



**Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-op
Producer Quality and Food Safety Guidelines**

2023



Introduction

Thank you for participating as a member in the Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-operative Ltd! Being a member of the Food Hub connects you to a community of people building a stronger local food economy, either by producing or consuming food produced here in Cape Breton. Together, through this co-op, consumers and producers can create a fair and sustainable food system.

As an organization we place food safety and excellent quality above all else. For this reason, we have developed this document to outline the important food safety regulations and quality standards relevant to you. As a member of the Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-op, we ask that you take the time to read over these Guidelines. Please feel free to contact us at any time with questions, concerns or comments. Our email address is manager@pancapebretonfoodhub.ca

Our Goal

The purpose of the Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-operative Ltd. is to make it really easy to get products from local producers into the hands of local consumers.

Our Mission Statement: The Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-op Ltd. provides a distribution linkage between local food producers and consumers, creating a more sustainable food system by increasing the viability of local producers while improving access to high quality local food.

Our Vision: A healthy food economy that supports a growing diversity of producers and consumers on Cape Breton Island.



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Common Terms

We ask that food producers identify the practices used to create their products. The following terms are some of the most commonly used:

Local – For the purposes of the Food Hub, local means Cape Breton only.

Organic Certified, Organically Grown – To use the term organic, producers must be certified. To become certified organic, producers and processors must meet the requirements set out in the Canadian Organic Standard, including applying to a CFIA Accredited Certification Body, showing complete traceability of their products and being inspected by an independent third party.

Antibiotic Free – Animals must not receive antibiotics at any point in their life – from birth to death, including nursing or pregnant females.

Grass Fed – Refers to livestock that have been raised on pasture, grazing outside, and not confined to a feedlot/grain-fed system.

Free Range – Applies only to chicken and is licensed through the Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia Association. By definition, free range chicken is raised on a feed ration consisting solely of grains, vegetable oil and necessary vitamins and minerals and containing no traces of rendered meat products, fish meal, antibiotics or other medication of any kind, including growth promoters, has regular access to fresh air, sun, soil and green forage and will be processed by a federally or provincially inspected processor.

Non-GMO – Non-GMO products are non-genetically modified. These products are bred naturally without the use of genetic modification/engineering techniques.

Heritage Breeds – Traditional breeds of animals that were raised for food in the past, but their numbers dwindled during the rise of industrial agriculture.

Pastured – Pasturing is a traditional farming technique where animals are raised on pasture, grazing/foraging for food outside, rather than being fattened on a feedlot or in a confined facility.

Chemical Free – For the purpose of labelling in the Food Hub, “chemical free” refers to no commercial chemicals being applied to foods or added to the soil for the production of the food.

Processed Food – Any food that has been altered to prevent spoilage. This includes washing and wrapping.

Preserved Food – Any food that is stabilized with respect to safety and quality using a published and scientifically validated source.

Washed - Can only be used to describe vegetables that are ready to eat by being washed in a licensed processing facility.



Gluten-free - foods labeled “gluten free” must not contain any gluten sources and must be free from possibility of cross contamination.

Vegan – Any food that does not contain meat, fish, poultry, animal by-products, milk or milk products, eggs or egg products, honey or bee products, or insect products.

Vegetarian – Any food that does not contain animal products resulting from slaughter, but may contain milk or milk products, egg or egg products, and honey or bee products.

Wild Harvested – Foods that are collected or harvested from areas of land, which are not cultivated, and are maintained in a natural state

Nut Free – Any food that does not contain, and has no possibility of being cross contaminated with, any nut products; this includes tree nuts, and peanuts.



Product Guidelines

All products sold through the Cape Breton Food Hub Co-op must meet NS Food Safety Regulations or the Safe Food for Canadians Act. If you have questions regarding the regulations surrounding your product please phone Nova Scotia Environment, Public Health Officer, Sean O'Toole, at 902-563-2100. For the Safe Food for Canadians Act, Contact the local office of Canadian Food Inspection Agency at 902-564-3919.

Products sold through the Food Hub must be food only. Products such as seeds, tubers and other kits that may become food later are not permitted for sale.

Products that are resale are not permitted through the Food Hub, for example, purchasing a bulk product like spices and repackaging it into smaller quantities. Significant value-adding must be done to ingredients for them to be considered a producer product.

The co-operative reserves the right to refuse to accept delivery of products that were not ordered by consumers, or which are of poor quality, have been spoiled, contaminated, or are not in compliance with food safety regulations.

Meat and fish that is sold through the Food Hub must be frozen.

All meat, produce, honey and maple syrup must be grown in Cape Breton. Seafood must be fished in Nova Scotia. Value-added products must be produced in Cape Breton, with local or imported raw ingredients.

Any producer who is helping other producers to list products or is representing other farms must explicitly list the farm of origin for each product.

In accordance with our privacy policy, all consumer information must be kept confidential. If you wish to contact those who have purchased your product, please contact the Food Hub.

Adding a New Product

Please add new products by Wednesday to ensure that staff have time to review and categorize them by the time the order cycle opens on Friday. Use the software guide to help; it is available on our website.

Always search for the product in existing products before adding a new product. This will make end of year reports more accurate when pulling sales figures for product types.

Remember that the price you enter is the price that you will receive, and the software will mark up X 1.06 for retail, X 1.12 for restaurants and X 1.25 for households. If you want the consumer to pay a specific price divide that by 1.25. For example, if you want your item to cost the consumer \$5, divide by 1.25 = \$4.



Any meat, seafood or value-added product needs to be approved by the Public Health Officer before being added to the Food Hub.

All products that require temperature control to maintain their safety are required to be prepared in a facility that has a Food Establishment issued by Nova Scotia Environment.

