



Mastering Marketing

Highlight

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Direct Marketing Farm-Raised Meats in Maryland

Maryland farmers who raise meat - beef, pork, lamb, chevon, and veal- on their farms can sell their USDA processed frozen products and frozen cuts directly to the public from their farms. These products can also be sold at farmers' markets, to restaurants, and also to retailers. All meats sold in this manner must have been processed through a USDA federally inspected facility.

Product Development

Have your USDA processor cut, vacuum wrap, and label your individual cuts or packages. It is much easier to apply a label to the package before freezing. Clear, vacuum sealed packaging makes it easier for customers to see what they are purchasing and also helps keep your meat fresher and freezer burn resistant.

Most USDA processors have contact information for a label designer and printer. Your label should include the following information:

- Name of the product
- Your farm name and address
- The processor's name and address
- The processor's USDA stamp
- Safe food handling instructions

Obtaining an On-Farm Food Processing Plant License

To sell stored, frozen farm-raised meat directly from your farm, you should obtain a Food Processing Plant License. This is also sometimes referred to as an on-farm home processing facility. Request the license application by contacting:

Carolann Liszewski, Division of Facility and Process Review
Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Office of Food Protection and Consumer Health Services
6 St. Paul Street, Suite 1301
Baltimore, MD 21202-1608
410-767-8417

You will receive a one-page application form that is fairly simple to complete. The license type to request is "On Farm Processor". The license fee for on-farm distribution

is \$30 if you stay under \$40,000 in sales per year. If you go over that amount, the fee is \$150. Payment must be returned with the application.

To facilitate a speedier plan review, include a one-page description of what you plan to sell, where, and how. This page can serve as your site plan. It should include:

1. A description of the designated area on your farm where the frozen meat will be stored.
2. A description of your freezer. You will need an NSF certified commercial freezer. These are available at a number of retailers such as Sears and, although they cost slightly more than home freezers, are better insulated and more energy efficient.
3. Describe how the product will be kept secure. The simplest answer is that your freezer locks. Security becomes a food safety issue to prevent contamination.
4. Describe how the meat will be kept frozen during transportation or storage at a farmers' market.

Once the plan has been reviewed, an on-farm inspection of your facility and equipment is required to confirm it complies with the local and state laws governing food processing facilities.

Risk

All producers should consider the added risk of selling their meat directly through retail channels. The potential for loss could be great. You may want to consider legally organizing your meat sales business separate from your farm business to protect your farm. Consult with your insurance professional to discuss product liability insurance. Also, stores and markets often require that you have product liability insurance before they will purchase any of your products.