



CERTIFIED FARMERS' MARKETS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What is a CFM?

A. A CFM is a location certified by the County Agricultural Commissioner and permitted by the Environmental Health Division (Division) where certified producers offer for sale the agricultural products they grow.

Q. Is a health permit required to operate a CFM?

A. Yes, CFMs are defined in the California Health and Safety Code (CalCode) as food facilities and therefore are required to have valid health permits.

Q. Is a permit required for each producer selling agricultural products at a CFM?

A. No. All certified producers are covered under the health permit for the CFM. Since the health permit for the CFM covers all certified producers, the market manager is responsible for ensuring that each vendor operates in compliance with CalCode.

Q. What is a "non-certifiable agricultural product"?

A. These products are agricultural products that are not certified by the agricultural commissioner. Products that are considered non-certifiable include processed products from certified agricultural products such as fruit and vegetable juices, shelled nuts, jams and jellies. Other examples include catfish, trout, and oysters from controlled aquaculture operations, livestock and livestock products, and poultry and poultry products. Though these products are not certified, they have been produced or derived from plants or animals raised or produced by the producer. These non-certifiable processed agricultural products may include, or have added to them, a limited number of ingredients or additives which only act as preservatives or are essential on the preparation of the products. Non-certifiable agricultural food products must be from an "approved source".

Q. What is considered an "approved source"?

A. Possession of a valid Certified Producer certificate by the seller is considered an approved source for certified agriculture products. For non-certifiable agricultural food products, the processing and storage location must be under regulation by an authority acceptable to the State Department of Health Services or by this Division. Examples of approved sources include a Food Registration from the State Food and Drug Branch, a local environmental health agency permit from the jurisdiction where production takes place, or a federal inspection certificate.

Q. What are acceptable ways to display agricultural products at a CFM?

A. In most cases, certified and non-certifiable agricultural products are displayed on tables. CalCode does require that food items be stored at least 6 inches off the floor or ground. Bulk ready-to-eat foods, such as shelled nuts and dried fruit, must be protected from contamination. Acceptable methods include prepackaging food at an approved food facility or displaying food in approved containers with lids. Dispensing methods shall avoid direct hand contact with ready-to-eat food and shall be approved by the Division.

Q. Is food preparation allowed at the CFM?

- A. No. Food preparation is prohibited at CFMs with the exception of food samples. Distribution of food samples may occur provide that the following sanitary conditions exist:
1. Samples shall be kept in clean, nonabsorbent, covered food-grade containers.
 2. All cutting, or distribution of samples shall only occur under a tent, canopy, or other overhead covering.
 3. All food samples shall be distributed by the producer in a sanitary manner without the possibility of a consumer touching the remaining samples.
 4. Clean, disposable plastic gloves shall be used when cutting food samples.
 5. Fresh, whole produce intended for sampling shall be washed or cleaned to remove soil or other material by use of potable in order that it is wholesome and safe for consumption.
 6. Potable water shall be required for handwashing and sanitizing.
 7. Potentially hazardous food samples shall be maintained at or below 45 degrees Fahrenheit and shall be disposed of within two hours after cutting.
 8. Utensil and hand washing water shall be disposed of in a facility connected to a public sewer system or in a manner approved by this Division.
 9. Utensils and cuttings surfaces shall be smooth, nonabsorbent, and easily cleanable, or single-use articles shall be utilized.

Q. Can uninspected, processed poultry be sold at a CFM?

- A. No. The Department of Food and Agriculture exemption from the State's laws that require inspection and licensing of poultry slaughter plants does not apply to sales at retail food facilities. Since the CFM is a retail food facility and the Direct Marketing Regulations require compliance with CalCode, uninspected poultry, including rabbits, would not be from an approved source.

Q. Can uninspected meat be sold at a CFM?

- A. No. All red meat must be from an approved source. A "custom cut" operation under inspection by the State Department of Food and Agriculture is not an approved source for retail sales of red meat. The United States Department of Agriculture is the recognized regulatory authority for inspection of cattle, calf, sheep, swine, and goat processing plants.

Q. What type of seafood can be sold at a CFM?

- A. Only fish and shellfish produced under controlled conditions in waters or ponds located in California may be sold at a CFM. No cutting or filleting is allowed at the CFM.

Q. What is required on a label for packaged food?

- A. Labeling of packaged foods must include: name and address of the manufacturer, producer, or distributor; accurate statement of quantity of the contents in terms of weight, measure on numerical count; name of product, ingredients, if two or more ingredients are present, list by order of their predominance by weight, e.g., peanuts, salt

For the complete list of requirements for food labels, contact the Food and Drug Branch, California Department of Health Services at www.fda.gov/FoodLabelingGuide.

Q. Are restrooms required at the CFM?

- A. Yes. Approved toilet and handwashing facilities must be available within 200 feet travel distance of the premises of the CFM.

- Q. Are dogs allowed at a CFM?
A. No. With the exception of guide dogs, signal dogs or service dogs, no live animal, bird or fowl is allowed within 20 feet of any area where food is stored or held for sale within a CFM.
- Q. Can Mobile Food Facilities operate at a CFM?
A. Yes. Ventura County permitted mobile food facilities may operate at a CFM as long as they are located within 200 feet of approved toilet facilities.
- Q. Can Cottage Food Operations operate at a CFM?
A. Yes. Ventura County Cottage Food Operations may operate within the CFM without an additional permit as long as they operate within the limitations of a cottage food operation.
- Q. Can Temporary Food Facilities operate at a CFM?
A. Temporary food facilities may only operate at approved community events. If the CFM has a permit for a community event to operate in conjunction with the CFM, temporary food facilities are allowed. An annual Temporary Food Facility permit is required to operate at a community event that is operated in conjunction with a CFM. Temporary Food Facility requirements must be met in order to obtain this permit.