
Manufactured Food Program 2024 Update

Annual Report

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Minnesota Department of Agriculture
625 Robert Street North
Saint Paul, MN 55155-2538

david.e.smith@state.mn.us

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Contents

- Manufactured Food Program 2024 Update 1
 - Introduction..... 1
 - Services Provided..... 1
 - Program Highlights 2
 - Financial Support 3
 - Program Milestones and Priorities for the Year 4
 - Milestones 4
 - Priorities for the next year 4
 - Industry Spotlights..... 4

Introduction

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Manufactured Food Program is responsible for inspection of food manufacturers and warehouses to assess their compliance with federal and state laws and rules to produce and distribute safe food products. These types of facilities primarily wholesale products to other businesses for sale to use in businesses such as restaurants or as an ingredient in another food product.

Producing safe food is a requirement of all food manufacturers. The Manufactured Food Program works cooperatively with industry to manage food safety risks to the consumer by application of science-based regulations and best practices to ensure hazards are controlled, facilities are maintained, and staff are trained for the job they are doing.

Examples of manufactured food firms we work with include:

- Bakeries
- Low-acid canned foods such as canned vegetables.
- Acidified Foods including pickled vegetables, BBQ sauces, salad dressings
- Fresh cut and frozen fruits and vegetables
- Fermented foods
- Coffee roasters and beverage processors
- Alcohol processors
- Fish processors
- Dietary supplement processors and distributors
- Food salvaging and brokers
- Food storage warehouses
- Product of the farm manufacturers

Services Provided

We have a team of highly qualified food safety professionals who are responsible for conducting risk-based inspections to assess the safety of the food compared to applicable regulations.

The Manufactured Food Program supports new and existing businesses by educating them on regulatory requirements for their operation and providing guidance on what compliance "looks like" in practical terms. Being proactive with outreach and support for new firms is a focus to get a new business on track for success with their regulatory compliance and safe food production methods.

Inspections can cover a wide range of topics depending on the type of products produced. These assessments can include:

- Evaluating food safety plans to verify hazards have been identified and appropriate controls are in place to manage allergen, bacterial, chemical and physical hazards that are likely to exist.

- Determining if requirements for employee training and food safety record keeping are being maintained and reviewed by management.
- Collecting environmental samples of food, water, or to verify firms are managing risks to their products and consumers.
- Conducting investigations and following up on consumer complaints to evaluate food safety risks.
- Working with local, state, and federal partners during recalls to conduct investigations and evaluate the effectiveness of product recalls.
- When a firm is unable to make voluntary corrections, taking compliance action for on-going or serious food safety conditions consistent with state law and rules.

Program Highlights

In FY24, our team conducted 1,198 routine inspections in addition to 50 reinspections, six complaint investigations, 186 consultations and licensing inspections as well as closing 191 firms.

Table 1: Inspections for FY24

| Inspection Type | Number |
|--|--------|
| Routine Inspections | 1198 |
| Reinspection and Follow Up | 50 |
| Consultation and Licensing | 186 |
| Out of Business | 191 |
| Complaint and food safety investigations | 6 |

Our team includes 15 inspectors located throughout Minnesota, two supervisors, and the program manager. We elected to not fill an administrative position after a vacancy was created to manage increasing operational costs. The impact to services is being monitored.

The program’s staff are highly trained professionals, with most having advanced food safety credentials and training. Staff work with, and inspect, the food industry in the state based on the risks of the products and

processes they conduct. Results from previous inspection guide the inspection frequency to better focus staff resources and time.

The firms we license are varied in complexity, products, and experience level of the operators. The number of licensed firms stays relatively steady year to year, with approximately 10% of licenses being newly issued annually.

