

# FSIS Glossary of Special Terms

**Cooked:** Products have undergone a full lethality heat process step (e.g. cooking) to achieve food safety. Finished products are in the process category Fully Cooked—Not Self Stable. FSIS requires the products to be frozen or refrigerated for food safety purposes. These products also meet the definition of Ready to Eat (RTE) as defined in 9 CFR 430.1.

**Cured/Drying/Fermented without Heat process:** Products have undergone curing, drying, fermenting or acidifying processing steps as the sole means by which product achieves food safety. The process may include a low-level heat treatment as long as the heat treatment is not used as means to achieve food safety. Finished products are in the process category Not Heat Treated—Shelf Stable. FSIS does not require shelf stable products to be frozen or refrigerated for food safety purposes.

**Cured/Drying/Fermented with Heat process:** Products have undergone a heat treatment processing step to achieve food safety in combination with curing, drying, or fermenting or acidifying process to achieve food safety. Finished products are in the process category Heat Treated—Shelf Stable. FSIS does not require shelf stable products to be frozen or refrigerated for food safety purposes. **Note:** If the establishment produces using the processing steps applicable under this process category and the product is not shelf stable, then the establishment is producing product under the process category Fully Cooked – Not Shelf Stable.

**Post-lethality exposed product:** Ready-to-eat product that comes into direct contact with a food contact surface after the lethality treatment in a post-lethality processing environment (9 CFR 430.1).

**Raw Product – Non-Intact (previously named Raw Ground):** This process category applies to establishments that further process by using processing steps such as grinding, comminuting, injecting product with solutions, or mechanical tenderization by needling, cubing, pounding devices or other means of creating non-intact product. Examples of finished products in this category include raw products reconstructed into formed entrees, mechanically separated species and advanced meat recovery product. If the establishment produces bench trim or pieces of meat produced from non-intact meat, then the bench trim or pieces are also considered non-intact.

**Raw Product – Intact (previously named Raw Not Ground):** FSIS considers raw products to be in the process category Raw Product—Intact unless the product has undergone any of the processes associated with the Raw Product—Not Intact process category. Product in the Raw Product—Intact process category includes: carcasses that are cooled or poultry that has met the chilling requirements (9 CFR 381.66); raw meat or raw product (in whole or in part) that has been fabricated into parts beyond the carcass halves, quarters, primals and subprimals. Beef manufacturing trimmings are also an example of intact raw beef product unless they have undergone any of the processes that apply to non-intact product.

**Ready to Eat (RTE) Product:** Ready to Eat applies to any product intended for human consumption without further preparation steps. Note: Products that appear fully cooked or are customarily consumed without further preparation, but the label does not include cooking instructions, are by default considered RTE.

RTE fully cooked means that the products have been sufficiently cooked so that they are safe to eat as they are, with no further preparation required by the consumer. Note: Many of these products are customarily eaten hot, and heating instructions may be included on the label. This does not affect the classification of these products as RTE (9 CFR 430.1).

Some frozen RTE products require reheating for palatability. These frozen products are still safe to eat without this further preparation by the consumer and are therefore still considered RTE. Some examples include: fully cooked hams, cooked beef, roast beef, pastrami, corned beef, hot dogs, meat loaves, meat and poultry salads, sliced luncheon meats, baked chicken, frozen entrees, and poultry rolls. These finished products must be labeled in a manner that identifies them as RTE by the consumer.

Fresh or frozen entrees with fully cooked meat or poultry portions combined with fully cooked sauces, vegetables, pasta, or other ingredients are RTE products. These products are designed to be re-heated by the consumer, and may include instructions for re-heating.

**Not Ready to Eat (NRTE) Product:** Not Ready to Eat applies to products with cooking instructions or labeled with statements on the principal display panel such as “Cook Thoroughly, Cook and Serve, Not Ready to Eat, or For Safety and Quality- follow these cooking instructions.” These products are considered NRTE.

Some NRTE finished products are heat treated but are not fully cooked. These NRTE products are required to have sufficient labeling information to inform the consumer that the product must be cooked for safety. This information may be contained within the product name on the principal display panel, as well as bear cooking instructions that refer to cooking the product for safety rather than heating the product for best quality. The product often times may bear a safe handling instruction.

Some NRTE finished products are prepared with both meat/poultry components that have received a lethality treatment in combination with non-meat/poultry components that need to receive a lethality treatment. These multi-component products, e.g., meals, dinners, and entrees, have labeling features which are conspicuous so that intended users are fully aware that the product must be cooked for safety. The principle display panel on the label defines these products, e.g., “Cook and Serve, “Must be thoroughly cooked,” “Cook before eating”, and the product must include cooking instructions.

**Shelf Stable:** Shelf stable products do not spoil under ordinary unrefrigerated temperature and humidity conditions, if the package integrity is maintained. These products are free of microorganisms capable of growing in or on the product at unrefrigerated conditions (over 50°F) at which the product is intended to be held during distribution and storage. FSIS does not require shelf stable products to be frozen or refrigerated for food safety purposes.

**Thermally Processed – Commercially Sterile:** This process category applies to establishments that use a thermal processing step. Thermally processed, commercially sterile finished products are products in cans or flexible containers such as pouches, or semi-rigid, as in lunch bowls. These products remain shelf-stable under unrefrigerated conditions. Thermally processed, commercially sterile products are addressed in Subpart G, 318.300 – 311 for meat food products, and Subpart X, 381.300 to 311, for poultry products.

**Trimming:** Pieces of meat (boneless manufacturing trimmings) remaining after steaks, roasts, and other intact cuts have been cut below the Primal and Subprimal level.

Beef manufacturing trimmings are an example of Raw Product -Intact process category product unless they have undergone any of the processes that apply to non-intact product.

Bench trim or pieces of meat produced from non-intact product are considered Raw Product—Non-Intact process category product.