



# INDUSTRY NEWSLETTER

UPDATES IN RETAIL & MANUFACTURED FOOD SAFETY, JANUARY—JUNE 2016

## COMPLAINTS & COMPLIANCE IN GEORGIA

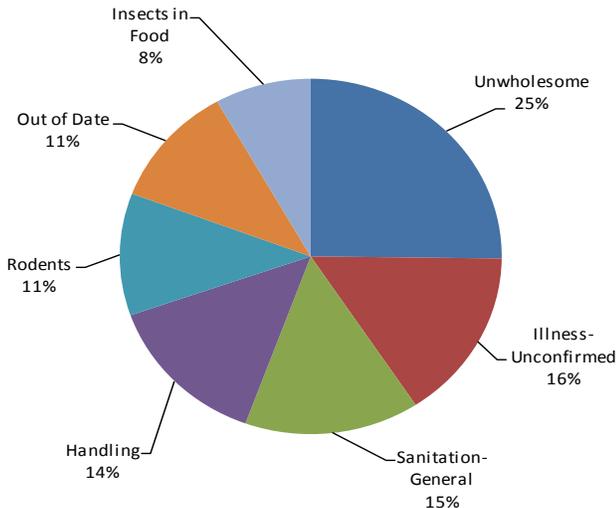
In this first issue of the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) Food Safety Industry Newsletter, the GDA is highlighting two components of the state compliance program. Within this program, industry and regulatory partners in the State of Georgia are able to identify **complaints** (situations where the public notifies the business or GDA and reports conditions they feel are not suitable within an establishment) and **compliance issues** (GDA food safety inspectors, or Compliance Specialists, report conditions during an inspection and/or an investigation).

correct the problem. Follow-up inspections or investigations that cite compliance issues that require remediation or enforcement actions are tracked using a Reportable Conditions Form (RCF). The complaints the GDA has investigated between January and June have totaled nearly 400 incidents.

Guidance materials that could be used in preventing compliance issues most commonly seen in Georgia include but are not limited to the following:

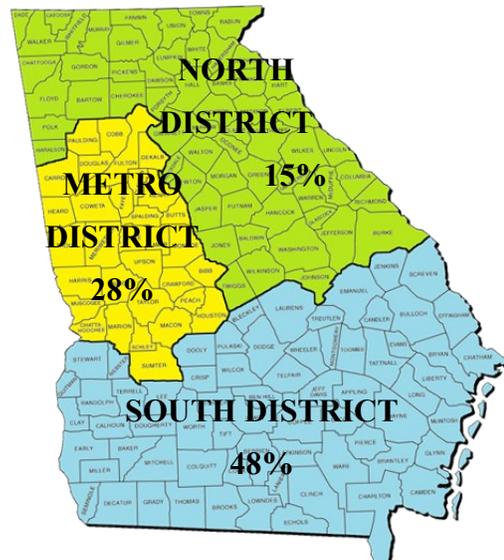
- ⇒ Georgia Food Code-[See more in Georgia's regulations.](#)
- ⇒ Sanitation Standard Operating Procedure. [See an example here](#) from the USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service.
- ⇒ Proper employee health and hygienic practices; see this [Employee Health & Hygiene guidance.](#)
- ⇒ For more tips on Food Safety Guidance click [here.](#)
- ⇒ "Focusing on Retail Food Safety" booklet for retail businesses is on our [GDA website.](#)

**Top 7 Complaints Investigated**



When the public reports food conditions they feel are unsanitary or unsafe, or they believe a food product they consumed has made them sick, those are classified as complaints. The GDA tracks complaints and reports of potential foodborne illness in a digital software system, and each complaint is investigated or referred to another regulatory agency.

