

CHAPTER 137F

FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS AND FOOD PROCESSING PLANTS

Referred to in §10A.104, 137A.2, 137E.2, 172A.6, 195.8, 331.382, 455C.4

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137F.1 Definitions.

For the purpose of [this chapter](#):

1. “*Bed and breakfast home*” means a private residence which provides lodging and meals for guests, in which the host or hostess resides and in which no more than four guest families are lodged at the same time and which, while it may advertise and accept reservations, does not hold itself out to the public to be a restaurant, hotel, or motel, does not require reservations, and serves food only to overnight guests.

2. “*Commissary*” means a food establishment used for preparing, fabricating, packaging, and storage of food or food products for distribution and sale through the food establishment’s own food establishment outlets.

3. “*Cottage food*” means the production and sale of food produced at a private residence other than time/temperature control for safety food as provided in [section 137F.20](#) and food for resale that is not time/temperature control for safety food. “*Cottage food*” includes home-processed and home-canned pickles, vegetables, or fruits that have a finished equilibrium pH value of four and six-tenths or lower or a water activity value of eighty-five hundredths or less for which each batch has been measured by a pH meter or a water activity meter and each container that is sold or offered for sale contains the date the food was processed and canned. “*Cottage food*” does not include any of the following:

- a. Milk or milk products regulated under [chapter 192](#) or [194](#).
- b. Meat, meat food products, poultry, or poultry food products regulated under [chapter 189A](#).

4. “*Department*” means the department of inspections, appeals, and licensing.

5. “*Director*” means the director of the department of inspections, appeals, and licensing.

6. “*Event*” means a significant occurrence or happening sponsored by a civic, business, governmental, community, or veterans organization and may include an athletic contest.

7. “*Farmers market*” means a marketplace which seasonally operates principally as a common market for Iowa-produced farm products on a retail basis for off-the-premises consumption.

8. “*Food*” means a raw, cooked, or processed edible substance, ice, a beverage, an ingredient used or intended for use or sale in whole or in part for human consumption, or chewing gum.

9. “*Food establishment*” means an operation that stores, prepares, packages, serves, vends, or otherwise provides food for human consumption and includes a food service operation in a salvage or distressed food operation, school, summer camp, residential service substance use disorder treatment facility, halfway house substance use disorder treatment facility, correctional facility operated by the department of corrections, or the state training school. “*Food establishment*” does not include the following:

- a. A food processing plant.
 - b. An establishment that offers only prepackaged foods that are not time/temperature control for safety foods.
 - c. A produce stand or facility which sells only whole, uncut fresh fruits and vegetables.
 - d. Premises that are a home food processing establishment as defined in [chapter 137D](#).
 - e. Premises where a person operates a farmers market, if unpackaged time/temperature control for safety foods are not sold or distributed from the premises.
 - f. Premises of a residence in which food is produced pursuant to [section 137F.20](#).
 - g. A kitchen in a private home where food is prepared or stored for family consumption or in a bed and breakfast home.
 - h. A private home that receives catered or home-delivered food.
 - i. Child care facilities and other food establishment facilities located in hospitals or health care facilities which are subject to inspection by other state agencies or divisions of the department.
 - j. Supply vehicles, vending machine locations, or boardinghouses for permanent guests.
 - k. Establishments exclusively engaged in the processing of meat and poultry which are licensed pursuant to [section 189A.3](#).
 - l. Premises covered by a current class “A” beer permit as provided in [chapter 123](#).
 - m. The premises of a residence in which honey is stored; prepared; packaged, including by placement in a container; labeled; or from which honey is distributed.
 - n. A stand operated by a minor.
 - o. (1) The premises of a raw milk dairy where raw milk is produced, processed, labeled, marketed, or distributed by a raw milk producer in compliance with [chapter 195](#).
 - (2) The premises of a raw milk dairy where a raw milk product or a raw milk dairy product is manufactured, labeled, marketed, or distributed by a raw milk producer in compliance with [chapter 195](#).
10. “*Food processing plant*” means a commercial operation that manufactures, packages, labels, or stores food for human consumption and does not provide food directly to a consumer. “*Food processing plant*” does not include any of the following:
- a. A premises covered by a class “A” beer permit as provided in [chapter 123](#).
 - b. A premises of a residence in which honey is stored; prepared; packaged, including by placement in a container; labeled; or from which honey is distributed.
 - c. A premises covered by a class “A” wine permit as provided in [chapter 123](#).
 - d. (1) The premises of a raw milk dairy where raw milk is produced, processed, labeled, marketed, or distributed by a raw milk producer in compliance with [chapter 195](#).
 - (2) A premises of a raw milk dairy where a raw milk product or raw milk dairy product is manufactured, labeled, marketed, or distributed by a raw milk producer in compliance with [chapter 195](#).
11. “*Mobile food unit*” means a food establishment that is readily movable, which either operates up to three consecutive days at one location or returns to a home base of operation at the end of each day.
12. “*Municipal corporation*” means a political subdivision of this state.
13. “*Pushcart*” means a non-self-propelled vehicle food establishment limited to serving foods that are not time/temperature control for safety foods or commissary-wrapped foods maintained at proper temperatures, or limited to the preparation and serving of frankfurters.
14. “*Regulatory authority*” means the department or a municipal corporation that has entered into an agreement with the director pursuant to [section 137F.3](#) for authority to enforce [this chapter](#) in its jurisdiction.
15. “*Stand operated by a minor*” means a stand or other facility operated by a person or persons under the age of eighteen at which food is sold directly to consumers that is not time/temperature control for safety food or an alcoholic beverage and that operates on a temporary and occasional basis on private property with the permission of the owner of the property.
16. “*Temporary food establishment*” means a food establishment that operates for a period of no more than fourteen consecutive days in conjunction with a single event.

