

## Starting a Wholesale Food Business

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The Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Food Protection Program has prepared this guide to help you comply with Massachusetts and federal requirements in order to start a wholesale food business. For additional information, please refer to the resources listed on the back panel.

A wholesale food business sells products to other businesses; it does not sell products directly to the consumer.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Food Protection Program regulates and inspects all wholesale food businesses in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

These businesses include:

Milk Pasteurization  
Dairy Products, e.g., cheese and ice cream  
Seafood (including seafood transport)  
Food Processing (including meat and poultry)  
Food Warehouses  
Food Distribution Centers  
Wholesale Residential Kitchens  
Bottled Water  
Carbonated Beverages

## Retail Food Establishments

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Retail Food Establishments such as restaurants, food stores, mobile food units, retail residential kitchens, catering Operations, farmer's markets, and temporary food events, are inspected and licensed by the local/municipal Health Department.

For more information, go to [www.state.ma.us/dph/fpp/retail](http://www.state.ma.us/dph/fpp/retail) or contact the Local Health Department. A roster of Boards of Health is available at [www.mhoa.com](http://www.mhoa.com).

## Regulations

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The Massachusetts Regulations for food establishments are posted on the Food Protection Program Website. Go to: [www.mass.gov/dph/fpp](http://www.mass.gov/dph/fpp), and in Quick Links, click on Food Protection Program regulations.

You may buy copies of the regulations at the State Bookstores:

Boston: 617-727-2834  
Springfield: 413-784-1376  
Fall River: 508-646-1374

The regulations most often used include:

105 CMR 500.000: Good Manufacturing Practices for Food  
105 CMR 520.000: Labeling  
105 CMR 530.000: Sanitation in Meat and Poultry Processing Establishments  
105 CMR 531.000: Inspection of Meat Slaughtering and Processing  
105 CMR 532.000: Inspection of Poultry and Poultry Products  
105 CMR 533.000: Fish and Fishery Products  
105 CMR 570.000: The Manufacture, Collection, and Bottling of Water and Carbonated Non-alcoholic Beverages  
105 CMR 541.000: Milk and Milk Products, Grade A Condensed and Dry Milk Products, Grade A Condensed and Dry Whey, and Milk Pasteurization Plants  
105 CMR 561.000: Frozen Desserts and Frozen Dessert Mixes

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For assistance about regulations, licensure, and inspection of a wholesale food business, please contact:

[Food Protection Program](#)  
Bureau of Environmental Health  
Massachusetts Department of Public Health  
305 South Street  
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Phone: 617-983-6712  
TTY: 617-624-5286  
Fax: 617-983-6770  
Web: <http://mass.gov/dph/fpp>

## Licensing and Inspections

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**In Massachusetts, all wholesale food businesses must have a license to operate.**

Copies of license applications may be found on the Food Protection Program website: [www.mass.gov/dph/fpp](http://www.mass.gov/dph/fpp), and in Quick Links, click on License Application Forms.

You may also call the Food Protection Program at 617-983-6700, and ask the staff to mail, email or fax an application.

After the license application and fee are received by the Food Protection Program, the application is processed by the Licensing Unit, and forwarded to the field inspection staff. An inspector will visit the facility and conduct an inspection.

For some wholesale food businesses, the inspection will be conducted by both the state and local health department.

The basic inspection determines whether the food business complies with all food sanitation regulations, including the standards listed in the Massachusetts regulation, Good Manufacturing Practices (105 CMR 500.000).

Some of the standards include:

- Plant Construction and Design
- Water Supply and Plumbing
- Employee Health and Hygiene
- Maintenance of Equipment and Utensils
- Control Programs for Monitoring the Safe Handling of Food
- Temperature Controls
- Sanitation and Cleaning Operations
- Product Labeling
- Cleanliness and Maintenance of the Grounds and Indoor Area

## **HACCP and Specialized Plans**

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HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) Plans are required for seafood, juice, and meat and poultry processors. HACCP Plans, when required by regulation, are necessary for licensure. Low-acid canned food and acidified food processors also must register and file a scheduled process with the FDA.

If you are unsure whether your processing operation requires a HACCP Plan or scheduled process, please review the regulations and contact the Food Protection Program prior to inspection at 617-983-6700.

## **Labeling**

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All packaged foods must be labeled in accordance with Massachusetts and federal labeling regulations. The Massachusetts regulations is:105 CMR 520.000: Labeling

The Massachusetts Food Protection Program has prepared a guide to help you develop a food label that complies with Massachusetts and federal labeling requirements.

A copy of the brochure, Massachusetts Minimum Requirements for Packaged-Food Labeling is posted on the Food Protection Program Website: [www.mass.gov/dph/fpp](http://www.mass.gov/dph/fpp).

## **Resource Information on Starting a Wholesale Food Business**

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### **New England Food Entrepreneurs**

This website is designed to help you start, maintain, or expand a food business.  
<http://www.umass.edu/nefe/index.html>

### **Massachusetts Minimum Requirements for Labeling (a brochure)**

[http://www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dph/environmental/foodsafety/food\\_label\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dph/environmental/foodsafety/food_label_brochure.pdf)

### **Massachusetts Regulations**

Go to: [www.mass.gov/dph/fpp](http://www.mass.gov/dph/fpp), and in Quick Links, click on Food Protection Program regulations.

### **Massachusetts License Applications**

Go to: [www.mass.gov/dph/fpp](http://www.mass.gov/dph/fpp), and in Quick Links, click on License Application Forms.

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### **NOTE: This brochure is only a guide.**

Since regulations, licensing requirements, inspection standards and labeling requirements are amended from time to time, it is the responsibility of licensees to know and abide by all current regulations, licensing requirements, inspection standards, and labeling requirements. Always consult official local, state and federal regulatory agencies to ensure your business is in full compliance.

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## **Starting a Wholesale Food Business In Massachusetts**

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- Regulations**
- Licensing**
- Inspections**
- Labeling**

**Food Protection Program  
Bureau of Environmental Health  
Massachusetts Department of Public Health**

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