



## INTRODUCTION

It's been said that the modern American supermarket is a reflection of the good life in the United States. The abundance and variety of groceries, produce, meat and other foods, dry goods and non-foods is staggering. Not the least of these attractions is the profusion of meat cuts offered in a typical fresh meat counter, with well over 100 *different* cuts offered at any given time in a large supermarket, and hundreds more cut names and identities in the overall label inventory. The vastness of choice for consumers in this array of fresh and cured meats is truly a benefit of American life.

“something  
ought to be  
done”

Yet the self-service meat display also has been at the root of many shoppers' frustrations. There are so many choices on which to center meals that few consumers could know or even be expected to learn them all. So many cuts of meat, called by so many different names, often left shoppers wishing the “kindly old butcher” of one's mother's or grandmother's memory was back to tell them how to cook or what to buy. Shopper confusion was compounded by the innovative merchandising techniques of retailers who sought to differentiate their otherwise generic fresh meats—sometimes by using colorful names. There were many more names (estimated at more than

1,000) than cuts. Occasionally, the same names described different cuts and in other cases a single cut might have had two different names in the same store! Colorful, or “fanciful,” names were often devised to enhance meat sales, rather than to provide customer information.

In the early 1970s, organizations ranging from THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS to HOUSEWIVES FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION, NATIONAL CONSUMERS UNITED, the VIRGINIA CITIZENS CONSUMER COUNCIL, the CONSUMERS FEDERATION OF AMERICA and scores of other private and government groups, newspaper and magazine food editors and cookbook authors, all agreed that “something ought to be done” about the puzzling variety of meat names.

A collective commitment of the meat/retail industry of that time was to establish a program intended to mitigate confusion that often beset meat shoppers in a supermarket. The NATIONAL LIVE STOCK & MEAT BOARD, then with more than 50 years of meat science, retail merchandising and home economics experience, was asked to coordinate industry efforts. An industry group was joined by meat science educators, food writers and representatives of consumer organizations and government agencies—including the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE and the WHITE HOUSE OFFICE FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS—in what became known as the *Industry-Wide Cooperative Meat Identification Standards Committee (ICMISC)*.

That committee's goal was the development and promulgation of a meat cut identification system that *every retail meat organization in the U.S.* could readily adapt to its own merchandising program.

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It is today a system that provides simple and complete label information to help even the uninitiated shopper in a food store.

The listing of approved names for retail meat cuts that has been established by the *ICMISC* is the most comprehensive summary of retail meat nomenclature available. In its original research for an educational manual more than two decades ago, the *ICMISC* assembled information on existing nomenclature of meats merchandised in the U.S.

In 1973, the industry introduced the *Uniform Retail Meat Identity Standards (URMIS)* program—a consumer-oriented identification system which simplifies and standardizes the perplexing array of fresh meat cuts and their names. The *URMIS* program adopted by food stores was seen as a guarantee for consumers that the same cut of meat would have the same name in every store, in every city across the country.

But even more, in the age of electronic scanning, *URMIS* has advanced as a tool for sales information and inventory control. In the fall of 1984, *ICMISC* received recognition by the UNIFORM CODE COUNCIL (the organization responsible for assigning bar codes) for a standardized list of numbers for random weight retail meat cuts. The bar codes that first appeared on manufactured foods and other products in the 1970s were appearing on random weight packages of meats and other fresh foods.

The same technology that has scanned the computer-readable bar codes on other pre-packaged products sold in all kinds of stores has now been applied to those meat cuts packaged and coded in the store, at a retail company's warehouse operation, or items prepackaged at an inspected meat processing facility. Within the *URMIS* system identification for meat cuts, Universal Product Code (U.P.C.) numbers have been assigned to every cut. The system is now able to identify wholesale cuts coming into the store from meat packers and purveyors, and provides code numbers for every different retail cut.

For a retailer, the ability to electronically “scan” meat packages using the U.P.C. bar codes provides information to assist in merchandising meat more effectively and improves opportunities through inventory and sales management—all while serving customers better.

The managements of thousands of food stores have adopted the *URMIS* system. Over the years, a number of states and municipalities also have approved the *URMIS* program as a substantial step forward in “truth in labeling” for fresh food products.

There has been a concern of the industry that some local governments—feeling that too little was being done by industry to alleviate consumer confusion at the meat counter—would consider laws and regulations aimed to correct the situation. For those cities and states that adopted the *URMIS* program,



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there was little to present a problem to retailers, as *URMIS* is a program that can be applied effectively across municipal, county and state borders.

In any instance where there is apprehension that lawmakers might be looking at the establishment of unique meat labeling standards, industry spokespersons would be well served to expose them to *URMIS*, a program which, from its very start in 1973, was supported by the retail and meat industry's trade organizations, the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, the WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS and essentially, all of the consumer oversight organizations.