A compliance issue constitutes anything with in a regulated food sales establishment that is against state rules and regulations. It is something that could cause adverse public health reactions, and/or is a repetitive violation or condition within an establishment. During routine inspections by the GDA, if and when a compliance issues is noted, the firm is given a timeframe to



*This map shows an estimated percentage of reportable conditions identified by GDA food safety inspectors at retail food sales establishments (Jan.-June 2016). Not represented on the map are an additional 9% of reportable conditions identified in manufactured food operations statewide.*



## Risk Based Surveillance Sampling of Food at the Retail Level in Georgia

The Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) Food Safety Division's Retail Program routinely collects food samples from retail food sales establishments throughout the state. These include samples collected from grocery stores, convenience stores, and other retail sales facilities. The food products are sampled and tested at the GDA's laboratory. Tests may include pesticide residue, chemistry, and/or microbiological testing.

This random, risk-based sampling program is designed to ensure safe, wholesome food products are offered for sale in Georgia. The GDA's Retail Food program inspectors, otherwise known as "compliance specialists," are instructed to sample food based on the risk of the item. For example, microbiological samples could include sliced deli lunch meat, prepared salads from within the deli (e.g., chicken salad or potato salad) or fresh, sliced melons or fruit salad that has been prepared on-site.

Foods prepared at the retail store level are often at a higher risk for cross contamination, environmental contamination or temperature abuse. For tips to help avoid these types of compliance issues, please see the GDA's guidance booklet for the retail industry, "[Focusing on Retail Food Safety](#)," and consider using for

in-house training, or as a print-out to post in a retail store as a reminder for all employees.

Food samples are collected during routine inspections (or may also be collected during a food safety investigation by the GDA), and are then tested for the presence of microbial contamination, such as *Listeria monocytogenes*, *E. Coli 0157*, *Salmonella*, and other pathogens that can pose a human health risk. Food products tested for chemistry may include aflatoxin levels in grain products, or histamine levels in fish. Fresh produce may also be tested for pesticide residue (this is not done routinely at this time).

The GDAs recent adoption of mandatory testing requirements at manufactured food plants, along with USDA's mandatory testing requirements in the meat and poultry industry and FDA's increased surveillance on foods in interstate commerce has resulted in a safer food supply. The risk-based sampling program employed by the GDA focuses on potential sources of contamination primarily at the retail level. Monitoring our food supply for wholesomeness and quality from production to retail with laboratory testing helps to ensure that Georgia citizens are receiving safe food.

### TOTAL FOOD SAMPLES TESTED BY THE GDA BY YEAR\*

Type of Sample	STATE FY13	STATE FY14	STATE FY15	FY16 (estimated)
DAIRY Containers	480	443	503	475
DAIRY Finished Products	862	753	755	790
DAIRY Raw Products	415	445	389	419
Dairy Water Samples	264	195	200	219
MANUFACTURED Surveillance & Routine Samples	1085	683	741	836
MANUFACTURED Environmental Swabs	1000	750	1250	1000
MANUFACTURED Investigation/Restoration Swabs	342	435	250	342
WELL WATER	642	521	553	572
RETAIL Surveillance & Routine Samples	0	0	987	1350
<b>TOTAL SAMPLES</b>	<b>5090</b>	<b>4475</b>	<b>5387</b>	<b>6003</b>

Each year, the GDA collects and tests finished products, finished product ingredients, and dairy and well water samples. This chart shows the total number of samples collected and tested by the GDA's laboratories over the past four years. While the numbers of samples have varied from year to year, the GDA aims to maintain a consistent approach to its testing processes; variations in could be attributed to several factors (such as a large, ongoing investigation). The Food Microbiology, Food Chemistry, Dairy and Pesticide Residue Laboratories are located at the GDA's headquarters in Atlanta. In South Georgia, the GDA also has its Groundwater Laboratory (among other testing capabilities), located in Tifton. Based on data collected through the GDA's sampling and testing program, the next newsletter will review what types of positives have been reported, what types of food products positive samples have been attributed to, and tips and guidance for industry on this topic. Be on the lookout for that later this year.

\*The GDA operates under a fiscal year beginning July 1, ending June 30.



