Product Information

This section covers food safety regulations and guidelines, as well as permit applications, labeling requirements and more.

Food Safety

Initial Operation/Facility Set Up

What Should I Do First?
Contact local authorities (city clerk or county auditor) for information on local requirements. Otherwise, you will need to track the necessary contact information specific to your situation.

Retain the services of an attorney and accountant. They will be able to inform and guide you through the legal and financial maze you encounter when starting a business.

Why an attorney?
Why an accountant?

Make sure the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) is one of the first state agencies you contact. Because food manufacturing is governed by the Iowa Food Code 2005, the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) - has primary responsibility for practical oversight of the Iowa Food Code and authority to inspect and license your business. You will be directed to the department’s environmental specialist assigned to your area or to the local authorities who coordinate food safety inspections. If you plan to make your product at home, you will need to have an area certified as a commercial kitchen. When building a new facility or remodeling an existing facility, the DIA will guide you in creating a code-compliant processing area for food safety. These facility types include food manufacturing plants and commercial kitchens. Facilities, such as pilot plants and sensory testing, that assist with product development must also comply with Iowa Food Code regulations.

Guidance for creating a code-compliant food processing area is available from ISU Extension faculty member Angela Shaw, 515-294-0868 or angelaml@iastate.edu. Dr. Shaw also offers guidance in preparing Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) procedures and for certification under ISO (International Standards Organization) and AIB (American Institute of Baking) quality management systems.

Reference the website for Iowa Department of Economic Development’s Business Licensing Information Center - a clearinghouse for regulatory requirements for Iowa businesses. “Begin License Search” will lead you to a series of questions about your type of business which, in turn, will yield descriptions of each license/permit/certificate along with contact information in the appropriate state bureau. Depending on the nature of your business, you will likely be making license purchases from various agencies.
Operation/Production

What Am I Selling?
The types of inspection and certification required depend on what you are selling. While the inspection and certification of food operations always involve the DIA, it is important to note you will also need to involve the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) for the inspection and certification of meats, poultry and dairy operations. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is currently establishing new requirements for all meat and poultry plants to improve food safety and begin the long-awaited modernization of USDA's meat and poultry inspection system.

As noted on the FSIS website - “All plants must develop, adopt and implement a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan for each of their processes. Under HACCP, plants identify critical control points during their processes where hazards such as microbial contamination can occur, establish controls to prevent or reduce those hazards, and maintain records documenting that the controls are working as intended. FSIS believes that HACCP-based process control, combined with appropriate food safety performance standards, is the most effective means available for ensuring the safety of food, including controlling and reducing harmful bacteria on raw meat and poultry products.

The extension publication, Iowa Laws: Sale of Home-prepared Foods, states, “Iowa law requires inspection and licensing for all people who advertise or distribute potentially hazardous food products prepared in the home for consumption off-the-premise. Licensing is required to sell non-potentially hazardous food and potentially hazardous food on a wholesale basis (such as selling or distributing products to restaurants, retailers, or institutions).” It also clearly outlines those foods which are exempt from licensing requirements.

Product Storage and Handling

- Postharvest Handling & Cooling of Fresh Fruits, Vegetables and Flowers for Small Farms (North Carolina State University)
- Postharvest Handling of Fruits and Vegetables – (ATTRA)
- “Produce Handling for Direct Marketing” (MidWest Plan Service at Iowa State University)

Types of Process Certification

There are two types of process certification – American Institute of Baking (AIB) () and International Standards Organization (ISO). See the following websites for additional details on the process certification options they offer:

- AIB
- ISO
As noted on ISO’s website, “‘certification’ refers to the issuing of written assurance (the certificate) by an independent external body that it has audited a management system and verified that it conforms to the requirements specified in the standard. ‘Registration’ means that the auditing body then records the certification in its client register. So, the organization’s management system has been both certified and registered.” Process certification is not required.

**Product Development**

How will you know if your product is the same when you go from “bench-scale” to “processing scale”? Depending on the type of product and the complexity of your process, “scale-up” for food production begins with knowing equipment capacities and how the food behaves in a larger environment. During food production, not only is the batch size important, but it will determine how factors like time and temperature are controlled. The texture of the product as it is being processed also determines, to some extent, how much of it can be produced at a time if it needs to move through equipment. Controls on processing factors relate directly to food safety, which has to be top priority. Unless you are a food engineer, you need to ask for guidance on how to “scale-up” production.

**Resources and Links**

The [website](#) is a tool developed by ISU Center for Transportation Research and Education and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. It estimates markets for 204 food products using USDA Economic Research Service data.

**Food Labeling**

Laboratories are equipped and designed to run tests for nutrient/ingredient labels. The Iowa State University Food Science laboratory, for example, can provide assistance and direction in developing your food products.

**Farmer’s Market Labeling**

According to the [Iowa Farmers Market Development Manual](#), the label on packaged food sold at farmers’ markets must include:

1. Product name
2. Ingredient List (if the product has more than one)
3. Name/Address of where the food was prepared
4. Net weight/volume/numerical