17. “Time/temperature control for safety food” means a food that requires time and temperature controls for safety to limit pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation.

18. “Vending machine” means a self-service device that, upon insertion of a coin, paper currency, token, card, or key, or by optional manual operation, dispenses unit servings of food in bulk or in packages without the necessity of replenishing the device between each vending operation.

19. “Vending machine location” means the room, enclosure, space, or area where one or more vending machines are installed and operated, including the storage areas on the premises that are used to service and maintain the vending machine.

98 Acts, ch 1162, §6, 30; 99 Acts, ch 192, §33; 99 Acts, ch 208, §28; 2001 Acts, ch 81, §1, 2; 2002 Acts, ch 1149, §1, 3; 2003 Acts, ch 44, §37; 2006 Acts, ch 1032, §4; 2007 Acts, ch 215, §210, 211; 2012 Acts, ch 1064, §1, 3; 2014 Acts, ch 1026, §32; 2016 Acts, ch 1086, §9; 2018 Acts, ch 1144, §5 – 9, 16; 2020 Acts, ch 1084, §1, 2; 2022 Acts, ch 1099, §99, 102; 2022 Acts, ch 1129, §8, 9; 2022 Acts, ch 1153, §57; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §219, 1908; 2023 Acts, ch 75, §4, 5

Referred to in §10A.523, 135.16A, 135.185, 137A.1, 137C.35, 137E.1, 189A.3, 190C.1, 331.301, 364.3, 716.7A

137F.2 Adoption by rule.

1. The department shall, in accordance with [chapter 17A](#), adopt rules setting minimum standards for entities covered under [this chapter](#) to protect consumers from foodborne illness. In so doing, the department may adopt by reference, with or without amendment, the United States food and drug administration food code, which shall be specified by title and edition, date of publication, or similar information. The rules and standards shall be formulated in consultation with municipal corporations under agreement with the department, affected state agencies, and industry, professional, and consumer groups.

2. In establishing minimum standards as described in [subsection 1](#), the department shall adopt rules for the sale at a farmers market of culinary mushrooms commonly referred to as a variety of wild golden oyster and classified as pleurotus ostreatus, pleurotus populinus, or pleurotus pulmonarius.

98 Acts, ch 1162, §7, 30; 99 Acts, ch 208, §29 – 32; 2001 Acts, ch 81, §3; 2007 Acts, ch 215, §212; 2019 Acts, ch 73, §1, 2

Referred to in §123.49, 137C.6, 137F.3, 331.756(28), 455C.4

137F.3 Authority to enforce.

