

## Food Sovereignty and Meat and Poultry Products Factsheet

Food sovereignty is generally defined as a food system in which the people who produce, distribute, and consume food also control the mechanisms and policies of food production and distribution. In 2017, the Maine State Legislature passed legislation that allows municipalities to adopt local food sovereignty ordinances that supersede certain state food laws and allow for some local food production without licensure by the State of Maine. Maine also ratified a constitutional amendment in 2021 that enshrined an individual's right to grow, raise, harvest, produce, and consume food of their own choice for sustenance and well-being.

However, meat and poultry products are specifically exempted from food sovereignty ordinances due to the inherent food safety hazards associated with the production of these products (7 M.R.S.A. § 281-286, 7 M.R.S.A. §285). **All meat and poultry production must be conducted under State licensure or registration and in accordance with the statutes (22 M.R.S.A. Chapter 562-A and Chapter 551).**

### **What if my municipal ordinance specifically exempts meat and poultry products?**

State statutes supersede any municipal ordinances regarding meat and poultry production and licensure. There are **no exceptions** for production of meat and poultry entering commerce from State of Maine statutes.

### **What if I am producing meat and poultry products at home, for my own family (not for sale)?**

State statutes do not and have never regulated the processing of meat and poultry products on your own property for your own personal use. However, you will want to ensure that your production of products at home for your own use does not violate any local ordinances or environmental statutes (dumping of offal near waterways, for example).

### **Does Food Sovereignty affect the animals I have slaughtered and processed under the custom exemption, retail and poultry exemptions?**

No. These are exemptions from certain statutes of the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) and the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA) that allow production of specific products without continuous (daily) inspection by the State or USDA-FSIS. They are **not** exemptions from State of Maine statutes. They do not exempt custom exempt operators, poultry exempt operators, or persons selling poultry exempt products or live animal shares from all applicable state statutes for sanitation, humane handling and licensure or registration.

*For any further questions about how Food Sovereignty affects meat and poultry products, please contact the Maine Meat and Poultry Inspection program at (207) 287-7512.*