
Manufactured Food Program Overview

Food and Feed Safety Division

2023/2024

Minnesota Department of Agriculture
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Introduction

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Manufactured Food Program is responsible for licensing, inspecting, and providing consultation to wholesale food manufactures, food warehouses, and food brokers. The types of food businesses the program works with are primarily producing or distributing products to other businesses for resale in restaurants or grocery stores, or to other food manufacturing businesses to use as an ingredient in a food product.

Producing safe food is a requirement of all food manufactures and the program works cooperatively with industry to manage their risks to the consumer by applying science-based regulations and industry best practices to ensure hazards are controlled, facilities are maintained, and staff are educated for the job they are doing.

Examples of the manufactured food industry here in Minnesota include:

- Bakeries
- Low Acid Canned Foods such as canned vegetables
- Acidified Foods which include pickled vegetables, BBQ sauces, salad dressings
- Fresh Cut and Frozen Fruits and Vegetables
- Fermented Foods
- Coffee Roasters and Beverage Manufacturers
- Alcohol Manufacturers
- Fish Processors
- Dietary Supplement Processors and Distributors
- Food Salvaging and Brokers
- Food Storage Warehouses

Services Provided

The program has a team of fifteen experienced and knowledgeable inspection staff that are responsible for conducting risk-based inspections to assess the safety of the food production processes. Average experience of inspectors in the program is around ten years.

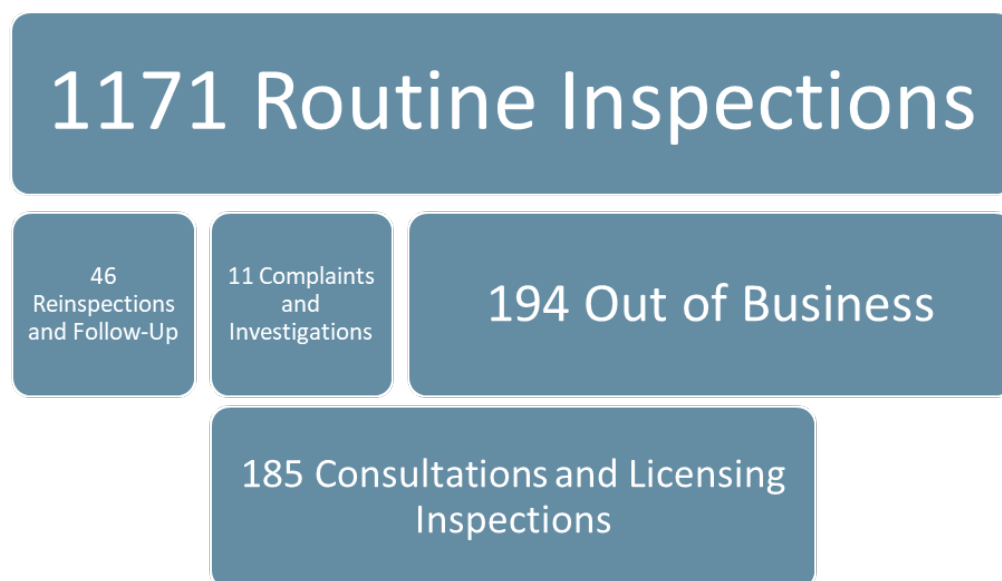
The Manufactured Food Program supports new and existing businesses by advising them on the regulatory requirements specific for their operation and providing guidance on what compliance 'looks like'. The program works to be proactive with outreach and support, especially for new business, to start them on the right track for success.