1. The director shall regulate, license, and inspect food establishments and food processing plants and enforce [this chapter](#) pursuant to rules adopted by the department in accordance with [chapter 17A](#). Municipal corporations shall not regulate, license, inspect, or collect license fees from food establishments and food processing plants, except as provided in [this section](#).

2. A municipal corporation may enter into an agreement with the director to provide that the municipal corporation shall license, inspect, and otherwise enforce [this chapter](#) within its jurisdiction. The director may enter into the agreement if the director finds that the municipal corporation has adequate resources to perform the required functions. A municipal corporation may only enter into an agreement to enforce the rules setting minimum standards to protect consumers from foodborne illness adopted pursuant to [section 137F.2](#) if it also agrees to enforce the Iowa hotel sanitation code pursuant to [section 137C.6](#). However, the department shall license and inspect all food processing plants which manufacture, package, or label food products. A municipal corporation may license and inspect, as authorized by [this section](#), food processing plants whose operations are limited to the storage of food products.

3. If the director enters into an agreement with a municipal corporation as provided by [this section](#), the director shall provide that the inspection practices of a municipal corporation are spot-checked on a regular basis.

4. A municipal corporation that is responsible for enforcing [this chapter](#) within its jurisdiction pursuant to an agreement shall use the data system prescribed by the director for activities governed by an agreement executed pursuant to [this section](#).

5. The director shall monitor municipal corporations which have entered into an

agreement pursuant to [this section](#) to determine if they are enforcing [this chapter](#) within their respective jurisdictions. If the director determines that [this chapter](#) is not enforced by a municipal corporation, the director may rescind the agreement after reasonable notice and an opportunity for a hearing. If the agreement is rescinded, the director shall assume responsibility for enforcement in the jurisdiction involved.

6. The inspection staff of a municipal corporation that has entered into an agreement with the director to enforce [this chapter](#) shall be required by the department to apply the current rules setting minimum standards to protect consumers from foodborne illness adopted pursuant to [section 137E.2](#) to ensure consistency in application of the rules. A municipal corporation's failure to comply may result in the department rescinding the agreement with the municipal corporation, after reasonable notice and an opportunity for a hearing.

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §8, 30; 2007 Acts, ch 215, §213; 2018 Acts, ch 1144, §10, 16](#)

Referred to in [§137E.1](#)

137E.3A Municipal corporation inspections — contingent appropriation.

1. *a.* The department may employ additional full-time equivalent positions to enforce the provisions of [this chapter](#) and [chapters 137A, 137C, 137D, and 137E](#) with the approval of the department of management, if either of the following apply:

(1) A municipal corporation operating pursuant to a [chapter 28E](#) agreement with the department to enforce the chapters either fails to renew the agreement effective after April 1, 2007, or discontinues, after April 1, 2007, enforcement activities in one or more jurisdictions during the agreement time frame.

(2) The department cancels an agreement after April 1, 2007, due to noncompliance with the terms of the agreement.

b. Before approval may be given, the director of the department of management must have determined that the expenses exceed the funds budgeted by the general assembly for food inspections to the department. The department may hire no more than one full-time equivalent position for each six hundred inspections required pursuant to [this chapter](#) and [chapters 137A, 137C, 137D, and 137E](#).

2. Notwithstanding [chapter 137D](#), and [sections 137C.9 and 137E.6](#), if the conditions described in [this section](#) are met, fees imposed pursuant to that chapter and those sections shall be retained by and are appropriated to the department each fiscal year to provide for salaries, support, maintenance, and miscellaneous purposes associated with the additional inspections. The appropriation made in [this subsection](#) is not applicable in a fiscal year for which the general assembly enacts an appropriation made for the purposes described in [this subsection](#).

[2006 Acts, ch 1185, §46, 53; 2007 Acts, ch 215, §214, 221; 2009 Acts, ch 133, §39; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §1909; 2024 Acts, ch 1158, §8, 9](#)

See annual Iowa Acts for provisions relating to the retention of certain fees collected by the department of inspections, appeals, and licensing as a result of licensing and registration activities under [chapters 99B, 137C, 137D, and 137F](#) for purposes of enforcing those chapters, and the remittance to a municipal corporation of certain fees collected on behalf of the municipal corporation

137E.4 License required.