Table 2: Number of Licenses

| | High Risk | Medium Risk | Low Risk | Total |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-------|
| Wholesale Food Processor/Manufacturer | 229 | 490 | 542 | 1,261 |
| Wholesale Food Handler (Warehouses) | 33 | 139 | 603 | 775 |
| Total | 262 | 629 | 1,145 | 2,036 |

Financial Support

Funding for program activities is managed with a mix of general funds, state-dedicated funds including license fees, federal cooperative agreements and an inspection contract with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

A significant change last year was moving licensing fees into a dedicated agricultural fund. This change allows for more flexibility in fiscal planning and spending outside of the two-year state budgeting cycle. Federal funding through cooperative agreements and contract inspections the program conducts for the FDA, remain an important part of the program’s financial support.

Table 3: Program Funding Sources

| State Dedicated Funds | General Funds | FDA Contract Inspections | FDA Cooperative Agreements |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 67% | 17% | 13% | 3% |

Program Milestones and Priorities for the Year

Milestones

Outreach to Small Firms: We focused on helping small businesses understand and meet food safety requirements by developing outreach information to help applicants better understand requirements and the process for licensing.

Website Improvements: The program’s website is continuing to undergo updates for content, readability, and navigation.

Priorities for the next year

Efficient and Effective Inspections: We will emphasis conducting risk-based inspections and licensing activities to ensure safety standards are met in the most efficient manner possible for industry and the program.

Industry Spotlights

“I think it’s been an incredible experience working with MDA as our business has grown and developed through the years. From our business growth into a new building, to a facility remodeling project, to finished product label redesigns and development of food safety programs, MDA has been there to help us along. We’ve treated the partnership as synergistic with a common goal to make safe food and thereby help protect the business. For example, based on recommendations from our local inspector, we’ve developed an ingredient tracking program that will help limit our exposure in the case of a supplier recall. MDA and our local inspector have been there as a resource and partner during our food business journey. The journey will continue as we begin to delegate more aspects of our business to our son.

The MDA partnership can be a valuable resource when regulatory, food safety and quality guidance is needed, for any business big or small.”

Cookie Advantage - Mike, Dana, and Tom Hoffmann



I am writing to express our appreciation for the exceptional services provided by the Manufactured Food Program at Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). Feed My Starving Children (FMSC), Food Safety & Quality Assurance department relies on MDA's assistance to obtain vital certificates such as the Certificate of Export, Inspection & Free Sale. These certificates play a crucial role in supporting the work we do to address the crisis of childhood hunger and malnutrition in some of the most vulnerable regions around the world.



FMSC ships MannaPack™ Meal products to over 70 countries around the world. These life-sustaining meals are distributed through our network of charitable partners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), schools, orphanages, and other humanitarian organizations. The efficiency, knowledge-based and professionalism of the MDA team has been key to our success in meeting regulatory requirements.

Looking ahead, we are excited to continue our partnership with MDA. We are eager to engage in training opportunities in 2025 that will help us deepen our understanding of the export process. We view this as a significant opportunity to expand our knowledge and refine our operations, which will ultimately enhance our service to our charitable partners.

Feed my Starving Children – Andra M. Thompson



“MDA has been great to work with in many ways - keeps us educated and operating in the best possible way. The program has been responsive and supportive as we try to navigate the intense world of starting, building, and maintaining a food business. I'm proud to be a part of the Minnesota food community with all the support and education it has to offer. One big way that MDA has supported P&TY Granola Co is through the marketing cost-sharing program. That program has allowed me to focus on my marketing efforts, elevate my branding and help to represent P&TY up against the big competitors. Marketing costs are hard to justify at times, but they make a big difference, the more resources there the better!”

P&TY Granola Company – Brit Williams

My experience working with MDA has been an incredibly positive experience. Gurley's Foods changed from corporate ownership to independent ownership in July of 2020. Shortly after that change the owner gave me the opportunity of advancing from quality technician to managing the company's food safety systems. The last few years have been challenging managing our food safety systems without having direction from a team of QA Directors. I discussed these challenges with our MDA inspector during our last inspection and received so much great feedback and direction on educational resources. We also discussed all the improvements Gurley's has made through MDA inspections and areas where we can continue to grow. I deeply appreciate the professional courtesy MDA has shown me and feel very encouraged to continue my own journey in food safety and working with MDA to help Gurley's continuing to succeed.



Gurley's Foods – Angie Jaspersen