

# BIOPREFERRED PROGRAM OVERVIEW



[www.biopreferred.gov](http://www.biopreferred.gov)

## USDA's BioPreferred Program

The goal of BioPreferred is to increase the development, purchase and use of biobased products through two initiatives: procurement preference by Federal Agencies and their contractors, and voluntary product certification and labeling for consumers.

## Biobased Products Defined

Biobased products are finished commercial or industrial products (other than feed, food, or fuel) that are composed in whole, or in significant part, of biological products -- renewable agricultural materials (including plant, animal and marine materials) or forestry materials.

Biobased products also include biobased intermediate/'upstream' materials such as bioresins or biopolymers, or feedstocks such as succinic acid. Biobased products do not include fossil fuels such as coal or petroleum, motor vehicle fuels, heating oil and electricity produced from biomass (biological material from living or recently living organisms, most commonly used as a renewable energy source).



## Federal Procurement Preference

The US Government and its contractors are required by law to purchase products that are biobased. The BioPreferred program identifies – via a regulatory process called designation -- which types of products must be afforded this procurement preference. As a part of this process, a minimum biobased content is specified for each product category, and information on the technical, health and environmental characteristics of these products is made available on the BioPreferred Web site. Biobased products that had a significant market share in 1972 do not qualify for Federal procurement preference or for certification and labeling. For example, cotton T-shirts are biobased, but are considered a 'mature market product' and are ineligible since a significant portion of the T-shirt market, as of 1972, consisted of cotton-based products.

## Voluntary Certification and Labeling

The consumer-focused portion of BioPreferred is designed to empower individuals to consider the verified amount of biobased content in a product. This content is listed on the certified product's label. The biobased label is intended to be:

- Easy to understand
- Transparent by way of percent biobased content
- Cost-effective to the end user
- Proprietary and controlled

Biobased certification is based on a product's biobased (new carbon) content only, as measured by a standard test method (ASTM D6866). The BioPreferred program encourages manufacturers to share, with the program and with prospective buyers, other product attributes such as life cycle analysis (LCA), environmental and human health effects, life-cycle costs, sustainability benefits, and performance.

## Certified Biobased Product Eligibility

Products must be biobased to be eligible for certification and labeling. Products that fit into one of the designated Federal procurement preference categories must meet or exceed the required biobased content minimum for that category (Product categories and biobased content minimums may be found here.) All other products considered for certification must be at least 25 percent biobased unless the label applicant applies for and receives an alternative minimum biobased content. Mature market products, which are excluded from the federal procurement preference program, are also excluded from the voluntary labeling program.



## Application Requirements

Applicants must provide a variety of information about the product and pursue certification in a step-by-step process. Product manufacturers, distributors, or brand owners should begin the process by creating an application on the BioPreferred Web site. Do not contact a third party laboratory for product testing first, as testing conducted outside the certification process steps will not be considered.

## Product Certification

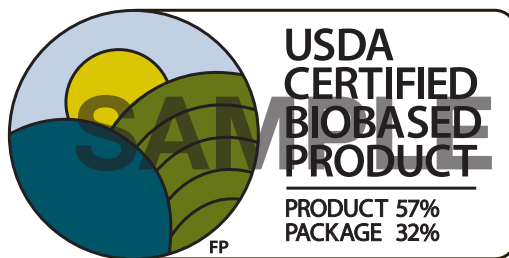
USDA will evaluate each application to determine if the product meets the above certification criteria, and a sample of the product must be tested for biobased content. USDA will certify products that meet the criteria and deny certification to those that do not. Applicants of certified products, once notified, may begin using the “USDA Certified Biobased Product” label. Explanations of denials will be provided to applicants; applications may be revised and resubmitted.

Certification will remain valid as long as the product is manufactured in accordance with the information supplied in the approved application. If USDA revises the applicable required minimum biobased content for a product, manufacturers and vendors may continue to label their previously certified product only if it meets the new minimum biobased content level.

## USDA Certified Biobased Label Artwork

The emblem in the label is meant to represent the sun, soil/farm, and aquatic environments. The certification label is intended to be used only to represent products and packaging approved for the voluntary labeling program, including:

- On a qualifying product or package
- In product literature/advertisements, adjacent to a qualifying product or package
- On a website to identify a qualifying product or package
- On point-of-purchase materials



*USDA Certified Biobased Product Label*

## About the Certified Products

As of December 2012, USDA has certified 900 biobased products in more than 100 product categories. Certified products include construction, janitorial, and grounds keeping products specified and purchased by the Department of Defense and Federal agencies, to personal care and packaging products used by consumers every day.