1. A person shall not operate a food establishment or food processing plant to provide goods or services to the general public, or open a food establishment to the general public, until the appropriate license has been obtained from the regulatory authority. Sale of products at wholesale to outlets not owned by a commissary owner requires a food processing plant license. A license shall expire one year from the date of issue. A license is renewable if application for renewal is made prior to expiration of the license or within sixty days of the expiration date of the license. All licenses issued under [this chapter](#) that are not renewed by the licensee on or before the expiration date shall be subject to a penalty of ten percent per month of the license fee if the license is renewed at a later date.

2. A regulatory authority shall not suspend or revoke a license issued to a food processing plant under [this chapter](#) for offering for sale or selling a food product that is misbranded as a meat product in violation of [section 137E.4](#).

3. A license issued to a food processing plant under [this section](#) also covers the operation of a food processing plant under [chapter 137E](#).

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §9, 30; 2018 Acts, ch 1144, §11, 16; 2024 Acts, ch 1158, §10](#)

Referred to in [§135.16A, 137F.4A](#)

137F.4A Egg products.

1. A regulatory authority shall not suspend or revoke a license issued to a food processing plant under [this chapter](#) for offering for sale or selling a food product that is misbranded as an egg product in violation of [section 137A.4](#).

2. A license issued to a food processing plant under [section 137F.4](#) also covers the operation of a food processing plant under [chapter 137A](#).

[2024 Acts, ch 1158, §20](#)

137F.5 Application for license.

1. An application form prescribed by the department for a license under [this chapter](#) shall be obtained from the department or from a municipal corporation which is a regulatory authority. A completed application shall be submitted to the appropriate regulatory authority.

2. A person conducting an event shall submit a license application and an application fee of fifty dollars to the appropriate regulatory authority at least sixty days in advance of the event. An “event” for purposes of [this subsection](#) does not include a function with ten or fewer temporary food establishments, a fair as defined in [section 174.1](#), or a farmers market.

3. The dominant form of business shall determine the type of license for establishments which engage in operations covered under both the definition of a food establishment and of a food processing plant.

4. The regulatory authority where the unit is domiciled shall issue a license for a mobile food unit.

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §10, 30; 2017 Acts, ch 54, §76; 2018 Acts, ch 1144, §12, 16](#)

137F.6 License fees.

1. The regulatory authority shall collect the following annual license fees:

a. For a mobile food unit or pushcart, two hundred fifty dollars.

b. For a temporary food establishment per fixed location for a single event, fifty dollars.

c. For a temporary food establishment for multiple nonconcurrent events during a calendar year, one annual license fee of two hundred dollars for each establishment on a statewide basis.

d. For a vending machine, fifty dollars for the first machine and ten dollars for each additional machine.

e. For a food establishment which prepares or serves food for individual portion service intended for consumption on-the-premises, the annual license fee shall correspond to the annual gross food and beverage sales of the food establishment, as follows:

(1) Annual gross sales of less than one hundred thousand dollars, one hundred fifty dollars.

(2) Annual gross sales of at least one hundred thousand dollars but less than five hundred thousand dollars, three hundred dollars.

(3) Annual gross sales of five hundred thousand dollars or more, four hundred dollars.

f. For a food establishment which sells food or food products to consumer customers intended for preparation or consumption off-the-premises, the annual license fee shall correspond to the annual gross food and beverage sales of the food establishment, as follows:

(1) Annual gross sales of less than two hundred fifty thousand dollars, one hundred fifty dollars.

(2) Annual gross sales of at least two hundred fifty thousand dollars but less than seven hundred fifty thousand dollars, three hundred dollars.

(3) Annual gross sales of seven hundred fifty thousand dollars or more, four hundred dollars.

g. (1) For a food processing plant, the annual license fee shall correspond to the annual

gross food and beverage sales of the food processing plant. A food processing plant's annual gross sales shall not correspond to sales of an unprocessed commodity.