Follow our social media accounts @GDAFoodSafety



***Get to know who your GDA Food Safety inspector is! Learn what Retail or Manufactured Food Program/District you are located within, and know when to contact your inspector.***

***Examples of when you should contact the GDA Food Safety Division:***

- *To report a change of ownership or change of location*
- *For plan review prior to any construction or remodeling updates*
- *For changes or additions to the type of firm operation*
- *For changes or additions to processing equipment or product line(s)*
- *To report the presence of any poisonous or deleterious substance, or other contaminants in a finished product or*

*finished product ingredient (even if it is still in the establishment's control, you must report it to the GDA)*

- *To report a possible customer foodborne illness issue, or other circumstance(s) that could endanger public health*
- *To report a natural disaster and/or power outage involving food products*
- *To request educational materials or a GDA Food Safety speaker for a conference, training or other industry or consumer-related event*

*Contact the GDA for any other licensing or inspection inquiries. Get additional contact information and a map of the Retail Districts at:*

<http://agr.georgia.gov/district-offices.aspx>

## **Event Highlight: GEORGIA 2016 FOOD SAFETY & DEFENSE CONFERENCE**

Georgia hosted a Food Safety and Defense Conference on May 23, 2016, at Cobb Galleria Centre in Atlanta. The event was co-hosted by Georgia's Food Safety and Defense Task Force and the Georgia Rapid Response Team, with attendees ranging from members of the retail and manufactured food industry to local, state and federal regulatory food safety professionals, academia, and more. This event is slated to become an annual conference, with the next meeting tentatively schedule for Spring 2017. During the 2016 event, presentations included:

- Interactive panel discussions on the 2013 Food Code (pictured, below; with representatives from both the GDA and Georgia Department of Public Health, discussing the most current Food Code implementation in Georgia) and a panel on multi-state foodborne illness outbreaks (with representatives from various local, state and federal regulatory and public health agencies discussing how the response has changed in recent years);
- Navigating food allergies, presented by industry representative Jordan Maeson, MD, CEO of Safer Dining (pictured, above) who became passionate about this topic after a personal allergic reaction and speaks nationally to help educate people about the importance of safe food handling and allergy awareness;
- Food defense training with a "Food Defense Plan Builder" tool, offering industry guidance to control and/or minimize the risk of intentional contamination events at a facility; and
- A talk on "The Cornerstones of Integration: Food Protection Task Forces and Rapid Response Teams," presented by FDA, highlighting the vision of an integrated food safety system and some of the national frameworks that support this concept, such as Food Protection Task Forces and Rapid Response Teams.

To view shared PowerPoint presentations from this conference, please [click here](#). To learn more about the conference and upcoming events, please visit [ga.foodprotectiontaskforce.com](http://ga.foodprotectiontaskforce.com). Want to attend this event next year? Contact [Jessica.Badour@agr.georgia.gov](mailto:Jessica.Badour@agr.georgia.gov) with a request to be added to the mailing list!



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## RECALL UPDATES

Get immediate notifications about recalls impacting Georgia by signing up for the GDA’s recall email alerts or text/SMS message alerts. Subscribe and manage your personal subscription online here:

<http://agr.georgia.gov/foodsafety.aspx>

### Sign up for Recall Email/Text Alerts

The GDA Food Safety Division sends out email and text alerts for recalls impacting the State of Georgia. You can sign up for recalls of both food and/or feed (specifically pet food/treats and animal feed products). To add your email or phone number to either of these lists, please [click HERE](#). (Note: the subscription will automatically ask for your email address; on the drop-down menu you can select "SMS/text alerts" to add your phone number.)

The GDA sends weekly updates for all recalled products that have been made and/or distributed in Georgia. There are two subscription options, including one specifically for food products, as well as another for feed (pet food, treats, animal feed) products.

Recall updates, as well as food safety news and tips are also shared on the GDA’s Twitter and Instagram accounts, @GDAFoodSafety.

Have feedback or issues with this system? Contact Jessica Badour at [Jessica.badour@agr.georgia.gov](mailto:Jessica.badour@agr.georgia.gov).



