

# Starting a Food Processing Business

## Current Good Manufacturing Practices

► Learn the requirements and regulations for safely producing food products as a business.

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

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

Products sold across state lines are subject to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act and Fair Packaging and Labeling Act regulations. These include labeling, ingredients, preparation, and handling requirements. The FDA offers guidelines for Good Manufacturing Practices in Manufacturing, Packing, and Holding Human Food available on their website at [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov). Information can also be found in the Code of Federal Regulations 21 CFR117.

### Good Manufacturing Practices

To produce and sell food for human consumption, your food business must conform to current good manufacturing practices (cGMPs), 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 outlined in the cGMPs. If a complaint is filed against you or your product, a cGMP inspection by the FDA or state will likely occur. The cGMPs include the following:

**Buildings and Facilities.** 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. The construction materials and design of the facility should assist in maintaining proper sanitary conditions.

**Equipment and Utensils.** All equipment must be certified for use in food processing and designed to 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 kept clean and sanitary. 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, storing 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 microorganisms.

**Warehousing & Distribution.** Transport and storage of products should protect against biological, chemical, or physical contamination or package deterioration.

Additional cGMPs are specific to certain types of foods: dietary supplements, infant formula, low-acid canned foods, acidified foods, and bottled water.

**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 on the Food and Drug Administration website at [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov).



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