ILLINOIS COTTAGE FOOD PRODUCERS:
Impact and Needs

A report based on survey of producers
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
November 2019
ABOUT THIS REPORT

Data for this report was collected through a survey of cottage food producers. The survey was developed by Illinois Stewardship Alliance in partnership with the Illinois Institute for Justice Clinic on Entrepreneurship. The survey was distributed to a list of over 1600 individuals that had previously downloaded the Cottage Food Legal Guide from the Alliance website, as well as through the Alliance’s Cottage Food Facebook Group with over 200 current or interested cottage food producers. 114 individuals completed the survey. Of these, 91 described themselves as the owner of the cottage food operation, 16 as co-owners, 2 as employees, 2 as prospective owners, and 1 as other.

COTTAGE FOOD IN A NUTSHELL

A “cottage food operation” means an operation conducted by a person who produces or packages food or drink in a kitchen located in that person’s primary domestic residence or another appropriately designed and equipped residential or commercial-style kitchen on that property for direct sale by the owner, a family member, or employee and is registered with their local health department as a cottage food operator.

The Alliance championed the passage of Illinois’ first cottage food law in 2012 which allowed for the production of non-hazardous baked goods, jams, and jellies in a home kitchen for sale at farmers markets. Prior to the passage of this law, a commercial kitchen was required, and the availability of renting a commercial kitchen, or expense of purchasing one, was out of reach for most starting food businesses. In 2017, the Alliance proposed an amendment, the Food Freedom Act, which increased the number and types of allowed foods, and importantly, allowed for the processing of vegetables, giving farmers greater opportunity to add value to their products and preserve vegetables for sale over the winter. The Food Freedom Act went into effect in January of 2018.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO GROW AND SUPPORT THE INDUSTRY

Based on survey respondents, these are recommendations to improve cottage food regulations and provide support to expand Illinois’ cottage food industry:

1. Explore expansion of cottage food legislation to open up all direct-to-consumer sales avenues.

2. Bring regulating bodies up to speed on cottage food regulations. This could include distributing existing cottage food resources, such as the Cottage Food Legal Guide and the Garden Gates to Dinner Plates website link to county health departments and market managers (through Illinois Dept. of Public Health and the Illinois Farmers Market Association), and hosting webinars and workshops specifically for regulators and market managers.

3. Translate cottage food resources into Spanish and other languages in order to insure these resources equally serve non-English speaking populations.

4. Increase the availability of resources for cottage food producers. This could include targeted partnerships and distribution of resources through University of Illinois Extension, the Illinois Farmers Market Association, Faith in Place, the Institute for Justice, the Illinois Department of Agriculture, as well as organizations that serve diverse populations—including but not limited to Enlace, Black Chambers of Commerce, and the Food Chain Workers Alliance.

5. Develop additional resources around labeling and food safety to insure that cottage food producers have every opportunity to understand and access food safety information after completing the food safety training courses.

6. Develop email newsletter content and templates for the above organizations to use. Cottage food producers regularly communicate through email.

7. Distribute cottage food resources through Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest—the primary social media platforms used by cottage food producers.

8. Explore the development of resources to help cottage food producers find and rent commercial kitchen space, including a directory of shared kitchens and commercial kitchens for rent.

COTTAGE FOOD QUICK FACTS

- Among survey respondents, cottage food producers are primarily female (77%) and Caucasian (85%)
- 38% of cottage food producers are over the age of 55, 49% are between the ages 35-54, and 12% are between the ages of 25-34.
- Most are married, and 44% have 1 or more children under the age of 18.
- 38% have a household income of less than $50,000.
- 61%, have household incomes above $50,000.
- The majority of cottage food producers, 65%, hold a bachelor’s degree or higher; the remaining 35% had various levels of education from high school diplomas to associates degrees.
- Over half of cottage food producers, 53%, live in rural areas.
- 36% of cottage food producers are farmers that use the cottage foods to add value to their farming operation, preserve bumper crops, sell products over the winter, and improve their bottom lines.
- Just 31% of cottage food producers are employed full-time, while the remainder describe themselves primarily as employed part-time, a homemaker, retired, or self-employed.
- Over half, 54%, describe their cottage food business as a supplementary occupation. 13% describe it as their main occupation, and 30% describe it as a hobby.
- Most cottage food businesses have been operating for three years or less and the majority are micro-businesses, earning less than $5000.
WHO ARE COTTAGE FOOD PRODUCERS?

Cottage food producers are a vibrant and diverse group of individuals, of varying race, gender, socio-economic status, and identity. Nevertheless, the survey results suggest a few overarching themes or trends. Primarily, cottage food enterprises are young micro-businesses earning less than $5000. The entrepreneurs of these enterprises tend to be mostly women and mostly white. Over half of all cottage food producers live in rural areas, and over 1/3 of producers describe themselves as farmers, suggesting that cottage food is of particular importance in fostering rural economic development—by providing job opportunities where they may not exist and providing farmers a means to improve the financial viability of their farms.