## INDUSTRY TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:

Please share with members of industry who may be interested in, and/or benefit from, these upcoming training courses:

### Wild Mushroom Identifier Course:

The Georgia Department of Public Health has recognized a wild mushroom identifier course, known as the “Mushroom Mountain Wild Mushroom Identifier Course”



here in Georgia. The course is designed for wild mushroom foragers who plan to forage and sell wild mushrooms to food service establishments in Georgia. The course helps ensure the safety of wild mushrooms for sale and service, and helps with traceability in the event of a food safety event, requiring regulatory interventions. *Next course offering: Savannah, GA - August 6-7, 2016*



### Certification for Food Safety Professionals:

This workshop, Oct. 4-6, will cover a broad range of topics, from food safety, in-depth sanitation, hands-on activities for developing GMPs, SOPs, and SSOPs, personal hygiene, monitoring, verification and validation of HACCP, Preventive Control, and FSMA programs, pathogen control, internal auditing, trace back and recall plans, and regulatory programs. Participants will have an opportunity to interact with leading food safety experts.



*Sponsored by the Extension Outreach Program, Department of Food Science & Technology, College of Agriculture & Environmental Sciences, The University of Georgia.*

REGISTER: [Athens, GA - October 4-6, 2016](#)

## GEORGIA SHELLFISH DEALER TRAINING OFFERED IN AUG. 2016

The National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP) is a federal/state cooperative program recognized by the FDA and Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC) for the sanitary control of shellfish produced and sold for human consumption.

Under the NSSP Model Ordinance Chapter X.04 A.[2], all shellfish dealers are required to obtain authority-approved training every five (5) years. **This is a mandatory training that all shellfish dealers must attend to maintain certification.** Georgia is providing this training at two locations in August 2016:

**August 9th** at Georgia Grown Welcome Conference Room  
Atlanta State Farmers Market, 16 Forest Parkway, Forest Park

OR

**August 17th** at Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
Coastal Resources Division, 1 Conservation Way, Brunswick, GA



*Please note, you only need to attend one training.*

[Click to Register Now!](#)

*For questions and concerns, please contact Krissa Jones at [Krissa.jones@agr.georgia.gov](mailto:Krissa.jones@agr.georgia.gov).*



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## HOW TO PREPARE THE TOP 5 FOODS ASSOCIATED WITH FOODBORNE ILLNESS

This article was originally written by Thomas Burke for publication in the Aug. 3 issue of the **Farmers & Consumers Market Bulletin**, the Georgia Department of Agriculture's bi-weekly newspaper. To learn more about this newspaper or sign up for a subscription (\$10.00 in print and online for Georgia residents, or \$5.00 for online subscription), please visit: <http://www.agr.georgia.gov/market-bulletin.aspx>.

Every year, an estimated 9.4 million people in the U.S. come down with "food poisoning," otherwise known as foodborne-related illness. When categorized into individual commodities, the five foods most often associated with illness include leafy greens, dairy, fruits and nuts, poultry, and vine-growing vegetables. Below is a breakdown on these commodities (percentage of contribution to total illnesses in parentheses), along with tips and best practices for consumers when shopping and eating these types of foods:



Credit: USDA | <https://flic.kr/p/kUw4M8>

**Leafy vegetables** (22.3%): Examine for bruising or damage, bag separately from meats, and stored properly in your refrigerator. Rinse leafy vegetables thoroughly under cool running tap water to remove soil and microorganisms. Labeled, pre-washed leafy vegetables are "ready-to-eat" and may be used out of the container (no additional washing).



Credit: USDA | <https://flic.kr/p/qqBqyE>

**Dairy products** (13.8%): Only consuming pasteurized milk products that are properly refrigerated greatly reduces chances of becoming ill. While the popularity of raw milk and cheeses has increased, caution should be exercised; many harmful pathogens are often found in raw milk/products that are especially hazardous to young children, the elderly, and chronically ill. In Georgia, raw milk is not legal for sale for human consumption.



Credit: USDA | <https://flic.kr/p/dT7hJL>

**Fruits and Nuts** (11.7%): Rinse fruit thoroughly before consuming, even when not using the skin/rind. Scrub firm produce, such as melons, with a clean produce brush prior to consumption. Be aware that nuts can also be life endangering to those with allergies.



Credit: USDA | <https://flic.kr/p/cibzwl>

**Poultry** (9.8%): When purchasing chicken, the package should feel cool to the touch. Immediately place poultry in the refrigerator (41°F or lower) and use within three days, otherwise freeze it. Cook all poultry products until the internal temperature reaches 165°F.



