



**ARKANSAS FOOD
INNOVATION CENTER**

**Helping entrepreneurs grow
Arkansas' economy**



**DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION**

University of Arkansas System

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Mission

The Arkansas Food Innovation Center (AFIC) provides scientific knowledge, technical expertise, state-of-the-art facilities and training opportunities to assist entrepreneurs and agricultural producers in Arkansas and the region in launching new food processing businesses.



Executive Summary

The Arkansas Food Innovation Center (AFIC) is designed to assist entrepreneurs and farmers prepare value-added food products for sale in local and regional commercial markets. The Center offers services to facilitate the creation of food manufacturing businesses in Arkansas. AFIC offers clients access to a manufacturing facility located at the Milo J. Shult Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Fayetteville. We are the only facility of this type in Northwest Arkansas, and our services reach statewide and beyond. AFIC's productivity has increased dramatically since its launch in 2013. In 2021, AFIC assisted 25 small food companies with 697 production runs. The retail value of products manufactured in AFIC's facility in 2021 was over \$2.1 million, and AFIC has contributed to the creation of full-time processing jobs and businesses in food manufacturing. As demand for AFIC's services continues to grow, manufacturing will be limited by the space available for production and storage. We are working to improve automation and efficiencies to serve our growing base of entrepreneurs.

Forward

Americans enjoy one of the safest, highest quality and most affordable food supplies in the world thanks to the productivity of our farmers and those who process, package and market food products. Agriculture is big business in Arkansas. Approximately 20% of the state's economy is generated from the total direct, indirect and induced economic impact of agricultural production and processing.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture provides research and extension support for both the production and processing of agricultural products. The Arkansas Food Innovation Center (AFIC) provides a link between research and extension programs within the Division's Department of Food Science (FDSC) and the food industry. AFIC was established to assist small to mid-size farmers enhance profits by expanding markets for their products and to encourage entrepreneurs wanting to become part of the food industry. AFIC is a public, licensed and inspected facility in Arkansas that is used for commercial production of locally-grown and made, value-added food products on a small scale.



AFIC offers clients the opportunity to draw on the expertise of the faculty within the Department of Food Science, the Division of Agriculture and across the University of Arkansas System. In addition, AFIC offers training opportunities designed to enhance clients' abilities to compete in the marketplace. Students within FDSC benefit from the presence of AFIC with opportunities to interact/network with clients and through training opportunities.

This publication provides a look at some of the impacts of the Arkansas Food Innovation Center. They are solving problems and creating new opportunities for growth in a vital sector of our local and national economy.

Handwritten signature of Jean-Francois Meullenet.

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Introduction



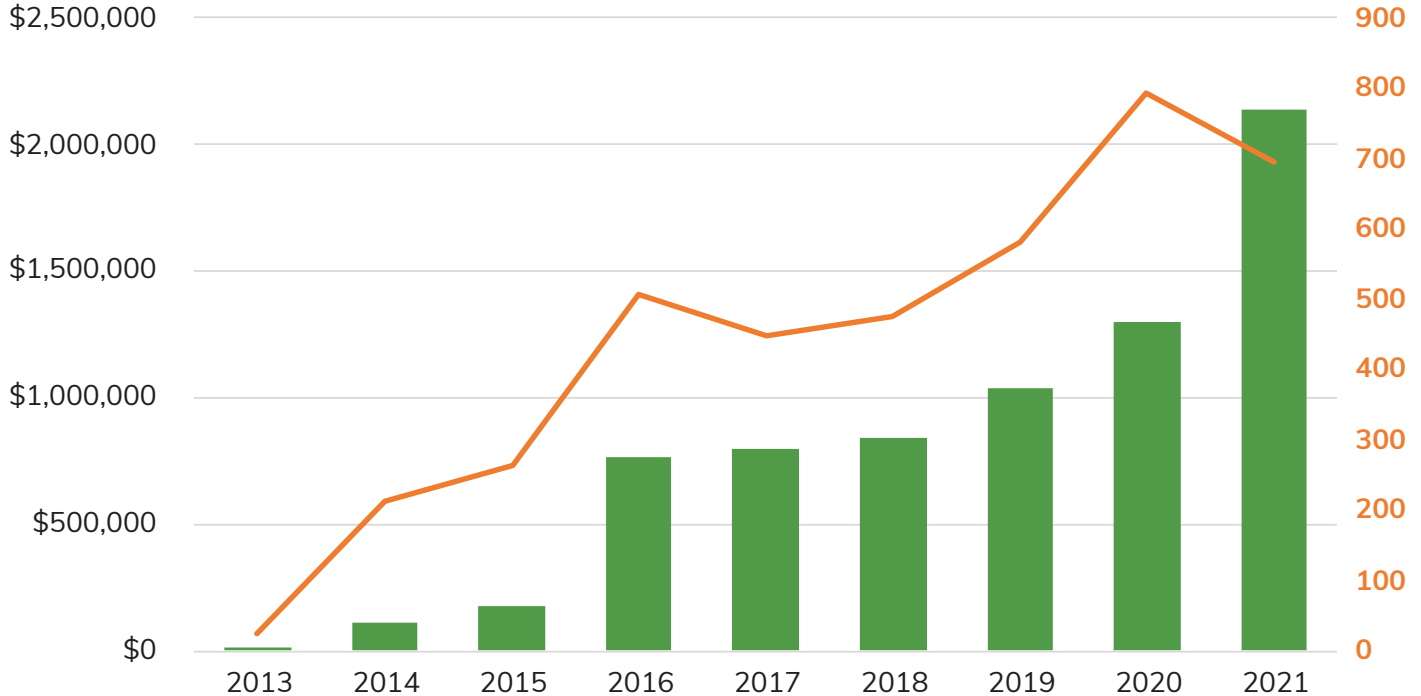
Manufacturing of food products is the largest value-added sector of the Arkansas economy. Growth within this sector will come not only from large companies that operate in the state but also new and developing smaller operations. Food entrepreneurs who transform a concept or recipe into a marketable product are important sources of economic development for the state and innovation for the food industry.