Cottage food producers are driven by their passion to do work that they love and enjoy, as well as to increase their financial stability. Overwhelmingly, cottage food producers are making non-hazardous baked goods and candies; however, it’s clear the they appreciate the recent expansions made available through the 2018 Food Freedom Act as pickled and fermented goods are the third most-popular item in production, followed by dried goods—which includes teas and dehydrated fruits and vegetables. Prior to the Food Freedom Act, these vegetable products were not allowed.

Apart from these overarching trends, there are two primary types of cottage food producers:

The first is women with young families. These women may have full-time or part-time employment, or may describe themselves as a homemaker. They are likely to be middle or low income. They view cottage food as a means to provide additional earnings while also giving them the flexibility to control their schedules and take care of their children.

The second is women with grown children that are retired or entering retirement age. These women have sufficient household income and view cottage food as a hobby. It is a means to express their creativity and provide wholesome food to their community. For these women, cottage food is about preserving tradition, serving their community, and contributing their time and talents to the betterment of themselves and their society.
What is your estimated sales total for 2019?
- I haven’t sold anything yet: 10
- $0-4,999: 70
- $5,000-9,999: 9
- $10,000-14,999: 5
- $15,000-19,999: 2
- $20,000-24,999: 4
- $25,000-29,999: 0
- $30,000-39,999: 1
- $40,000-49,999: 1
- $50,000-59,999: 1
- $60+: 0

What motivated you to launch a cottage food business? (114 responses)
Check all that apply
- I wanted to fill my time doing something I love: 76 (67.3%)
- I wanted to increase my financial stability: 58 (51.3%)
- I wanted to be my own boss: 44 (38.9%)
- I wanted to have flexibility and control over my schedule: 52 (46%)
- I wanted to pursue a food entrepreneurship dream: 46 (40.7%)
- I wanted to earn income while taking care of my family: 30 (26.5%)
- Other: 17 (15.3%)

What types of food do you make? (113 responses)
Check all that apply
- Baked goods (pastries, muffins, pies cookies): 81 (71.7%)
- Candy, confections: 33, (29.2%)
- Pickled or fermented goods: 31 (27.4%)
- Dried goods, teas, dehydrated fruits and vegetables: 29, (25.7%)
- Breads, tortillas, pizza dough, noodles: 27
- Condiments, dressings, dips: 24
- Seasoning, spice mixes: 22
- Jams: 17
- Canned tomato products: 17
- Premade meals: 7
- Soup: 5
- Cut frozen produce: 4
HOW COTTAGE FOOD IMPACTS ENTREPRENEURS

Cottage food legislation provides entrepreneurs with personal freedom, an outlet to express their creativity, and a pathway to turn their passions and skill sets into thriving small businesses. Most cottage food producers are serious about their business and have plans to grow. Over half plan to purchase new or better equipment in the next 5 years, and 38% are seeking a commercial kitchen to rent. At least 8% wish to open a brick & mortar location in the next 5 years.

To further demonstrate their commitment to their business, cottage food producers, the primary use of their cottage food earnings is to reinvest the earnings back into the business. However, cottage food producers use their earnings for necessary household expenses and savings as well. A smaller, but not insignificant portion of earnings go towards medical and healthcare expenses, mortgage and rent payments, and student loans, suggesting that cottage food earnings are critical for some entrepreneurs. When asked to describe how their cottage food operations affect them, many entrepreneurs spoke of cottage food as a means to pay bills, add income to their farm, provide for their family, and feasibly start and grow a small business without cost-prohibitive start-up funding.

Complete the following sentence:
My cottage food business helps me to...

- “Pay my bills. And allows a flexible schedule due to health needs and kids with special needs”
- “Expand our farm based business while also being present to meet personal family needs. My cottage food business also provides meaningful vocational / learning opportunities for our disabled adult son.”
- “Put my kids through college, educate and serve my clientele, and use my skills for the betterment of all of them.”
- “Start and grow my business small and gives me the space to learn while not having to launch a large scale business.”
- “Utilize produce I grow that doesn't sell at farmers markets, reducing food waste and adding revenue to my overall farm business.”
- “Make money from a hobby I love and slowly transition to it being my full time “retirement job”

