



# The Cornucopia Institute

## Snack Bar Scorecard Scoring Criteria

### **USDA Certified Organic**

There are many certified organic options when it comes to snack bars. Certified organic brands received 500 points. Brands that are “made with” organic ingredients received 300 points. Conventional brands received zero points.

### **Brand Commitment**

Brand commitment to organics, as measured by the percentage of offerings a brand sells that are certified organic, is important because a brand that is wholly invested in the organic label has an incentive to maintain the integrity of the label. This is not merely a theoretical point – the organic marketplace is rife with certified products that exploit one loophole or another in order to reduce costs. Cornucopia’s scorecards are designed to help consumers identify products that adhere to the letter and spirit of the organic regulations.

The number of points awarded equals the percentage of products a brand sells that are certified organic, up to 100.

### **100% Whole Ingredients**

A clear indication of high-quality snack bars is the presence of whole foods and the absence of highly processed isolated flours, syrups, powders, starches, proteins and concentrates. These ingredients can be problematic in themselves, but also they can reflect a product that is low-quality, has been overly processed, is designed to sit on a store shelf for long periods of time, or is otherwise cheaply made.

Brands that use only whole ingredients receive 100 points.

### **Colors**

The USDA permits conventional (non-organic) coloring agents in organics due to an alleged shortage of certified organic colors. Cornucopia does not believe that there is a shortage anymore, if there ever was. Because colors, organic or conventional, are an unnecessary additive, bars that do not include colors receive the full 100 points. Brands that use organic colors receive 50 points. Brands that use conventional colors receive zero.

## **Flavors**

As with colors, natural (non-organic) flavors are permitted in organic products, even though organic flavors are available and frequently used by the higher-quality brands. Bars that do not include flavors receive the full 100 points. Brands that use organic flavors receive 50 points. Brands that use conventional flavors receive zero.

## **Sweetener**

For the purposes of this scorecard, Cornucopia does not take a position on the myriad types of sweeteners found in bars (cane sugar, honey, maple syrup, etc). We do however believe in the principle of transparency with regard to ingredients and ingredient labels. For this reason, we award bars that state the type of sweetener used 100 points. Bars that simply list “organic sugar,” which could come from a wide variety of agricultural products, receive zero points.

## **Amount of Sugar**

This is a non-scoring criteria listed for informational purposes. It should be noted that just because a bar brand is certified organic does not mean that it can't include an alarmingly high amount of sugar.

## **Artificial Sweetener/Flavor**

This is an informational, non-scoring criteria for those who wish to limit their intake of artificial sweeteners and flavors.

## **Preservatives**

Preservatives of one kind or another are frequently found in snack bars. Brands that avoid preservatives receive 100 points. Snack bars that use natural preservatives such as mixed tocopherols, malic acid, or ascorbic acid receive 50 points. Brands that use any other preservative receives zero points.

## **Thickeners/Gums**

Thickeners/Gums includes all additives designed to thicken or stabilize the product. Bars that use no thickeners or stabilizers receive 100 points. Those that use certified organic thickeners such as tapioca flour, locust bean gum, carob bean gum, gum acacia, or corn starch receive 50 points. Brands that use conventional thickeners receive zero points.

## **Non-GMO Project Verified or USDA Organic**

Genetic engineering is banned in organics. Conventional products that carry the Non-GMO Project Verified label can also be trusted to not contain GMOs. Snack bars that carries either label receives 100 points.

## **Lecithin**

Lecithin is a common ingredient in processed foods and is most commonly derived from soy or sunflower. Unless it is organic, it is likely derived using harsh chemicals, such as hexane. Snack bars

that are lecithin-free received 100 points. Brands that use organic lecithin received 50 points. Those brands that used conventional lecithin received zero points.

### **May Contain Hexane-extracted Ingredients**

Conventional isolated proteins use harsh chemicals, including hexane, during the extraction process. This is an informational, non-scoring criteria for those who wish to avoid hexane.

### **Hydrogenated Oils**

Hydrogenated oils are generally considered to be unhealthy and are usually found in lower quality processed foods. Snack bars that do not contain hydrogenated oils received 100 points. Brands that included certified organic oil received 20 points. Brands that included conventional oil received zero points.

### **Protein Isolates**

Protein isolates boost protein levels in snack bars, but they are often derived from GMO soy or other conventional crops using harsh chemicals, including hexane, in the extraction process. Snack bars that do not have isolated protein received 100 points. Brands that included organic isolated protein received 50 points. Brands with conventional isolated protein received zero points.

### **Boosted Fiber**

Added fiber is another ingredient of dubious utility. Fiber is readily available in natural form in many fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Snack bars that do not contain boosted fiber received 100 points. Brands with organic fiber received 50 points. Those with conventional fiber received zero points.