In addition, growers of agricultural commodities contribute to the food industry by adding value to products. Adding value to agricultural commodities provides farmers the opportunity to expand the consumer base for their products, market products year-round, use excess product, and diversify farm incomes, creating more sustainable local food systems.

The Arkansas Food Innovation Center (AFIC) provides assistance to entrepreneurs and farmers moving into the food processing industry. As part of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture's Department of Food Science, AFIC is uniquely positioned to provide clients with the expertise, facilities, and equipment for developing value-added products and moving these products into the marketplace.

AFIC Production

■ Retail Value ■ Production Runs



“Natural Way Food Group started at AFIC, and AFIC provided our company with the ground work on best manufacturing practices, food safety protocols, and many other essential small business needs. AFIC continues to be a tremendous support for our company as we have now grown to over 1,300+ stores.

AFIC will always be a business friend and mentor to Natural Way Food Group.”

— Austin Simkins, Co-Founder,
Natural Way Food Group
AFIC Graduate



Product Development & Start-up Activities





Potential clients come to AFIC with an idea they want to develop into a commercial product. Ideas may come from recipes that friends or family enjoy or heritage recipes handed down for generations. They may bring a product they've produced before but know they can improve. Farmers may work with AFIC to identify alternative ways of marketing crops or ways to use surplus produce. AFIC can assist clients with product development activities including:

- Helping convert recipes to commercial production quantities
- Connecting entrepreneurs with research scientists within the Department of Food Science who assist with recipe conversion and optimization
- Providing a certified and inspected facility for production of trial batches. Facilities may also be used for initial production runs allowing clients to develop markets
- Providing support for the development of product and processing required documents
- Supplying information on ingredients, packaging and labeling materials

Regulatory Requirements



ARKANSAS
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH





Since food directly affects the health and safety of consumers, the food industry is one of the most closely regulated industries in the country. Regulatory oversight is conducted by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) at the Federal level and by the Arkansas Department of Health at the state level. AFIC assists clients in ensuring that they meet the requirements of both of these agencies by:

- Assistance in completing FDA registration forms
- Support for the development of recall and allergen control plans
- Guidance in obtaining an Arkansas Department of Health Permit to operate a food processing operation
- Access to a process authority for required certification for acidified and low-acid food products
- Assistance with Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) safety plans
- Information for obtaining product liability insurance

Labeling

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container 2

Amount Per Serving
Calories 260

Calories from Fat 120

Total Fat 13g

Saturated Fat 5g

Trans Fat 2g

% Daily Value*

20%

25%



The label on a food product is an important part of the package since consumers use it to make purchasing decisions. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has mandatory guidelines for the presentation of label information on food products. With their in-depth knowledge of food labeling requirements, AFIC staff can provide clients with guidance on the layout of their food labels.

