



Cottage Food: How Social Media and Food Freedom Activists Have Changed Our Laws, Impacted Our Food Supply, and Kept Us on Our Toes

Monday, June 8, 2026 | 1:30-2:30 PM



Panelists:

- **Alexis Hamilton**, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist, Virginia Tech
- **Kurt Ruebert**, Small Food Processing Lead, Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals & Licensing
- **Katherine Simon**, Food and Feed Safety Division Director, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- **Tenesha Stubblefield**, Home Food Processing Program Lead, Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, & Licensing
- **Kendall Vela**, Retail Operations Manager - Retail Food Safety Operations, Texas Department of State Health Services



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

TX Cottage Foods

SB 541 (89th)

Senate Bill 541 (89th)

- Signed by Gov. Abbott on May 30, 2025.
- Significant expansion of Cottage Food in Texas.
- GAV increased from \$50k -> \$150k
- New Limited Wholesale called Cottage Food Vendor
- Updated Definitions
- Registry – 3 Scenarios
- **Effective September 1, 2025.**



TEXAS
Health and Human Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

What is a Cottage Food?

HSC 437.002(2-b)(A): **any food other than:**

- meat, meat products, poultry, poultry products
- seafood, including seafood products, fish, fish products, shellfish, and shellfish products
- ice or ice products, including shaved ice, ice cream, frozen custard, popsicles, and gelato
- low-acid canned goods
- products containing cannabidiol or tetrahydrocannabinol
- raw milk and raw milk products



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Health and Human Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

Regulation of CF

Strictly prohibited:

- 437.0191: No Food Manufacturer License for wholesalers.
- 437.0192(a): No inspection of home kitchen and no permitting for production or sale.
- 437.0192(c): Prohibition against employing a person who “knowingly” requires CF to pay a fee or obtain a permit. 🤔
- *What About Complaints?*



TEXAS
Health and Human Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

Questions?

Kendall Vela MPH, RS

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foodestablishments@dshs.texas.gov or 512-834-6753

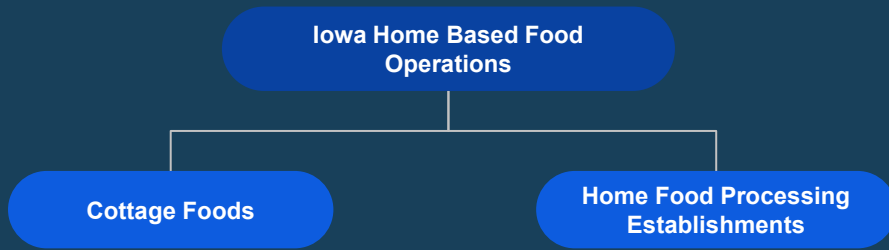
Iowa Home Based Food Operations



Department of Inspections,
Appeals, & Licensing



New Legislation July 1st, 2022



- [Iowa Code Chapter 137D](#) - Home Bakeries are changed to “Home Food Processing Establishments”
- [Iowa Code Chapter 137F](#) - “Cottage Foods” defined; exempt from licensing
- [Iowa Code Chapter 137F](#) - Packaged TCS Food sold at a Farmers Market are exempt from licensing at the market (source still applies)
- On May 11, 2023: “Made to Order” foods were added to the statutory definition of a “Homemade Food Item”

Unregulated Cottage Food Operations

“Cottage Foods”

Regulatory & Licensing:

- Governed by [Iowa Code Chapter 137F](#) and [Iowa Admin. Code 481, Chapter 30](#).
- Licensing and Inspection is not required

Sales & Distribution:

- Annual sales limit: No sales limit
- Allows direct-to-consumer sales only

Production Standards:

- Permits non TCS foods, to include high acid foods and acidified fruits and vegetables
- Prohibits milk/meat products, low acid canned foods

Compliance & Safety:

- No training or registration required
- Specific labeling requirements

Home Food Processing Establishments

“Homemade Food Items”

Regulatory & Licensing:

- Governed by [Iowa Code Chapter 137D](#) and [Iowa Admin. Code 481, Chapter 34](#).
- Requires license and inspection
- License is renewable; annual fee is \$50.

Sales & Distribution:

- Annual sales limit: \$50,000.
- Allows direct-to-consumer and wholesale sales.