The producer software guide details how to add new products.



Product Packaging

All products must be packed separately for each customer, preferably in food-grade plastic bags, or an environmentally friendly alternative or paper bags. If the product consists of a single item such as an eggplant or cucumber, you do not need to place it in a bag unless the unit sold is listed in pounds, etc. It is helpful if all similar items are boxed together. If you are using a large bag to place items which will be removed and placed into individual orders, please label the bag with the product name and the number of orders in the bag.

Labels with the name of the product are needed to ensure that the correct items get packed in the correct orders. Labels can be ordered from local print shops or printed at home using Avery labels. If using handwritten labels, please ensure that they are very easy to read. If it is not feasible to label each individual item, for example, garlic, please make sure that at least one is labelled as a reference. Many of our volunteers are newcomers to Canada and it can be difficult for them to identify specific items.

Logos on packaging are highly recommended as they eliminate confusion at packing and are a great source of repeat business. If a consumer member is enjoying your product all week and seeing your logo, they are more likely to order from you again. Also, many consumers order the same item from more than one producer to test out their preferences. If they are not labelled in advance, volunteers will not have time to label each product so consumers will not know what product is from which producer.

Transportation

All orders must be placed inside cardboard boxes to ship. Use boxes that are the best size for the order, and make sure there is as little space as possible around the products. Please do not send boxes that are mostly empty if possible. Sometimes the temperature-controlled trucks get too cold for sensitive vegetables. Please ensure that things like tomatoes and herbs have newspaper around them to protect them from the cold.

Boxes can often be obtained for free at Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation stores or at grocery stores. If you are reusing boxes from a Food Hub location, please ensure that you remove previous labels. If your boxes do not have covers (as is the case with banana boxes), you can use an additional box over the top as a cover. All boxes must be covered to ensure that no contamination takes place during transport.

Please ensure that the outside of each box has a label indicating the intended location (e.g., Sydney, Baddeck, etc.). These labels must be printed from the Food Hub software, under reports, labels, generic, large. Make sure that you check off fridge or freezer, and mark "1 of 1" or "1 of 2" etc. in the space provided on every label.



Specific Guidelines

Vegetables/Produce

Processing

- All products must be of the freshest and best quality possible, harvested as close to the pick-up time as possible.
- Vegetables must be whole and unwashed, unless coming from a GAP-certified farm.
- Vegetables must be rinsed to remove field dirt and debris.
- Store fresh fruits and vegetables separately, away from unprocessed or raw food items (raw meat, seafood and eggs) in order to avoid cross-contamination.

Accuracy

- All products must be pre-weighed to exact weight if being sold by weight, and quantity must be kept consistent if being sold by the bunch.

Meat and Seafood

Processing

- All meat and seafood must be processed in a provincially licensed facility and kept frozen in compliance with the food safety regulations of Nova Scotia.
- Meat vendors must also retain records, invoices, and receipts to allow for tracking of meat products.

Packaging

- Pre-packaged meats must have labels on the package.
- All meat vendors must ensure meat products are labeled indicating the plant number(s) where meats have been slaughtered and processed.

Transportation

- Meat products must be kept at a frozen temperature, -18°C or lower.
- All meat and seafood must be boxed separate from other products and must have "Keep Frozen" indicated on the label.

Eggs

Processing

- All eggs sold through the food market must be graded and inspected.
- All eggs must be clean and whole (not cracked).

Transportation

- Eggs must be stored at a temperature of 4°C (40°F) or lower.



Value-Added Products

Definition: A value-added product is a raw or whole agriculture product that has been modified to increase its shelf life and/or market value. We are including bread and other baked goods, as well as pre-made meals in this category.

All Value-Added Products:

Processing

- Products in this category need to be cleared with the Public Health Officer before being sold through the Food Hub. Our Public Health Officer is Sean O'Toole, and he can be reached at Sean.OToole@novascotia.ca or 902-563-2100.

Packaging

- All value-added products must have a packaged-on date, an ingredient list, as well as your name, address, phone number, and nutrition facts table, and handling instructions (if applicable)
- Nutrition Facts Tables can be made using software such as <https://www.nutritionistpro.com/>
- An ingredient list must be included on the website product listing.
- Ensure that the label includes the name of the product.
- Detailed ingredient listings are required including all individual components (e.g. You cannot just list Worcester sauce without listing all the ingredients from the original label)
- Declare all allergens on the label that are used (contains or may contain).
- Allergens that must be declared include the following: Eggs, Milk, Mustard, Peanuts, Crustaceans and molluscs, Fish, Sesame seeds, Soy, Sulphites, Tree Nuts, Wheat and triticale.

Shipping

- Please ensure that all breakable products are well packaged with additional newspaper or bubble wrap to withstand rough shipping.

Bread and Baked Goods, Chocolate and Candies

Products in this category can only be sold to establishments with food permits if they are coming from an inspected kitchen. Otherwise, they can be sold to households only. Please check with Food Hub staff when adding a product that is currently in the system, or add it as a new product and let administration know.

Please ensure that the product has cooled down completely before putting into bags to avoid condensation in the refrigerated trucks.



Canned Goods, Ferments, Pre-Made Meals and other Value-Added Product

Value-added products such as pre-made meals must be frozen and must have heating/cooking instructions on the label. Ready-to-prepare mixes (e.g., soup, baked goods, falafel, etc.) must have preparation instructions.

Preserved goods or canned goods that are considered shelf stable must use recipes that are from a published source (using all ingredients and no substitutions of the main components like sugar, salt, vinegar). Your own formulations may need to be reviewed, for safety, by a third-party food safety consultant if they do not follow a published source.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Máire at manager@pancapebretonfoodhub.ca