Labeling services provided by AFIC include:

- Label review to assure proposed labels meet required FDA standards
- Information on how to obtain Universal Product Codes (UPC), a label component required by most commercial markets
- Creation of a Nutrition Facts panel for the label

Analytical Services





Product component analysis is an important part of product development, quality control, and product safety. Entrepreneurs new to the food processing industry often have little or no knowledge of how to conduct these tests or how to interpret the analyses. In addition, most new producers are hesitant to invest in equipment for performing the tests until their business is viable. AFIC provides clients with access to test equipment as well as instruction in its use and interpretation of results. Testing services available through AFIC include:

- pH/acidity
- Water activity (A_w)
- Brix/sugar levels
- Viscosity
- And more



Client Training & Student Education



In addition to hands-on training in the operation of equipment for product production and packaging, AFIC clients are provided with opportunities to learn more about food safety, food processing, and food regulations through:

- An annual Better Process Control School to help producers of low-acid and acidified foods comply with FDA regulations
- Good Manufacturing Practices training
- Workshops on the fundamentals of starting a food processing business
- Factsheets on food safety, food processing and value-added food products
- Networking opportunities with other new food processors/entrepreneurs

As part of the Department of Food Science, AFIC provides educational opportunities to students. Through formal and informal interactions with AFIC clients, students within the Department gain a greater understanding of food product development, processing, safety, and the food industry. AFIC Interns have enjoyed opportunities to apply classroom studies to real-world situations and learn management skills.

Companies from across Arkansas that have produced in AFIC:

CLIENTS	PRODUCTS
A&A Orchards (Green Forest, AR)	Apple cider, fruit spreads
Bartleby's Food (Rogers, AR)	Seitan
Bernice's Hummus (Fayetteville, AR)	Hummus
Cherry Hill Plants (Fayetteville, AR)	Sauce, caramel
Deb's Gourmet Pantry (Rogers, AR)	Pepper jellies
Diamond Brew (Fayetteville, AR)	Kombucha
Fat Top Farm (Farmington, AR)	Mushroom products
Florence & Flint (Bentonville, AR)	Cookies
Garden Girl Farm (Pleasant Plains, AR)	Salsa
Granola Goddess (Fayetteville, AR)	Granola
Kindle Spices (Fayetteville, AR)	Hot sauces
Kyya Chocolate (Springdale, AR)	Syrups
Lundun Creations (Little Rock, AR)	Barbecue sauce
Luvmea (Springdale, AR)	Chocolate products

CLIENTS	PRODUCTS
Margaret Ruth's (Huntsville, AR)	Salad dressing
Markham & Fitz (Bentonville, AR)	Chocolate products
Mundi Sauce (Eureka Springs, AR)	Sauces
My Father's Garden (Rogers, AR)	Pepper jelly
Ozark Bootleg (Huntsville, AR)	Barbecue sauce
Ozark Cracker (Rogers, AR)	Lentil crackers
Ozark Wild Harvest (Eureka Springs, AR)	Pickled mushrooms
Pink House Alchemy (Fayetteville, AR)	Syrups, shrubs, bitters
Roberts Family Farms (West Fork, AR)	Salsa
Ruthie Mountain (Sage, AR)	Ground peppers
Salsa for Change (Fayetteville, AR)	Salsa
Savoy Tea (Fayetteville, AR)	Syrups
TO's Brand (Bentonville, AR)	Peanut sauce
Wade Industries (Rogers, AR)	Spices

Linking Clients To Other Resources

AFIC recognizes that product development and production is only part of getting a product into commercial markets. Through its partnerships with other organizations within the University of Arkansas System and in the community, AFIC helps clients identify the resources needed to launch and grow their companies. Some of our partners include:

- Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center (ASBTDC) - part of a national network that provides training, research and consulting services to existing and potential business owners. ASBTDC offers seminars and one-on-one consulting on topics such as operating challenges, business and financial plans, start-up assistance, and marketing strategies.
- Startup Junkie Consulting - a social venture focused on building entrepreneurship and innovation. Startup Junkie provides in-depth support, consulting, and assistance to both new and existing ventures in all aspects of building and growing a business.
- The National Agricultural Law Center - a source of objective, timely, and nonpartisan information on agricultural and food law. Representatives from the Center have participated in training sessions on topics such as Cottage Laws and food liability.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.



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