(2) The annual license fee for an initial license shall be calculated based on the food processing plant's projected gross annual sales. Otherwise, the annual license fee shall be based on the food processing plant's prior annual sales.

(3) The amount of the annual license fee shall be as follows:

(a) For annual gross sales of less than fifty thousand dollars, seventy-five dollars.

(b) For annual gross sales of at least fifty thousand dollars but less than two hundred thousand dollars, one hundred fifty dollars.

(c) For annual gross sales of at least two hundred thousand dollars but less than two million dollars, three hundred dollars.

(d) For annual gross sales of two million dollars or more, five hundred dollars.

h. For a farmers market where time/temperature control for safety food is sold or distributed, one annual license fee of one hundred fifty dollars for each vendor on a statewide basis.

i. For a certificate of free sale or sanitation, thirty-five dollars for the first certificate and ten dollars for each additional identical certificate requested at the same time.

j. For a food establishment covered by both paragraphs "e" and "f", the applicant shall pay the licensee fee based on the dominant form of business plus one hundred fifty dollars.

k. For an unattended food establishment, the annual license fee shall correspond to the annual gross food and beverage sales, as follows:

(1) Annual gross sales of less than one hundred thousand dollars, seventy-five dollars.

(2) Annual gross sales of one hundred thousand dollars or more, one hundred fifty dollars.

2. Fees collected by the department shall be deposited in the general fund of the state. Fees collected by a municipal corporation shall be retained by the municipal corporation for regulation of food establishments and food processing plants licensed under [this chapter](#).

3. Each vending machine licensed under [this chapter](#) shall bear a readily visible identification tag or decal provided by the licensee, containing the licensee's business address and phone number, and a company license number assigned by the regulatory authority.

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §11, 30; 2002 Acts, ch 1149, §2, 3; 2003 Acts, ch 108, §128, 132; 2007 Acts, ch 215, §215; 2009 Acts, ch 133, §40; 2012 Acts, ch 1064, §2, 3; 2018 Acts, ch 1144, §13, 14, 16; 2023 Acts, ch 82, §2, 3](#)

Referred to in [§137E.3A](#)

137E.7 Suspension or revocation of licenses.

1. The regulatory authority may suspend or revoke a license issued to a person under [this chapter](#) pursuant to rules adopted by the department if any of the following occurs:

a. The person's food establishment or food processing plant does not conform to a provision of [this chapter](#) or a rule adopted pursuant to [this chapter](#).

b. The person conducts an activity constituting a criminal offense in the food establishment or food processing plant and is convicted of a serious misdemeanor or a more serious offense as a result.

2. A licensee may appeal a suspension or revocation in accordance with rules adopted by the department.

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §12, 30; 2009 Acts, ch 41, §263](#)

137E.8 Farmers markets.

A vendor who offers a product for sale at a farmers market shall have the sole responsibility to obtain and maintain any license required to sell or distribute the product.

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §13, 30](#)

137E.8A Stand operated by a minor.

A municipal corporation or regulatory authority shall not adopt or enforce an ordinance or rule that requires a license, permit, or fee to sell or otherwise distribute food at a stand operated by a minor.

[2020 Acts, ch 1084, §3](#)

137F.8B Raw milk — associated products.

A food establishment or farmers market shall not advertise for sale, offer for sale, sell or otherwise distribute, or use raw milk, or a manufactured raw milk product or a raw milk dairy product, regardless of whether the food establishment or farmers market is regulated by the department under [this chapter](#) or another chapter, another state agency, or a municipality.

[2023 Acts, ch 75, §6](#)

137F.9 Operation without inspection prohibited.

1. A person shall not open or operate a food establishment or food processing plant until an inspection has been made and a license has been issued by the regulatory authority. Inspections shall be conducted according to standards adopted by rule of the department pursuant to [chapter 17A](#).

2. A person who opens or operates a food establishment or food processing plant without a license is subject to a penalty of up to twice the amount of the annual license fee.

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §14, 30](#)

137F.10 Regular inspections.