Depending on the type of products produced, the work the program does covers a wide range. This work looks like:

- Conducting food safety inspections of food manufacturing facilities to determine compliance with the regulations and requirements.
- Evaluating written food safety plans to verify hazards have been identified and appropriate controls are in place to manage allergen, pathogen, chemical, and physical hazards that may exist.
- Evaluating if requirements for employee training and food safety record keeping are being maintained.
- Collecting samples of food, water, or from the environment of a manufacturing facility to verify sanitation and product safety is being maintained.
- Conducting investigations and following up to consumer complaints to evaluate food safety risks.
- Working with local and state partners along with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) during recalls to conduct investigations and determine if product recalls are effective.
- When a firm is unable to make voluntary corrections, compliance action is taken for on-going or serious conditions consistent with state law and rules.
- Certificates of Free Sale are issued by the program. These certificates are an important part of helping industry sell their products internationally.

Program Highlights

The Manufactured Food Program is busy. In fiscal year 2023, we conducted 1,171 routine inspections in addition to 46 reinspections, 11 complaint investigations, 185 consultations and licensing inspections as well as closing 194 firms who were out of business.



The program’s core functions are wide ranging and varied, so it can be a challenge to make time for the different priorities. We use our agency division principles to help guide our decision-making processes.

- We foster a culture of open collaboration and continuous improvement, valuing diverse perspectives, and demonstrating respect for each and those with whom we work,
- We hold ourselves accountable to measurable, quality outcomes for Minnesotans, recognizing the significant impacts of our work on the public and regulated entities, and
- We actively engage diverse perspectives to improve food and feed safety education, scientific and technical understanding / knowledge, and risk-based regulatory approaches.

The program’s staff are highly trained food safety professionals, with most having advanced credentials and training. Staff inspect the food industry here in Minnesota based on the risks of the products a firm chooses to produce. Results from inspections guide future inspections to better focus staff resources and time. The 15 field inspectors and two supervisors live and work throughout Minnesota, which helps us connect with local communities and understand the day-to-day challenges the industry faces.

The program uses an electronic data system to maintain an inventory of regulated firms and manages the results of inspections. While reaching the end of its lifecycle, this system is critical and allows for management of inspections which allows for data driven decisions and setting work priorities. The reporting functions in the system, such as identifying the most common violations, are key to using data to help us focus our time and outreach.

Regulatory requirements are consistently applied but can be scaled based on the size of a manufacturing facility to reduce paperwork demands for small firms with limited distribution. Regardless of the size of a business, the regulations require everyone to have a proactive approach to food safety.

While the total number of licensed businesses has remained generally consistent the past few years, around 10 percent are newly issued each year.