After 30 years of work, the ICMISC continues to keep the URMIS program abreast of the retail meat labeling practices. URMIS must reflect the ever changing merchandising and marketing programs to fit today's consumer. To that end, the URMIS system and the standardized U.P.C.s for variable measure fresh meat products were reviewed and updated in 1995. Then in 2002, anticipating the introduction of Reduced Space Symbology for variable measure meats, produce and deli products, the ICMISC conducted another thorough review and revision of URMIS and fresh meat U.P.C.s. This manual contains the results of that review, and has been approved by the ICMISC for use by the meat industry.

*\*This manual exhibits more than 500 cuts of fresh and cured meats, including some duplicate photos. In an "average" supermarket, a shopper is likely to see 100 or more cuts during a given weekly sale period. A large store might easily have 150 cuts at one time. Many retailers would have most of the cuts in their merchandising inventory. The totality of cuts named in this manual are the result of research to identify the most popular cuts in different regions, though these regions are not named in the book.*

### **Acknowledgments:**

From the inception of the Uniform Retail Meat Identify Standards (URMIS) in the 1970's, the retail industry has played a key role in the development of ways to assist consumers in purchasing meat products. This critical work could not have been undertaken without a cohesive and far-reaching joint effort involving retailers, government agencies, commodity groups, and other volunteers.

The current Industry-Wide Cooperative Meat Identification Standards Committee (ICMISC) has been instrumental in developing this set of URMIS recommendations that will aid the retail industry in moving forward with efforts to better manage the meatcase while serving the consumer's best interests. The URMIS Working Group, a sub-committee of the ICMISC, has spent hours reviewing the URMIS

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Manual, discussing potential revisions, and making suggestions to assure that the revised URMIS Manual reflects current needs of the marketplace. Both the URMIS Working Group members and the ICMISC members are listed on the following pages and deserve a heartfelt "thank you" from the entire retail industry for their dedication. Brad Graham, of Harris-Teeter, has served as the Chairman of the ICMISC and has been instrumental in leading the group.

This revision marks the first adaptation of CD-ROM technology to make the URMIS Manual more user-friendly and technologically-sound. This revision could not have taken place successfully without the tireless work of Beth Wonderlin, Graphic Artist. Beth and her team spent countless hours transferring data and information, working with the URMIS Work Group on revisions, and ensuring that the new CD-ROM was built in a truly user-friendly format. The editors of the URMIS Manual wish to publicly thank Beth for her expertise and dedication to this project.



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ACNielsen

AgInfoLink

Ahold USA

Albertsons, Inc. ▲ ■

American Association of Meat Processors

American Meat Institute ▲

American Meat Science Association

The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co., Inc.

Associated Wholesale Grocers

Basha's

Big Y Foods, Inc.

Certified Angus Beef LLC

ConAgra Foods

Copps Corporation

Costco Wholesale

Cryovac/Sealed Air Corporation ▲

eMerge Interactive

Excel Corporation ■

Farmland Foods, Inc. ▲ ■

Fleming

Food Lion Inc.

Food Marketing Institute ▲

The Fresh Look Marketing Group

Global Animal Management, Inc.

Harris Teeter ▲ ■

H.E. Butt Grocery Company

H.K. Johnson & Associates, Inc.

Hobart Corp. ▲

Hormel Foods Corporation

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## *INDUSTRY-WIDE COOPERATIVE MEAT IDENTIFICATION STANDARDS COMMITTEE cont'd.*

IBP Fresh Meats ▲  
Iowa State University

The Kroger Company ▲

Marsh Supermarkets Inc.  
Meat & Poultry XML (associated w/ Wegman's)  
Meat Solutions LLC ▲ ■  
Meijer Inc.  
Mettler-Toledo

Nash Finch Company  
North American Meat Processors Association  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association ▲ ■  
National Meat Association  
National Pork Board ▲ ■

PACTIV Advanced Packaging Solutions  
Pathmark Stores, Inc.  
Premium Standard Farms  
Publix Supermarkets, Inc.

Raley's  
RMS Research Management Systems USA, Inc  
Roundy's Inc. ■

Safeway, Inc. ▲ ■  
SaveMart  
Schnuck Markets Inc.  
Seaboard Farms  
Shaw's Supermarkets  
Smithfield Packing  
Spartan Stores, Inc.  
Super Kmart  
Supervalu Inc. ▲  
Swift & Company

Target Corporation  
Topco Associates, LLC

Uetz Enterprises, Ltd ▲ ■  
Ukrop's Super Markets Inc.  
Uniform Code Council ▲  
U.S. Department of Agriculture ▲ ■

Wakefern Food Corporation  
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. ▲  
Wegmans Food Markets ■  
Winn-Dixie Stores, Inc.

▲ ICMISC Steering Committee  
■ URMIS Work Group