



2021 Legislative Priority

Issue:

Local foods and value-added products

Background:

Hoosiers are entrepreneurs. They are innovators. Much of that innovation and entrepreneurship begins on Indiana's farms. From large commercial operations using new technology to increase productivity to small operations with locally grown products that keep food dollars in our State's economy, these producers are driving economic development and growth.

But as with any innovation, sometimes old systems can stand in the way. Regulations and market barriers that don't recognize new products or technologies stifle growth. Producers and processors should have the ability to raise, process, add-value, and market their products directly to consumers in a way that's modern. We know consumers crave local products and, in this economic and public health climate, they are particularly interested in being able to order and receive those products in a contactless manner.

Our State Legislature has acknowledged this trend in the past by exempting farmer's markets and roadside stands from the Indiana State Department of Health's "Food Establishment" regulations. See *IC 16-42-5-29*. However, this limited, narrow exemption no longer recognizes the robust opportunity for entrepreneurs in the food and ag industry.

We should expand that exemption to include all home-based vendors in order to allow them to capture the opportunity to more broadly market value-added products to consumers.

Story Points:

- The local food movement has become well developed and we need policy that will support these entrepreneurial efforts.
- Our current regulatory structure for local foods is too narrow and restrictive.
- Food safety is paramount: that's why our bill layers in the right guardrails while also expanding products that can reach consumers and the methods by which they can do so.

Key Message/ Ask:

Our request is simple: expand the existing exemption from the food establishment regulations to home-based vendors and all those producers and processors to market their products by mail, telephone or online for pickup or home delivery.