

Michigan Department of Agriculture Agency Consolidation Speaking Points

- The Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) offers a full array of food and agriculture industry support services, ranging from inspections that allow product to enter channels of trade to voluntary consultation and verification of environmental protection to domestic and international marketing assistance to product assurance, and everything in between.
- MDA is the only department in state government that is focused on the needs of one industry sector – food and agriculture. This type of focus on safety and economic growth contributes to its strength as Michigan’s second largest industry and what makes it unique compared to other business sectors.
- MDA’s comprehensive programs to address food protection cover the full spectrum of the food safety system - from production agriculture, through handling, transportation, processing, and retail to the customer.
- At the federal level, fragmented food safety protection efforts (e.g., FDA and USDA) have been identified by some as a weakness in the nation’s food safety net.
- Several bills have been introduced in Congress to create a single, integrated food safety protection agency to more effectively protect consumers.
- The State of Michigan is ahead of the curve by housing all of its food safety protection programs under one agency – the Michigan Department of Agriculture.
- MDA is the only agency in state government that makes protection of the state’s entire food supply system its number one priority.
- MDA’s ability to quickly address food safety problems lies in the integrated nature of the department – all programs and resources can be rapidly mobilized in an emergency. These resources have been deployed on numerous occasions such as the Blackout of 2003, melamine-contaminated pet food and feed recalls of 2007, and the peanut butter recall of 2008.
- MDA has a longstanding history of being cooperative problem-solvers for its constituents and stakeholders. This includes staff at all levels of MDA, such as field inspectors empowered to resolve issues, to staff that assist with licensing; to workgroups convened to find solutions through the development of public policy.
- MDA’s culture of fostering communication and problem-solving is somewhat unique among government agencies. Consolidation with larger agencies will impact the department’s ability to respond to consumer and industry needs.