buyers have told CADE they look to stock cheeses with this award. [https://www.cheesesociety.org/](https://www.cheesesociety.org/)

- **Animal Welfare Approved:** offers several certifications for animal welfare of various animals as well as an additional Certified Grassfed. [http://animalwelfareapproved.org/standards/dairy-cattle-2015/](http://animalwelfareapproved.org/standards/dairy-cattle-2015/)

- **New York State Grown & Certified:** A new state sponsored promotional label with a free certification process. It is currently available to produce growers who are certified for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and are participating in Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) plans. [http://certified.ny.gov/producers](http://certified.ny.gov/producers)

- **Kosher Certified:** This is important in New York State, home to the largest Jewish community in the world. [https://oukosher.org/get-kosher-certification-application/](https://oukosher.org/get-kosher-certification-application/)
3. **Are products packaged in containers and cases that minimize damage in transport?**

Whether you are driving to the farmers market or to a distributor’s warehouse, you want to make sure that your packaging safely delivers your product to the end consumer. For this reason, it is incredibly important to do the following:

- Sell products by the full case only. Selling single units or partial cases can lead to products shifting and breaking in transit.
- Purchase cases that are intended for the containers your products in which your products are bottled. Most jar and bottle companies will have cardboard boxes they sell with each specific container to perfectly fit the containers. In doing so, you will maximize the amount of product you can move in your vehicle and minimize damage.
- Use cases that can be stacked on top of each other, either milk crates or taped or secured cardboard boxes.
- Purchase cases that work for your product. Wax coated boxes are best for products that are wet, such as meat and produce. Corrugated cardboard boxes are best for refrigerated and shelf stable added value products that are not high in condensation.
- To minimize costs, ask your buyers to return boxes so you can re-use them.