



GOV. COMM. 24-101
(HOUSE)

David M. Apatang
Governor

Dennis James C. Mendiola
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

January 08, 2026

GOV 2026-016

The Honorable Karl R. King-Nabors
President
The Senate; Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas
Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950

The Honorable Edmund S. Villagomez
Speaker
House of Representatives
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas
Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950



1/9/26

Dear Mr. President and Mr. Speaker:

This is to inform you that I have signed into law **Senate Bill No. 24-31, SD1**, entitled “To ensure food safety and support small food entrepreneurs sell non-time/temperature control (TCS) for safety food and home-cooked meals; and for other purposes.”, which was passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

This bill becomes **Public Law No. 24-22**. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,


DAVID M. APATANG
Governor

RECEIVED BY [Signature]
DATE 1/17/2026 TIME 4:11P

cc: Lieutenant Governor; Attorney General; Commonwealth Law Revision Commission;
Special Assistant for Administration; CEO, Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation;
CHCC Environmental Health Disease Prevention; Programs and Legislative Review



**THE SENATE
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH
LEGISLATURE**

SENATE BILL NO. 24-31, SD1

AN ACT

To ensure food safety and support small food entrepreneurs sell non-time/temperature control (TCS) for safety food and home-cooked meals; and for other purposes.

SENATE ACTION

Offered by Senator(s): Donald M. Manglona

Date: March 07, 2025

Referred to: Committee on Judiciary, Government, and Law

Standing Committee Report No.: 24-12 adopted on 06/23/25

Final Reading: June 23, 2025

HOUSE ACTION

Referred to: Committee on Commerce

Standing Committee Report No.: 24-41 adopted on 11/25/25

Final Reading: November 25, 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Francisco Q. Cruz", written over a horizontal line.

**Senator Francisco Q. Cruz
SENATE LEGISLATIVE SECRETARY**



**THE SENATE
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE**

FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 2025

S.B. NO. 24-31, SD1

AN ACT

To ensure food safety and support small food entrepreneurs sell non-time/temperature control (TCS) for safety food and home-cooked meals; and for other purposes.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:**

1 **Section 1. Short Title.** This Act may be cited as the “Cottage Food and
2 Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations Act of 2025.”

3 **Section 2. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature acknowledges that the
4 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is presently in a state of economic decline
5 that is seemingly deteriorating, given the idling tourism industry, which the Commonwealth
6 depends solely on. Furthermore, this depressed economic state adversely impacts the well-
7 being and sustainability of all citizens and many business owners throughout the islands,
8 making it difficult to remain afloat. The Legislature finds that many small businesses within
9 the Commonwealth can generate revenue using their culinary talents performed within their
10 homes; however, it is difficult absent the necessary regulations in place.

11 The Legislature further finds that allowing the sale of Non-Time/Temperature Control
12 (TCS) for Safety Food within the Commonwealth would assist small businesses that are at
13 risk of shutting their doors due to the negative economic impact. Therefore, the purpose of
14 this legislation is to support small food entrepreneurs by allowing the sale of non-TCS meals
15 prepared at residential kitchens, while ensuring food safety through reasonable regulations.

1 **Section 3. Enactment.** Subject to codification by the CNMI Law Revision
2 Commission, the following provisions are hereby enacted to read as:

3 **“Chapter xx. Cottage Food and Micro Enterprise Home Kitchen Operations.**

4 **§ 101. Definitions.** For the purposes of this chapter:

5 (a) “Time/Temperature Control (TCS) for Safety Food” means a food that requires
6 time/temperature control for safety to limit pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin
7 formation. This definition is inclusive of:

8 (1) An animal food that is raw or heat-treated; a plant food that is heat-treated
9 or consists of raw seed sprouts, cut melons, cut leafy greens, cut tomatoes or mixtures
10 of cut tomatoes that are not modified in a way so that they are unable to support
11 pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation, or garlic-in-oil mixtures that are
12 not modified in a way so that they are unable to support pathogenic microorganism
13 growth or toxin formation.

14 (b) “Non-TCS Foods” means any food that does not meet the definition described in
15 subsection (a).

16 (c) “Cottage Food Operations” (CFO) means a home-based non-TCS food business
17 that produces and sells non-perishable, low-risk foods such as baked goods, jams, and dry
18 snacks.

19 (d) “Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation” (MEHKO) means a home-based
20 business that prepares and sells freshly cooked meals directly to consumers.

21 (e) “Direct sales” means sales made directly to consumers, including in-person
22 transactions, farmers’ markets, and local online sales.

23 (f) “EHDP” means the CHCC Environmental Health Disease Prevention.

24 (g) “Indirect sales” means sales made through third-party businesses such as retail
25 stores, cafés, and grocery stores.