See appendix A for full list.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you primarily plan to use your cottage food earnings? Check all that apply (113 responses)</th>
<th>What plans do you have for your cottage food business in the next 5 years? Check all that apply (114 responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Invest back into the cottage food business: 84, 74.3%</td>
<td>• Purchasing new/better equipment: 60, 52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Necessary household expenses: 55, 48.7%</td>
<td>• Continued product testing: 59, 51.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Savings: 36, 31.9%</td>
<td>• Renting a commercial kitchen space: 44, 38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Buying things I wouldn’t otherwise (travel, entertainment, luxury items): 31, 27.4%</td>
<td>• Building a website: 37, 32.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Medical and healthcare expenses: 21, 18.6%</td>
<td>• Contracting a tax accountant for end-of-year taxes: 28, 24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mortgage and rent payments: 17, 15%</td>
<td>• Purchasing customer management/payment software (Quickbooks, Constant Contact, Mail Chimp, PayPal, Square): 24, 20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gifts or charitable donations to others: 17, 15%</td>
<td>• Hiring an employee: 17, 14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student loans: 13, 11.5%</td>
<td>• Contracting a graphic designer/label artist: 16, 13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education: 9, 8%</td>
<td>• No plans, I’m happy with where things are now: 15, 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other: 8</td>
<td>• Opening a brick &amp; mortar business: 10, 8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farm Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td>• Explore financing with a bank: 8, 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t make enough to “do” anything with it</td>
<td>• I plan to discontinue the business: 3, 2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Invest into our farm</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supplemental retirement income</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide my college kids with pocket money</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Put towards home loan</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pay property taxes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Survive</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COTTAGE FOOD

Cottage food producers demonstrate a high level of concern for the health and well-being of their community and environment. Many are creating “wholesome” food products that are difficult to find in mainstream groceries or bakeries - i.e. allergy free, gluten free, vegan, organic, whole grain or sprouted grain, no-added sugar, etc.

Below, cottage food producers self-describe their products:

- “**Nutritious, high quality baked goods with locally sourced ingredients**”
- “**I offer healthy alternatives to comfort foods, such as: pickles with honey instead of sugar, rolls with sprouted wheat flour, and desserts with whole grains and honey.**”
- “**Cupcakes using einkorn flour, organic ingredients whenever possible, and no preservatives, or artificial flavors or colors.**”
- “**coconut water based sports drink with no added sugar, sugar subs, dyes, chemical preservatives or flavors**”
- “**Fresh, vegan, local ready to eat food produced on an urban micro farm.**”

Not all cottage food is “health food” though, and many cottage food products celebrate local specialty items and guilty pleasures, like the following vendors who described their products as:

- “**Damn fine pie**”
- “**Special Regional Hot Dog Toppings**”
Cottage food producers care deeply about the social and economic fabric of their community as well, and they prove it with their pocketbooks—purchasing ingredients, supplies, and services from other local businesses in order to support them. A full 70% ranked purchasing from/hiring/contracting local businesses as “important” or “very important.” In addition, 60% of cottage food participants at least occasionally buy local ingredients direct from Illinois farmers and of those 30%, are committed to frequently or always buying direct from local farms. 65% at least occasionally purchase from a locally-owned grocery store or cooperatives and of those, 31% take that commitment further to purchasing frequently or always from locally-owned grocers and cooperatives. Cottage food producers’ commitment to supporting local farms and grocers is important to the development and growth of the specialty crop industry and agriculture sector in Illinois.

On a scale of 1-5, how important is it to buy from/hire/contract locally-owned businesses for your cottage food operation.

112 responses

Tell us how often you use the following types of ingredients
NEEDS OF COTTAGE FOOD PRODUCERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

When it comes to the issues facing the cottage food industry, two clear and pressing needs arise.

The first is the desire for greater opportunities and sales avenues to sell products direct-to-consumer. The current legislation mostly limits sales of cottage food to farmers markets—with a few exceptions for cottage food products that feature locally-grown ingredients. These “local products” have additional sales opportunities through CSAs, on-farm, and direct delivery. This language of “exceptions” is confusing to interpret and understand for health departments and cottage food producers alike; however, the more pressing issue is that the primary sales avenue through farmers markets is overly limiting and restrictive. According to cottage food producers, most farmers markets in the state are seasonal, and many communities do not have winter markets between October and April, which means cottage food sales are primarily limited to just 6 months of the year. In addition, farmers markets impose their own regulations on the type and quantity of vendors that they allow. For example, the City of Chicago runs a series of farmers markets, and cottage food vendors are not approved vendor type. Other farmers markets might turn away cottage food producers if they have too many bakers or prepared food vendors already vending at the market. Finally, some communities, especially rural communities, do not even have farmers markets where cottage food producers can vend their products.

When asked directly about their biggest barriers, cottage food producers overwhelmingly responded that the limitations around sales avenues is their biggest hurdle. Time and lack of availability of commercial kitchen space to scale up were also mentioned repeatedly as issues.