Figure 1: 780 Food Storage Warehouses Licensed

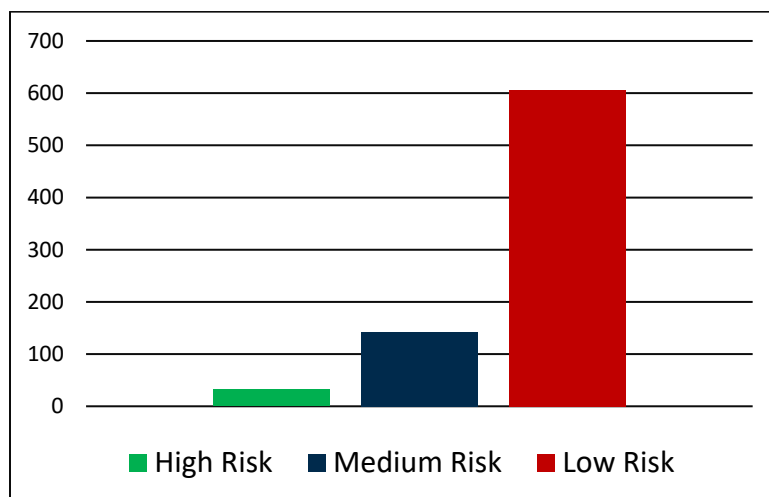


Table 2: 780 Food Storage Warehouses Licensed

License Type	High Risk	Medium Risk	Low Risk
Food Storage Warehouse	32	142	606

Figure 2: 1,336 Food Processors Licensed

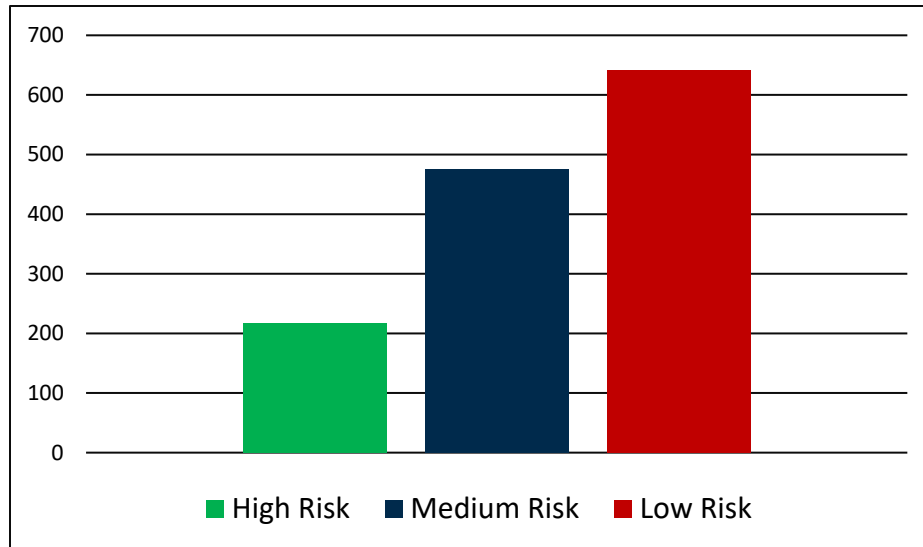


Table 2: 1,336 Food Processors Licensed

License Type	High Risk	Medium Risk	Low Risk
Food Processor/Manufacturer	218	476	642

Additional Services and Partnerships

In addition to assisting the manufactured food industry here in the state, we work in other areas to advance food safety in Minnesota.

- Participating in the Minnesota Food Safety and Defense Task Force. This is a team of regulatory and industry partners working together to improve food and feed safety within Minnesota.
- The program is part of the FDA’s Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards. These standards are developed in cooperation with regulatory programs across the United States and have been important to standardize, improve and guide how manufactured food regulatory programs work. The federal funding the program receives is important to help maintain this quality management system which supports process improvement for inspections and licensing, ensuring enforcement and compliance tools are applied consistently, and strategic goals for outreach and education are set to help industry and the consumer.
- MDA receives federal funding from the FDA to support the coordination of food safety investigations, and emergency response procedures between state regulatory programs and the FDA. The MDA Rapid Response Team is nationally known for its work in this area.

- The program is part of the FDA’s nationwide sampling emphasis to target the highest risk products known to cause human illness due to bacterial pathogen or chemical hazards. FDA resources at the local level are limited and the ability for state program to collect samples in interstate commerce is an important surveillance tool.
- Our staff trains for and responds to other agricultural emergencies here in the state – The program’s staff are involved to help the MDA manage the impact of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in collaboration with other agency programs, including the Minnesota Board of Animal Health, and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Financial Support

Almost three million dollars in funding is needed each year to support program services. Funding is a mix of general fund appropriation, state dedicated funds, licensing fees, federal cooperative agreements, and inspectional contracts with the FDA.

A significant change within the past year was moving licensing fees collected by the program away from the General Fund, and into a dedicated agricultural fund. This change allows for strategic fiscal planning outside of the two-year state budget cycle.

Federal funding through cooperative agreements and contract inspections supports staff time to develop and maintain a quality management system for inspections, enforcement, investigations, and employee training. Additionally, these federal funds support continuous improvement and involvement in the nationally integrated food safety system by partnering with local, state, and federal public health partners.

