

By [Lisa M. Keefe](#) on 3/25/2013

A small Bennington, Vt., poultry processor has been sentenced to two years' probation and 50 hours of community service for misrepresenting the chickens he sold in New York City as being "free range" and "farm raised" when they were in fact neither, according to documents in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York state.

Seeking to overcome financial setbacks, Craig Acton of Hoosic River Poultry began applying false USDA labels to chicken purchased from other wholesalers, representing the products as being from his farm and "qualifying as organic or farm-raised" in order to sell it at a higher price at farmer's markets in New York City, according to a report on the Bennington Banner newspaper website. Acton reportedly was able to buy \$1,200 of meat a week but sell it in New York City for \$5,000 with the false labels on it.

Such false labeling is a felony offense. There was no evidence, though, that the poultry meat was unsafe or had been mishandled at any point in its distribution.