When asked about potential changes to the law, cottage food producers overwhelmingly agreed that they would like to see additional direct-to-consumer sales avenues through fairs and festivals, delivery, and at home pick-up. There was also strong support for expanding the product list to include dairy and buttercream icing.

What are your biggest barriers as a cottage food producer? (106 responses)

- “The inability to sell goods at events that are not labeled ‘farmers markets.’ There are a number of fairs, art walks, holiday events where I could sell my canned and baked goods but local health departments will not allow simply because they are not called “farmers markets.””

- “Not being allowed to participate in a particular market due to the market manager insisting there are enough bakers and she needs ‘diversity’ in the market.”

- “All of the rules and regulations. Especially only being able to sell at farmers markets. They are all full and it is cold too many months out of the year.”

- “Laws are too strict when it comes down to what I can and cannot sell. More items should be approved, for example like cheesecake. They should allow selling cheesecake as long as it’s stored properly. Also, allowing us to sell at more places instead of only farmers markets. It really does hold us back from selling our product and expanding our business. Unfortunately, not everyone can afford a brick & mortar and allowing us to sell more items & at more locations helps us better provide for our family.”

- “There’s no 24 hour shared commercial kitchen space close to my home.”

See Appendix B for full list
The second hurdle for cottage food producers is the need for greater understanding, clarity, and communication about cottage food regulations by industry stakeholders—including county health departments, market managers, non-profits, and state agencies. The following chart demonstrates the lack of clarity around cottage food legislation and perceived inconsistency in the knowledge base of licensing and regulating bodies such as county health departments and farmers market managers.

How much do you agree with the following statements:

- Cottage food law is straightforward and easy to understand: 43 Disagree, 22 Neutral, 49 Agree
- I was able to easily find the info and resources I needed to start a cottage food business: 38 Disagree, 19 Neutral, 55 Agree
- My health department fully understands the cottage food law: 40 Disagree, 37 Neutral, 34 Agree
- My health department is a useful resource that I can go to with questions about licensing and food safety: 37 Disagree, 29 Neutral, 45 Agree
- My farmers market manager fully understands the cottage food law: 23 Disagree, 42 Neutral, 37 Agree
- My farmers market manager is a useful resource that I can go to with questions about licensing and food safety: 33 Disagree, 43 Neutral, 31 Agree
- To include products made with dairy: 29 Important, 43 Neutral, 28 Very Important
- To include buttercream icing: 29 Important, 43 Neutral, 28 Very Important
- To include products made with meat and eggs: 29 Important, 43 Neutral, 28 Very Important
- To include products with CBD oil: 29 Important, 43 Neutral, 28 Very Important
- To allow cottage food producers to sell out of their home: 40 Important, 37 Neutral, 55 Very Important
- To allow cottage food producers to sell their products at fairs and festivals: 40 Important, 37 Neutral, 55 Very Important
- To allow cottage food producers to deliver direct-to-consumer: 40 Important, 37 Neutral, 55 Very Important
- To include all direct-to-consumer sales avenues: 29 Important, 43 Neutral, 28 Very Important
Finally, to further emphasize the lack of clarity in information surrounding cottage food, when asked what other changes to the law should be considered, a number of answers revealed that cottage food producers are receiving incorrect information about the current regulations.

- “Expecting a cottage food producer to have a separate entrance for their home based cottage food business....to be considered a legitimate business.”
  - A separate entrance is not a requirement of cottage food producers

- “The mason jar rule. Any product that requires refrigeration doesn't need a mason jar and some products spoil quicker in that type of jar (oils oxidize quicker with more air surface space contact, vinegar erodes metal bands causing rust, etc.)”
  - Not all products are required to be in mason jars-- just canned products

- “Standardize cottage food laws between counties and cities.”
  - The regulations are standardized across the state

- “Remove income limits. Does IL not realize that hundreds of people are baking illegally because of the restrictions? And they are not paying taxes on their earnings because of it. IL could earn more tax money if they would allow more freedom to their cottage food operations.”
  - Income limits have been removed

- “I also believe the sampling options need to be revised to include sampling at markets without individual packaging”
  - This is possible by obtaining a sampling license.

- “Clarify fermented foods and definition of a “condiment” to ease communication with health department officials.”
  - Fermented foods are allowed.

- “The local Health Departments view creme Honeys in a similar category as Hotdog/High Risk food and their fees are too high for this low risk item.”
  - Creme honeys are a confection and they are allowed under cottage food law. No fee higher than $25 should be applied.

- “Allowing pickled items that contain garlic.”
  - This is allowed

- The local health department not being up to speed on the new laws. Ex. They insist that I cannot do condiments or fermented foods (Kane county, Elgin)
  - This is not legal

*See appendix C for full list.*

There were also several suggestions to loosen the labeling/packaging requirements, which suggests a need for more education around these requirements and why they exist. Finally, one producer captured perfectly the sentiment of many cottage food producers who wish to work collaboratively with health departments to create safe and legal products. This producer requested: “More funding for public health so they can expand as needed. I don't want to be doing any of this under the table, but want to work with them.”
Complete the following sentence: My cottage food business helps me to..

