

Starting a Food Processing Business

Good Manufacturing Practices

You've decided to take that old family recipe and turn it into a food processing business. One of the many considerations in planning is to ensure a safe product.

All foods prepared at any location and offered for sale to consumers for distribution to retailers are the responsibility of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH). ADPH is responsible for regulating and enforcing food safety as it pertains to food processing, handling, storage, and sale in Alabama.

If your product is sold across state lines, it will be subject to regulations of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act and the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act. These include labeling, ingredients, preparation, and handling requirements. The FDA offers guidelines for Good Manufacturing Practices in Manufacturing, Packing, and Holding Human Food available at <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm>.

Good Manufacturing Practices

To produce and sell food for human consumption, your food business must conform to good manufacturing practices (GMPs), which are designed and instituted by the federal government to ensure that foods are manufactured, processed, and handled in a safe and sanitary manner. To operate and maintain your business, you must meet the conditions set forth in the GMPs. If a complaint is filed against you or your product, a GMP inspection by the FDA or state is likely to occur. The GMPs include the following areas:

Plants and Grounds. GMPs start with buildings and grounds. The grounds should be kept neat, grass and weeds trimmed, and waste and litter picked up. The site also needs good drainage. Large trees and shrubs near your building may harbor pests. Proper waste treatment and disposal must be suitable so they are not a source of contamination.



Equipment. All equipment must be certified for use in food processing and designed so it can be easily cleaned and sanitized.

Sanitary facilities and controls refers to utilities, and *sanitary water supply* refers to adequate plumbing and sewage services.

Sanitary Operations. All buildings and equipment must be maintained in a clean, sanitary condition. Food contact equipment must be sanitized regularly. Cleaning and sanitizing chemicals must be handled carefully to prevent contamination of ingredients or the finished product.

Processes and Controls. Proper sanitation must be considered in all areas of the operation—purchasing, receiving, storage of raw materials and ingredients, processing, packaging, transportation, etc. All food production must be done under processes and controls that will minimize the potential for contamination and growth of micro-organisms.

Personal Hygiene. All personnel must practice good personal hygiene. Education and training of workers will be necessary to ensure that they are aware of food safety practices, proper handwashing techniques, and the use of gloves. Health is also a consideration; workers must report illnesses.

Detailed GMPs for food processing are available at <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/CGMP/ucm110907.htm>.