Production Standards:

- Permits TCS* and non-TCS* foods.
- Specific foods and processes are prohibited.

Compliance & Safety:

- Training required.
- Enforces food safety standards, including specific labeling and distribution requirements

Demonstration of Control

The central concept behind home food processing establishments is to "Demonstrate Control."

Operators must show they have control and understanding of food safety principles. This is achieved by explaining their methods in writing and through observation, using:

- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Standardized Recipes
- Receiving/Batch/Distribution Records
- Onsite observations

This essentially serves as a highly simplified version of a food safety or HACCP plan.

HFPE Inspection Process

APPLICANTS PROVIDE:

- Application and Fee
- Homemade Food Item List
- Standardized Recipes
- Corresponding Product Labels
- Food Safety Training
- Receiving/Batch/Distribution Records
- Written procedures describing their intended compliance with “Demonstration of Control”.

INSPECTORS ASSESS:

- Compliance with “Demonstration of Control” requires record review and observation/discussion.
- Record review alone is insufficient. Paperwork outlines hazard control; observation verifies implementation and understanding of food safety.
- Assess physical facilities and equipment. Inspections can be virtual (preferred) or in person.

Enforcement Policies

COTTAGE FOODS

- No regulatory authority
- Response to questions, complaints, or cottage foods that violate Iowa law or are discovered during inspections is purely educational, *unless...*
- If cottage foods are found in a licensed food establishment, food processing plant, or home food processing establishment = Approved source violation for the operator.

HFPEs

- Contact regarding unlicensed facility complaints is made via phone, email, or mail.
- Written corrective actions are required for observations made during an HFPE inspection.
- HFPEs are subject to enforcement actions—including suspension, revocation, and injunction—similar to those in other program areas.

Available Resources

INDUSTRY

- Home Prepared Food Item List
- Basic Requirements Guide for HFPEs
- Cottage Food/Farmers Market Guide
- HFPE Overview videos
- Record and SOP Templates
- [Iowa Food Protection Task Force/DIAL](#) websites
- Centralized phone number and email contact for home foods production.

INSPECTORS

- Refresher Videos
- FAQs covering a variety of topics
- SOPs/WI/Guides
- Technical Assistance Survey
- Small Food Processing Lead for Cottage Foods/Farmer's Market questions.
- HFPE program Lead for HFPE questions
- Vice versa

Challenges & Considerations for Home Food Production

Transitioning to Consumer Sales

- **Shift:** Moving from preparation for personal consumption to commercial sales.
- **Barriers:**
 - **Access & Technology:** Difficulties with language, submitting applications, recordkeeping, printing, and participating in virtual inspections.
 - **Compliance:** Meeting requirements for process authorities and specialized equipment.
- **Market Trends:**
 - **Social Media:** The impact of online trends.
 - **Local Focus:** Growth in farmstand nooks, farm-to-table events, and retail outlets specializing in local products.
- **Regulatory Differences:** State-by-state variations in regulations.

Three years later...

What have we learned?

Revisiting key aspects of our approach

- Complaint investigation process
- Re-evaluation of the inspection process for Home Food Processing Establishments (HFPEs)
 - Pre-inspection record requests caused extensive back-and-forth and a backlog of pending applications.

Strengthening collaborative relationships

- Interagency (IDALS, Choose Iowa)
- Collaboration with collectives (FM, Small Ag Groups, SBA).
- Educating grocery and restaurant industry groups
- Collaborations with academia (Iowa State, UNL)
- Engaging with the legislature, as requested by the legislature, to inform, adjust, change, or refine existing laws and regulations.

Thank you!

Kurt Rueber

Small Food Processing Lead

Tenesha Stubblefield

Home Food Processing Lead

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Leveraging academic partnerships to educate small producers

Alexis M. Hamilton, Ph.D.