(102 responses)

Provide for my family
Be creative and contribute to my family
Use excess food products that we grow and to add value to our existing business.
make an extra income while saving up to purchase/rent a storefront.
Utilize produce I grow that doesn't sell at farmers markets, reducing food waste and adding revenue to my overall farm business.
do what I enjoy
keep busy doing something I love.
Prepare for retirement.
get added value from our fruit, herbs, and veggies
Express my creativity, learn new information and skills, and push myself to see what new foodstuffs I can grow in the garden to use in my baked goods
Use my passion for baking without the investment of a brick and mortar shop.
Get involved in my community and make an income
Extend my season and the reach of local food
Supplement income
be creative while supplementing income
Enjoy my hobby and share with others locally grown foods
start and grow my business small and gives me the space to learn while not having to launch a large scale business.
use my talents to give back to others
Sell a product I enjoy
Explore new food product ideas
build my on farm business.
Create a life that works for me on my terms
Transform our produce into more profitable and unique items.
reduce waste and increase profit for our farm business.
Do what I love most - teaching the lost art of preservation, through canning, pickling and fermentation.
It will help me provide for my family and share my passions with the world.
share our love of our homestead produce
sell my home made hot sauce locally and spread our love of hot peppers
Provide for my family while also teaching my kids work ethic (entrepreneurship).
plan for retirement and enjoy my life because I love what I do!!!
Supplement our income
build a stronger local food system.
do the activities in the garden and the kitchen that I enjoy.
share my love of pie.
Supplement our family income, but hope to expand to other wholesale areas to increase that income.
share goodness with others.
offer value added products
Sell my extra products generated on my hobby farm to help pay for property taxes
avoid government oversight.
provide healthy product
Provide healthy food and build community.
Buy those extra things for my family. Pay bills.
reintroduce and demonstrate traditional growing and processing practices
Enjoy preserving
Be creative.
Meet my family and community's needs.
be creative and form connections in my community.
Educate others about einkorn flour, increase our finances, and use my talents as a baker.
Share German baked goods with my community.
feel like I am contributing to the healthy food alternative.
share something I love doing with other people
Test the market for my product
Express my creativity.
better myself by engaging in and supporting the local food community, networking, trying new foods, expanding my knowledge and social capital, support my farm, and expand what I do beyond work.
made a difference in my community by sharing my passion for health and whole, nutritious food.
Make extra money
Pay my bills. And allows a flexible schedule due to health needs & kids w/ special needs.
Build my baking skills and experience for an eventual bakery career
share a truly nutritious and clean sports beverage.
Provide food for my family
Purchase veg at the market.
Offer additional products at my market booth.
Produce a high quality, in-demand product.
Be creative and have fulfillment.
Provide the community with fresh, local, ready to eat food.
sell my crop.
Do things I love to do...grow garden, can, bake.
Provide quality organic produce to the community.
... expand our farm based business while also being present to meet personal family needs. My cottage food business also provides meaningful vocational / learning opportunities for our disabled adult son.
Use the gifts God has given me to make baked goods for others to buy and enjoy. It has also allowed us to work together as a family.
Pay the bills
create shelf stable value added product
Use excess produce and better market what we grow
Make money from a hobby I love and slowly transition to it being my full time "retirement job"
Add value to some of the things I grow, and provide products even in the collar seasons.
put my kids through college, educate and serve my clientele, and use my skills for the betterment of all of them.
Do what I love to do.
Utilize fruits and veggies that may have gone to waste and provide income in the off season.
Keep busy, engage with the community, earn supplemental income
Preserve harvests and increase sales
Fill in when my produce is sparse
Provide fresh, healthy, great tasting food items to those local to me
Use extra produce. Pay extremely high property taxes.
provide additional income and do something I love.
Help others have less of an environmental impact by sourcing and preserving home and locally grown ingredients. Less waste/surplus on my end also, win!
Supply REAL quality food to real people.
value-add the herbs, vegetables, fruit and flowers that I currently grow.
have a hobby as well as extra income for my family and to promote more healthy local foods.
pay the bills.
Meet new people and learn the ins and outs of a food business
provide fresh produce and homemade products to my customers. Flavor is everything!
Utilize the food grown on our family farm to make recipes that are sought after by those who have tasted our food we make.
Bring people healthier choices that are specialty items
keep in touch with current food sanitation and public health rules
bake and sell goods without the heavy investment in a commercial kitchen.
Relax.
work towards my self-employment goals and acts as one of my creative outlets.
connect with consumers interested in foods direct from the farm
supplement my income.
be an entrepreneur, running all aspects of a business without some the traditional barriers (overhead expenses, relying on investors, securing a separate physical location to operate, etc).