Figure 3: Program Funding Sources

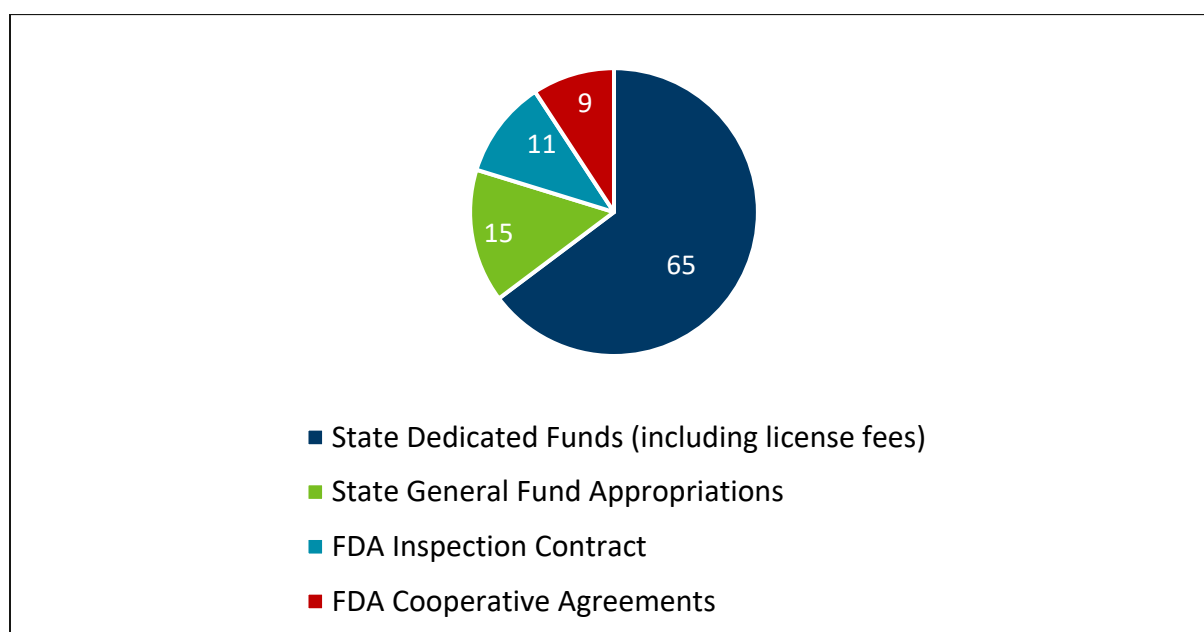


Table 3: Program Funding Sources

State Dedicated Funds	General Funds	FDA Contract Inspections	FDA Cooperative Agreements
65%	15%	11%	9%

Program Challenges and Priorities for the Year

Challenges

- License fee revenues are not representative of what it costs the program to conduct inspections. License fee revenue covers approximately a third of the cost of program services and general funds and federal funding is not guaranteed with increasing budget pressure.
- Increased need for education to industry such as preliminary technical review and guidance on food safety plans and facilities. While this is a priority area, it does place a considerable demand on program resources and availability to do other work.
- New and emerging trends in food production and distribution including novel ingredients being used in dietary supplement products. This quickly changing food space has led to an increased food safety focus at the national level and here in Minnesota as well. The Manufactured Food Program is in the early stages of increased outreach and consultation with industry to help support their success in complying with federal requirements for labeling, sanitation, and process control for these types of products.

Priorities

- Conduct efficient and effective inspections to focus on risk assessment and mitigation.
- Enhancing the program’s outreach to help small firms develop a clear understanding of regulatory requirements and how they can meet them.
- Improve website content and navigation to meet needs of both licensed applicants and currently licensed firms.
- Provide and promote program food safety documents translated into other languages or connect businesses to community services that can offer translation.

Industry Spotlights

“With this being my second day as manager, I just wanted to say THANK YOU!

I greatly appreciate your assistance and knowledge with the inspection today. You helped me very much in understanding the rules and regulations. I look forward to working with you in the future. If I have any questions or concerns, I will be sure to reference you, if I may.”

Randy’s Foods – Cyndi Langevin



“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

