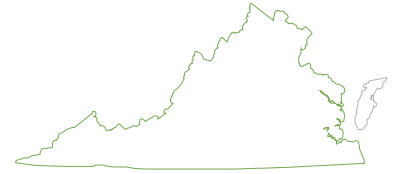


# Community Food and Processing Facilities



REBECCA DROBIS

State and local Community Facilities Programs offer support to develop or improve food and agriculture processing infrastructure, often within the context of other state food processing laws. At the federal level, USDA Rural Development also has a Community Facilities Program which offers direct loans, loan guarantees, and grants to develop or improve essential public services and facilities to help increase the competitiveness of rural communities in attracting and retaining businesses.

## Virginia Program Description

Virginia has several state laws that govern food processing and community food facilities. Facilities that manufacture, process, pack, or hold food for sale must abide by Virginia's Food Laws as well as local regulations such as zoning and licensing.

The [Code of Virginia Chapter 51. Food and Drink Law](#) requires inspections and permits for food manufacturers, food storage warehouses, and retail food establishments. Section [§ 3.2-5130](#), which governs food establishments, includes nonprofit organizations holding

one-day food sales and private homes where food is prepared. In addition, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) [AFID Infrastructure program](#) provides grants to support community facilities like commercial kitchens, food hubs, and other value-added facilities (See [Agriculture and Forestry Industry Development Grants](#) fact sheet) and [Code of Virginia, § 3.2-108.2](#) provides financial incentives and technical assistance to slaughter and meat-processing facilities.

Local governments and boards of health also can pass zoning and other ordinances to guide the development of community food and agriculture facilities.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of these laws and regulations is to protect health and safety while encouraging value-added processing, retail sales, and expanded market opportunities for Virginia grown food and agriculture products. They enhance economic opportunities and can improve quality of life in rural communities by financing, constructing, and inspecting facilities.

### HOW IT WORKS

Generally, the Virginia Department of Agriculture (VDACS) regulates and inspects packaged foods including those that are canned, frozen, or baked while the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) regulates and inspects ready-to-eat foods like chopped fruit. State inspectors VDACS and VDH also uphold federal laws.

Local governments—often boards of health—develop local regulations and ordinances related to value added processing of agricultural products that people eat. These vary by location but often require permits for food facilities and zoning approval for food processing and related businesses on farms and in homes. Local governments also can invest in community facilities themselves and support them through zoning and favorable local ordinances.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Agricultural operations benefit greatly from expanded infrastructure to add value to raw products. These could include facilities with equipment for adding value to specialty crops, grading, co-packing, labeling and/or storing, as well as processing meat, poultry, and dairy products. They include facilities like food hubs and smaller facilities like community kitchens. Along with supporting agriculture, they can be a source of jobs and revenues for local communities. However, these facilities require careful planning to make sure that they have the supply, workforce, and market demand needed to support the initial investment and their economic viability over time.



USDA

### To Learn More

- › [USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Program](#)
- › [VA Food Works: “Food Business Regulations and Options for Value-added Processing”](#)
- › [Virginia’s Home Kitchen Food Processing Regulations](#)