APPENDIX B

What are the biggest barriers facing your cottage food operation? What prevents you from growing your business? (106 responses)

time
Time and money
The inability to sell goods at events that are not labeled “farmers markets”. There are a number of fairs, art walks, holiday events where I could sell my canned and baked goods but local health departments will not allow simply because they are not called “farmers markets “.
Not enough time
I can not take orders and sell/deliver direct to costumers
Time
You can only sell at farmer's markets. I would like to sell at vendor fairs/craft fairs/etc.
Needing a separate entrance for my home based business. It's required in my county. I can’t advertise or become a legitimate business without that separate door.
The limitations on where I can sell products. There are lots of events that would be perfect to vend at.
the red tape hurdle
time and space
Not being able to produce cream and custard pies in my home for sale.
Not being allowed to participate in a particular market due to the market manager insisting there are enough bakers and she needs "diversity" in the market.
Can only sell at farmer markets. Many individuals wish to buy product in person outside of maker season.
The stupid laws. The cottage food law and the new USDA garbage is discrimating against non corporate farms.
Time, outlet for products
Internet sales!!!!!!
Getting my name out there
Space, but am building dedicated space this year
Advertising due to the limited number of places I can sell at- trying to market my products and get them out in front of customers
time and cost
Minimum wage increase, taxes , Amazon
Laws limiting amounts of product sold and restrictions on online sales
There still appear to be differences in what can be sold under the Cottage Food Law, i.e. at a farmer's market vs. what can be sold at home under the home based baking permits. Same home kitchen but different rules based on where you sell.
The type of ingredients I’m allowed to use to create my products and where I can source them from.
Limited to where we can sell
Larger scale equipment.
Time - still just my retired husband and myself and I am working full time
Not being able to sell direct to consumer anywhere other than Farmers markets. By only being able to sell at farmers markets it REALLY limits growth. Fortunately some of that was solved when I stumbled into a commercial kitchen that I’m now working from, But if you can’t work from a commercial kitchen, not being able to do vendor shows or offering your product
for resale at events really limits potential. Income limits are also restrictive. Why is there a limit? It’s my only source of income.

My 9 to 5 job takes up too much of my time.

Just moved from Colorado and it was not easy to find clear information on cottage food act law, policy or rules to be considered an IL cottage food act provider. I felt like I had to use many of the resources listed in the next question and piece it together.

I need to pay for and take the certification class - hard to find time while homeschooling and raising our young family

Time vs space vs cost. Where we can sell under the regulations is also a hamper. It'd be nice if we could sell outside of farmer's markets

Laws are too strict when it comes down to what I can and can not sell. More items should be approved, for example like cheesecake. They should allow selling cheesecake as long as it’s stored properly. Also, allowing us to sell at more places instead of only farmers markets. It really does hold us back from selling our product and expanding our business. Unfortunately not everyone can afford a brick & mortar and allowing us to sell more items & at more locations helps us better provide for our family.

We are not able to take our wares to craft shows even though my products ARE agriculture that I have grown and canned, most of it local. It has to be labeled Farmers Market

The fact that different municipalities have different rules. I would love to open a home kitchen operation, but my town doesn’t allow it, even though the county and surrounding towns do

Limited time, and fewer people coming to farmers' markets.

