

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Protecting the Entire Food System and Michigan Consumers

Ensuring the food we eat is safe the number one priority of the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA); and MDA is the only agency in state government whose core mission is protecting the entire spectrum of Michigan's food supply chain. 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. Each piece of the food protection system helps to strengthen the state's food safety net. Remove any piece, and we risk weakening it

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. Maintaining the integrity of the state's food supply requires interconnected programs ensuring all resources are utilized from the entire department to quickly and effectively address threats to the entire food system.

As food is grown and handled, MDA is there to make sure it's done safely.

Foodborne illness outbreaks in raw fruits and vegetables are leading to the development of an MDA program certifying that Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices are being met by growers and handlers. MDA inspectors also ensure the safety of the milk supply on farm, and the proper use of agri-chemicals. Animal health is ensured by MDA veterinarians, and animal feeds are routinely tested to ensure that they comply with state and federal law. Agricultural worker health is also a focus of an MDA program. The program works to make sure Michigan does not face food contamination problems caused by insufficient sanitary conditions for workers. Additionally, our pro-active environmental assurance program targeted at Michigan's agricultural industry aids producers in using cost-effective pollution prevention practices in order to be in compliance with applicable environmental regulations and guidelines.

As food products are transported, MDA is involved.

Dairy products are highly regulated to ensure cross-contamination does not occur anywhere along the production chain, including milk transportation companies. MDA works cooperatively with the Michigan State Police to investigate cases of suspected temperature abuse and cross-contamination on trucks bringing a variety of food products into Michigan. The department also investigates cases of suspected cross-contamination caused by insufficient cleaning of trucks or back-hauling of food after carrying a toxic product.

As food products are processed, MDA is responsible for ensuring state and federal food safety laws are met.

The vast majority of the food safety assurance work performed in Michigan's food manufacturing plants is done by MDA inspectors utilizing state laws; however, MDA does some inspections of food and animal feed manufacturing operations on contract for FDA.

As food moves from the plant to the retail level, MDA is integrally involved in assuring safety.

Inspectors are responsible for ensuring safe practices are being followed at the state's retail food stores, whether through routine surveillance of operations or rapid response to a food recall. MDA can quickly mobilize inspectors from every division to be sure a potentially contaminated food product is removed from stores shelves and commercial channels. MDA also oversees the work of local health department inspectors who provide the same assurance for the state's restaurants and cafeterias.

MDA is a cornerstone for growing the state's \$71.3 billion agri-food industry.

MDA as a single, unified agency is also focused on the economic development of the food and agriculture industry because businesses want to locate and grow in states with a positive regulatory environment. Michigan's agri-food businesses rely on a strong regulatory authority to cultivate and maintain strong consumer confidence in their product, which helps them expand their companies in Michigan generating additional jobs and revenue in the state.

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 Blackout of 2003, melamine-contaminated pet food and feed recalls of 2007, and the peanut butter recall of 2008.

For several years, MDA has been working with stakeholders to strengthen their role in the food protection system. Local veterinarians are now trained to spot emerging animal disease threats and be part of a response network. Dairy producers now have quick-response information at their fingertips. Food manufacturers and retailers are helping us to identify our greatest areas of vulnerability so that we can minimize threats to our food system. Food safety is a team effort requiring coordinated partnerships both internally and externally.

MDA's culture of fostering communication and problem-solving is somewhat unique among government agencies. 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. Consolidation with larger agencies will likely impact our ability to respond to consumer and industry needs.

To protect Michigan citizens from a variety of threats to our food safety net, it's critical to have the strongest, most comprehensive, and unified food safety system in place. MDA already has a solid, integrated, holistic food protection approach in place, and it is getting stronger every day.