The appropriate regulatory authority shall provide for the inspection of each food establishment and food processing plant in this state in accordance with [this chapter](#) and with rules adopted pursuant to [this chapter](#) in accordance with [chapter 17A](#). A regulatory authority may enter a food establishment or food processing plant at any reasonable hour to conduct an inspection. The manager or person in charge of the food establishment or food processing plant shall afford free access to every part of the premises and render all aid and assistance necessary to enable the regulatory authority to make a thorough and complete inspection. As part of the inspection process, the regulatory authority shall provide an explanation of the violation or violations cited and provide guidance as to actions for correction and elimination of the violation or violations.

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §15, 30; 2007 Acts, ch 215, §216](#)

137F.11 Inspection upon complaint.

Upon receipt of a complaint by a customer of a food establishment or food processing plant stating facts indicating the premises are in an unsanitary condition, the regulatory authority may conduct an inspection.

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §16, 30](#)

137F.11A Posting of inspection reports.

An establishment inspected under [this chapter](#) shall post the most recent routine inspection report, along with any current complaint or reinspection reports, in a location at the establishment that is readily visible to the public.

[2007 Acts, ch 215, §217](#)

137F.12 Plumbing.

A food establishment or food processing plant shall have an adequately designed plumbing system conforming to at least the minimum requirements of the state plumbing code, or local plumbing code, whichever is more stringent. The plumbing system shall have a connection to a municipal water and sewer system or to a benefited water district or sanitary district if such facilities are available.

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §17, 30](#)

137F.13 Water and waste treatment.

If a food establishment or food processing plant is served by privately owned water or waste treatment facilities, those facilities shall meet the technical requirements of the local board of health and the department of natural resources.

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §18, 30](#)

137F.14 Toilets and lavatories.

A food establishment or food processing plant shall provide toilet and lavatory facilities in accordance with rules adopted by the department pursuant to [this chapter](#) in accordance with [chapter 17A](#).

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §19, 30](#)

137F.15 Fire safety.

A violation of a fire safety rule adopted pursuant to [section 10A.523](#) and applicable to food establishments or food processing plants which occurs on the premises of a food establishment or food processing plant is a violation of [this chapter](#).

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §20, 30](#)

137F.16 Conflicts with state building code.

Provisions of [this chapter](#) in conflict with the state building code, as adopted pursuant to [section 103A.7](#), shall not apply where the state building code has been adopted or when the state building code applies throughout the state.

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §21, 30; 2004 Acts, ch 1086, §40](#)

137F.17 Penalty. Repealed by 2018 Acts, ch 1144, §15, 16.

137F.18 Injunction.

A person opening or operating a food establishment or food processing plant in violation of [this chapter](#) may be enjoined from further operation of the establishment or plant. If an imminent health hazard exists, the establishment or plant must cease operation. Operation shall not be resumed until authorized by the regulatory authority.

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §23, 30](#)

137F.19 Duty of county or city attorney.

The county attorney in each county or city attorney in each city shall assist in the enforcement of [this chapter](#).

[98 Acts, ch 1162, §24, 30](#)

Referred to in [§331.756\(28\)](#)

137F.20 Cottage food — requirements.

1. Cottage food is exempt from all licensing, permitting, inspection, packaging, and labeling laws of the state if the food is sold and delivered by the producer directly to the consumer, or delivered by mail or an agent of the producer such as an employee. A producer may sell food to the consumer in person, remotely, by telephone, by internet, or by an agent of the producer.

2. Cottage food sold pursuant to [this section](#) shall be affixed or labeled with all of the following information:

a. Information to identify the name and address, phone number, or electronic mail address of the person preparing the food.

b. The common name of the food.

c. The ingredients of the cottage food in descending order of predominance.

d. The following statement: “This product was produced at a residential property that is exempt from state licensing and inspection.” If the cottage food contains one or more major food allergens, an additional allergen statement must be included on the label identifying each major allergen contained in the food by the common name of the allergen.

e. If the food is home-processed and home-canned pickles, vegetables, or fruits permitted under [this section](#), the date that the food was processed and canned.

3. Compliance with the cottage food exemption provided in [this section](#) does not represent compliance with federal law.

[2022 Acts, ch 1129, §10](#)

Referred to in [§137D.1, 137E.1](#)