a poor local economy
Illinois dairy laws; health department fees
Some of the food limitations are difficult. Especially around the holiday season.
Can't sell baked goods out of my home (cookies, jam)
Not knowing all the state or local requirements.
the cheap prices that people can buy from Walmart
Time. I have to split my time between this business and another in order to pay the bills.
I can only sell seasonally
Health Dept staff uneducated about registering and current law
Restrictions on where you can sell products.
Money, family illness
Time and money. I work full time and don't make enough to substantially grow my business.
Affording to rent a commercial kitchen.
Inability to sell from home directly; inability to sell products or teach classes using ingredients requiring TTC even though mobile refrigeration is possible.
Becoming organic certified.
inconsistency of the Cupcake Law throughout the State and the limitations of the Cottage Food Law. Also, all of the labeling and packaging requirements for cottage foods but not for commercial bakers at markets. (I really think all of the individual plastic packaging required is very wasteful.)
Access to new markets. There are not very many farmer's markets near by
Lack of commercial kitchen
Time and money
Mostly it is time. As I expand to include the farm, take orders, and find new recipes, I need assistance. I tried to hire an employee this year. Four different people came and went. I am so small I can't pay enough to keep them around? I am not sure what happened. I ended the summer closing for four weeks off since I couldn't find anyone to run things while I was out for surgery. I have been focused on adding more nonperishable products to sell so that I wasn't losing a lot of money with every market. Advertising is another barrier. How do I get the word out and explain what my business is and can do? Farmers markets are unpredictable and expensive leaving me with leftover product and little profit on bad days.
Not enough free time
All of the rules and regulations. Especially only being able to sell at farmers markets. They are all full and it is cold too many months out of the year.
Would like to sell at places other than farmers markets (home, craft fairs, online) Baking from home--where/how can I sell (confusing), space limitations, sales limitations.
I'm honestly a bit scared to do it!
Marketing, establishing need.
The farmers markets only rule
Poorly run markets
Being able to produce enough product to actually be profitable (including time/labor) in the confines of a home kitchen. I would love to be able to produce meat based broths.
Restrictions on selling only at a farmer’s market.
Mostly my own time as well as restrictions on selling.
The local health department not being up to speed on the new laws. Ex. They insist that I cannot do condiments or fermented foods (Kane county, Elgin)
Sales accounts
Not fully engaged; retired and filling my time
Having a certified kitchen to dry and package our products.
Limited availability of locally grown fruit, and venues for cottage food sales.
Not really a barrier-but a challenge to consistently provide customers with the varied selection of baked goods
Limitations are too tight...can only sell any volume at Farmers Markets and those are already crowded by Large companies with Honey.
Income levels
Don't want to grow too much more, happy at the level of production we're at
Time- working a full time job and have a new baby- and making sure I follow all of the rules
Licensing
I need commercial kitchen space & help to produce my products, & a lot of it needs to be done when everything is harvested & I'm already busy
Biggest barrier is being limited to farmer’s markets. I've always hoped the law would change to include other temporary markets, such as local festivals, craft and vendor fairs, local/county/state fairs. My county does not recognize the Cupcake Law, so I am severely limited to a few months of the year. I have to turn down orders constantly in the name of staying "above board."
Having a separate kitchen.
Access to markets from home kitchen
Restrictions on canned tomato products. Restricted sales locations (only farmers’ markets or direct).
Trying to get into Washington county. They claim to know nothing about cottage food industry.
Not sure what is ok
Laws preventing sales of so many items that people are interested in purchasing from local farms
Getting the license and certifications required and find a market to sell in.
Being able to deliver locally grown ingredients in my products. I will be waiting for Spring farmers markets to have a full menu available. Delivering only my homegrown items is a much smaller menu.
The codes against cooking meals in my own kitchen. And codes requiring something from my own farm being included in the food.
Space. I'm currently looking for a kitchen or looking to build a building mainly for cottage foods.
I am not ready to grow at this time.
Kitchen space and time
I'm satisfied with the volume I currently have.
Transitioning from working a lot of hours to having set amount of time to grow business where I can transition over
Location of available food markets--farmer's markets, etc. time and energy(my own)
I'm only one person, working from home! Scaling up is nearly impossible.
Money
The biggest barriers are living in a small town with only limited markets and times to be able to sell my items. It's very difficult to juggle the markets, my husband's work schedule, my children, and only having one vehicle in our family.
There's no 24 hour shared commercial kitchen space close to my home.
## APPENDIX C

### Are there other changes we should consider?  
(58 responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illinois</th>
<th>Allowing cottage food producers to sell by mail. We know people buy our products and mail them as gifts. There is no difference.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Expecting a cottage food producer to have a separate entrance for their home based cottage food business....to be considered a legitimate business.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| No        | I believe the cap on income has already changed.  
Standardize cottage food laws between counties and cities.  
Get the laws to regulate corps or large farms not the small family farms. AND educate people to know small family farms are safer than FDA approved large scale growers.  
Sell to commercial businesses, with their knowledge that we are cottage bakers!  
More places to sell is my biggest wish!  
Include edibles  
The law should be based on the items sold rather than the location it is sold. It is very confusing for both the customers and the operator the way it is currently written. For example, my cottage food permit allows sales of baked goods at the farmer's market where the customer can just stop by and choose from what is offered. The same product made in the same home kitchen but sold at home must be baked to order only.  
IL  
Being able to ship and sell online.  
Have a combination cottage industry and commercial kitchen agreement - I tend to use a commercial kitchen for the so as not to have so many restrictions and wider avenue for sales  
Remove income limits. Does IL not realize that hundreds of people are baking illegally because of the restrictions? And they are not paying taxes on their earnings because of it. IL could earn more tax money if they would allow more freedom to their cottage food operations.  
Yes let people make a living.  
grants to lower cost of the class?  
Local online sales? I.E. the ability to sell from a website as long as not out of state  
No, you all are doing a fantastic job!  
Unsure.  
I want to stress the need for inclusion of ALL Direct to consumer sales such as pick up/delivery of full meals or pre-frozen meals. Also the ability to sell from home and not have to set up at a market. I also believe the sampling options need to be revised to include sampling at markets without individual packaging.  
Fee costs  
N/A  
Homemade jam should not be limited to sale at farmers market. You should be able to sell it out of your home, at craft fairs, etc.  
Allowing approved products to be shipped.  
The mason jar rule. Any product that requires refrigeration doesn't need a mason jar and some products spoil quicker in that type of jar (oils oxidize quicker with more air surface space contact, vinegar erodes metal bands causing rust, etc.)  
Removing home address from labels. Registration in county, city, farmers market provides address of business in the event/concern. Don't think every customer needs to know where we live. Sampling of baked goods shouldnt require a handwashing station. At any venue all businesses selling baked products should be treated the same with regard to packaging and labeling. I don't understand how baking product in commercial kitchen allows vendor to sell without packaging |
etc. Can consumer be informed of product ingredients with individual packaging/labeling which is costly, time consuming and bad for the environment?