Credit: USDA | <https://flic.kr/p/d5ZfMN>

**Vine-stalk produce** (7.9%): Like leafy vegetables and fruits, rinse thoroughly and look for bruising or damage.

Remember with any preparation of food: *Clean* surfaces, hands, and fresh produce; *Separate* food types; *Cook* to proper temperature; and *Chill* leftovers immediately.

For more information on food safety of various food types visit: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/types/>, and follow the GDA for more food safety tips at @GDAFoodSafety.



Follow our social media accounts @GDAFoodSafety



## FOOD SAFETY TRENDS, RESOURCES & HOT TOPICS IN THE NEWS:

- [FDA Finalizes Rule to Ensure Food Safety During Transport, \*FDA Constituent Update\*](#)
- [Integrating the Nation's Food Safety System: What You Need to Know—Past, Present and Future, \*Food Safety Magazine\*](#)
- [Implementing Active Managerial Control Principles in a Retail Food Business, \*Food Safety Magazine\*](#)
- [Controlling \*Listeria monocytogenes\* in Retail Delis, \*USDA outreach materials\*](#)
- [Study: How Often are Retail Deli Machines Cleaned? \*Food Safety Magazine\* \(article\)](#), also see: [Retail Deli Slicer Cleaning Frequency—Six Selected Sites, U.S., 2012 \*CDC MMRW\*, \(official study results\)](#)
- [Produce Safety Best Practices Guide for Retailers, \*FMI The Voice of Food Retail\*](#)
- [Cyclospora in Cilantro: The Georgia Rapid Response Team Investigate, \*Georgia Gov\*](#)
- [Food Safety Modernization Act \(FSMA\) Final Rule Watch: Intentional Adulteration, \*National Law Review\*](#)
- [Why Supply Chain Transparency is More Important Than Ever, \*Food Safety Magazine\*](#)
- [FSMA Requirements Call for Better Data Management](#)
- [Safely Feeding America, \*Pathogen Detection without Compromise\*](#)
- The **Center for Food Security & Preparedness** has a new app related to culturally-based foods in the [Google Play Store](#).

### \*\*EVENTS\*\*

- See these recent past events and get access to valuable resources, presentations and speaker info. If interested, mark your calendars for the upcoming dates of these events in 2017!
  - *June 13-16: The National Environmental Health Association held The Sate of Big Ideas: Moving Environmental Health Outside the Box in San Antonio, TX. TO learn more about the conference [click here](#).*
  - *June 25-29: Association of Food and Drug Officials Annual Educational Conference took place in Pittsburg, PA. Follow this [link](#) for more information about the conference and to access the presentations.*
  - *June 29-July 1: Georgia Environmental Health Association Annual Education Conference took place in Savannah, GA. [Click here](#) to learn more about becoming a member, read the annual journal publication, and see event photos.*
  - *July 19-21: The 2016 National Association of County & City Health of Officials Annual Conference was hosted in Phoenix, AZ, follow this [link](#) for more information.*
- Aug 18-19: FDA FSMA Rules on the Sanitary Transportation of Human and Animal Foods Training, San Francisco, CA. For more information [click here](#).
- Aug 21-24: 2016 Public Health Informatics Conference to be held in Atlanta, GA. [Click here](#) for more details.
- Sept 11-14: The Association of Food and Drug Officials of the Southern States (AFDOSS) Fall Conference, Gatlinburg, TN, register and get information [here](#).
- Sept 18-21: 26th National Radon Training in San Diego, CA, [register here](#).
- Oct 4-6: Certification for Food Safety Professionals, through UGA Extension. See more on page 4.
- Nov 1-3: Seafood HACCP Basic Course in Brunswick, GA, through UGA, Marine Extension, and Georgia Sea Grant Programs. For more information contact Tori Stivers at [tstivers@uga.edu](mailto:tstivers@uga.edu).

### FIND THE GDA ONLINE!

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These pages offer industry resources, guidance documents, and other useful tools for food safety and compliance



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