June 8, 2026 | AFDO Conference

Leveraging academic partnerships

- Academic and regulatory partners can play complementary roles in small food producers' businesses
 - As an academic and Extension Specialist, I **can't** tell someone what they are and aren't allowed to do (what is legal)
 - What I **can** do is educate and empower them to make safe food within a regulatory framework
- Examples of academic educational opportunities through cooperative Extension systems
 - One-on-one technical assistance and/or site visits
 - Resource development (e.g., food safety plans, allergen control plans)
 - Niche trainings, workshops, and educational materials



Ways to work together

- Regulatory partners serving on educational/academic advisory committees
- Co-teaching educational workshops aimed at regulatory compliance (virtual, in-person, asynchronous, etc.)
- Invite academic partners to conduct onsite visits for small producers struggling with the practical side of regulatory compliance



JOIN US FOR

FOOD SAFETY SCHOOL
AN INTRO TO FOOD SAFETY

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2025

This **hybrid** training teaches the fundamentals of food safety and regulatory compliance for beginning, small, and growing value-added food businesses.

IN-PERSON WORKSHOP
Virginia Department of Ag Laboratory
261 Mt. Clinton Pike
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

\$25

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP
View the online module at the link in the registration email

[Register here](#)

Virginia Cooperative Extension

The poster features a central illustration of various food products including a jar of jam, a bottle of hot sauce, a carton of milk, and a bottle of oil, surrounded by icons of a microscope and a virus. The text is arranged in a clear, hierarchical layout with bold headings and a call to action.



Let's talk about it!



Alexis M. Hamilton, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist

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Partnerships and Synergies

Katherine Simon | Food & Feed Safety Division Director

Why?

- Increasing number of registrants
- Increase in complaints
- Increase in violations
- Administrative resources exhausted

Staff activity	% of time
Complaint investigation	3%
Inquiries and outreach	37%
Registration processing	60%

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025
Fee registrants	464	438	489	599
No-fee registrants	6,836	8,474	10,364	13,518
Revenues	24,200	22,600	23,850	24,00
Expenses	49,105	50,770	113,500	160,145
Net Program Funds	-24,905	-28,170	-89,650	-136,145

What We Did

FOOD LICENSING MODERNIZATION

[Home](#) > Food Licensing Modernization

Food Licensing Modernization – Background

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Food and Feed Safety Division initiated a Food Licensing Modernization Project in early 2024 to identify and plan actions to address challenges with current food licensing. The Minnesota Legislature had last made major modifications to the MDA food licensing in 2003, though the state's food business landscape has evolved significantly since that time. MDA's desired outcomes for license modernization included:

- Simplification of licensing structure
- Improved business access
- Capability for business innovation
- Flexibility for business adaptability and evolution
- Correlation to food safety risk
- Sustainability for program funding

FORMS + RESOURCES

- > [Summary of Input and Feedback on Potential Changes to the MDA Food Licensing Model \(PDF\)](#)
- > [Partner Input to Develop Home Food Processor License Report \(PDF\)](#)
- > [Partner Feedback on the Potential Food Licensing Model Summary Report \(PDF\)](#)

Working Groups: LFAC and FIT

Cottage Foods Safety Hour: Ask the experts

Minnesota cottage foods producers and farmers market managers are invited every month to attend a virtual [Cottage Foods Safety Hour](#) to hear a short presentation and then ask Extension educators questions.

Submit questions in advance by emailing exfdsafe@umn.edu.

- Analyze – what are the facts
- Communication channels – get in front of your audience
- Influence – get buy in from your audience
- Engagement – understanding and shared agreement with your audience



6/18/2026

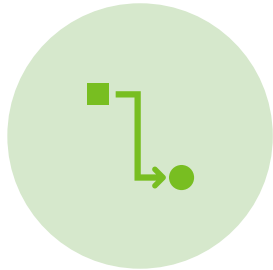


Equitably ensuring the integrity of Minnesotan's food supply | www.mda.state.mn.us



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So What Happened?



FOCUS - INTERNAL
ADMINISTRATIVE
NEEDS



GOT AHEAD OF ISSUES



SUCCESSFUL
LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL



UNSUCCESSFUL
LEGISLATIVE
PROPOSAL*

Now What's Next



- Supporting stakeholders in systems feedback
- Developing training network
- Improving online registration system
- Exploring market and event coordinator supports



Engagement Concepts

[Community Outreach & Engagement](#)

Molly Donovan, UNH Cooperative Extension

[7 Strategies For Effective Stakeholder Management](#)

International Institute for Management Development Blog



Example Outputs

[MDA Food Licensing Modernization Webpage](#)

includes report links

[MDA Cottage Food Data Webpage](#)

includes charts, live maps, report

FFSD Outreach Policy – *available upon request*