The labeling requirements (sometimes items are just too small, like cake pops, for all of the labeling required) and having to individually package every item. I understand the reasoning of letting people know they are purchasing something from a home kitchen, but I don't understand why commercial bakeries are allowed to sell items without packaging. I have no better idea of what ingredients they might contain, or what allergens they might have than something purchased from a cottage food baker. It's just so wasteful to have to package things like big cookies or scones separately so someone has to throw away even more plastic!

None

Pumpkin pies need to be added to the allowed list. So much lost business around Thanksgiving!

I wish public health had a list of available commercial kitchens that can be rented. I am fine with taking orders because we are also a farm, but if I wasn't a farm, I would want our county to have a Home Kitchen Operation option (not just Cottage, but this is the same as being able to include all direct-to-consumer sales). Could all counties be required to offer that as an option? I really wish I could accept small catering jobs. The people who ask me to bring a cake, cookies, coffee, etc., know I am a Cottage Operator and they are fine with that. I So far, I just tell them they have to purchase the food and then I don't know what they do with it. I would like to be able to sell at their venues, or bring food to them and stand there and serve it with a little sign that says I am a Cottage Operator. I can give samples at Farmers Markets and to me serving someone a cookie is no different than that. Of course, I don't want to deal with big safety issues like temperature controlled meats and buffets and such, but a plate of cookies served with some tongs...? I should be able to do that. There is a large niche of folks who are looking for that small-scale inexpensive catering that Cottage Operators could provide. Another thing is that I wish I could give my leftover perishables to the food pantry. Homeless folk deserve cake, too, but that is considered feeding the public, so I cannot donate. More funding for public health so they can expand as needed. I don't want to be doing any of this under the table, but want to work with them.

Creating more sales avenues should be the primary goal of the law expansion. It is extremely expensive to start a cottage food production and I find myself constantly dealing with the cost-prohibitive nature of the business. This year I barely made back what I spent on licensing, supplies, insurance, etc.

Also being able to sell online. Please.

Raising the limit which we can sell

I feel consenting adults should be able to buy whatever food they want from whoever they want. But I don't see that happening anytime soon.

Clarify fermented foods and definition of a “condiment” to ease communication with health department officials.

The cottage laws are intended to protect consumers from poorly processed and adulterated foods. Food safety and the health of Illinois citizens should be the prime concern of the law. This survey does not ask key questions about food safety.

FOOD SAFETY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION TO ANY CHANGE IN THE LAW!

The ice law is extreme that we have to pay the same amount a restaurant pays to handle ice.

The local Health Departments view creme Honeys in a similar category as Hotdog/High Risk food and their fees are too high for this low risk item.

Allow mail order/internet sales through sites like etsy

Lower fees

I think you covered my concerns!

Allow a larger selection of preserved and baked items to be produced and sold

Pressure canned items would be AMAZING!

There should be zero restrictions on person to person agreements of exchange

I find other states (Missouri or North Carolina for instance) have much more relaxed food laws - all foraged ingredients (like edible mushrooms) are allowed. It would be nice to be able to make all foods to sell, including dairy.

Internet sales even if just within the state.

Nope

Allow sale of pickles using the recipes from proven sources with out PH testing from independent lab.

Allowing pickled items that contain garlic.

Better inspections at farmer's markets, fairs, festivals--I've seen people I would not have at the event--unclean nails, no labels on products, unprofessional looking and dirty packaging. Also baked items displayed in a manner that allows customers to come up and squeeze the baked goods.
Reducing packaging waste - packaging and labeling individual items is a major time burden. Make ingredients lists available on request - and those who are concerned will ask for them. For municipalities that honor the cottage law, the cupcake law should also be valid. As you are pushing for, these two types of operations should be tied together.