26 **§ 102. Cottage Food Operations (CFOs).**

27 (a) Permitted Foods: CFOs may prepare and sell non-perishable, low-risk foods,
28 including but not limited to:

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- 1 (1) Baked goods (cookies, bread, cakes, pastries);
2 (2) Jams, jellies, and preserves;
3 (3) Dried fruits, nuts, and seeds;
4 (4) Dry mixes (spice blends, baking mixes);
5 (5) Granola and cereal bars; and
6 (6) Other foods determined by the CHCC Environmental Health Disease
7 Prevention (EHDP).
- 8 (b) Permit requirements: CFOs may operate under the adherence of the following:
9 (1) CFOs must apply for, and obtain a Sanitary Permit from EHDP and renew
10 the permit annually.
11 (2) CFOs must complete a food safety training course and obtain a food
12 handlers certificate from the EHDP.
13 (3) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary, CFOs however must properly
14 label all products with:
15 (i) Business name and address;
16 (ii) List of ingredients;
17 (iii) Allergen warnings (if applicable);
18 (iv) A statement that the product was made in a home kitchen; and
19 (v) Date of production.
- 20 (c) Cottage Food Operation Categories: CFOs may operate under the following
21 classified categories:
22 (1) Class A: Permitted for direct sales only (e.g., from home, at farmers'
23 markets, or via local online sales for home delivery).
24 (2) Class B: Permitted for both direct and indirect sales (e.g., selling to stores,
25 cafés, and restaurants).
- 26 **§ 103. Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKOs).**

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1 (a) Permitted activities: MEHKOs may prepare and sell freshly cooked meals from a
2 home kitchen, or temporary events not to exceed 30 days, limited to:

- 3 (1) Breakfast, lunch or dinner;
- 4 (2) No pre-packaged or mass-produced foods; and
- 5 (3) No wholesale or third-party sales.

6 (b) Regulations and requirements: MEHKOs may operate under the adherence of the
7 following regulations and requirements:

8 (1) CHCC Environmental Health Disease Prevention:

- 9 (i) MEHKOs must obtain a permit from the EHDP to be renewed
10 annually; and
- 11 (ii) A home kitchen inspection is required before approval;

12 (2) Sales limit:

- 13 (i) Total annual sales may not exceed \$50,000; and
- 14 (ii) No more than 30 meals per day or 60 meals per week (subject to
15 adjustment by EHDP).

16 (3) Food safety standards:

- 17 (i) One full-time food handler (owner or employee) must be certified in
18 food safety;
- 19 (ii) Meals must be prepared and sold on the same day—leftovers may
20 not be stored for future sales; and
- 21 (iii) Proper sanitation and food handling must be maintained at all
22 times.

23 **§ 104. Exemption From Commercial Utility Rates.**

24 (a) Notwithstanding any law or regulation to the contrary, any business operating as a
25 CFO or MEHKO shall be exempt from commercial rates for the use of electric, water and
26 wastewater, and shall be assigned residential rates for electric, water, and wastewater usage.

27 (b) Any business operating as a CFO or MEHKO must provide necessary
28 documentation as requested by the utility provider as proof to confirm eligibility for this

1 exemption. This exemption shall remain in effect as long as the business maintains the
2 necessary qualifications and requirements provided in this chapter.

3 **§ 105. Enforcement and Penalties.**

4 (a) Inspection and compliance: CFOs and MEHKOs may operate under the adherence
5 of the following enforcement requirements:

6 (1) The EHDP may conduct periodic inspections to ensure compliance.

7 (2) Violations may result in fines, suspension, or revocation of permits.

8 (b) Penalties:

9 (1) Any person who violates a provision of this Act or operates without
10 registration or a permit shall be fined in accordance with 3 CMC § 2143.

11 (2) Repeated violations may result in a prohibition from operating a CFO or
12 MEHKO.

13 **§ 106. Implementation.** The CHCC Environmental Health Disease Prevention shall
14 establish regulations and procedures to implement this Act within six (6) months of its
15 effective date.

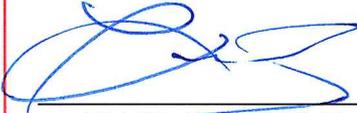
16 **Section 4. Severability.** If any provision of this Act or the application of any such
17 provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent
18 jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or
19 circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

20 **Section 5. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be
21 construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes
22 repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes. Repealers
23 contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or pursuant to prior law.
24 The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of terminating, or in any way modifying,
25 any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in existence on the date this Act
26 becomes effective.

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1 **Section 6. Effective Date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the
2 Governor or becoming law without such approval.

CERTIFIED BY:



KARL R. KING-NABORS
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ATTESTED BY:



FRANCISCO Q. CRUZ
SENATE LEGISLATIVE SECRETARY

Approved this *8th* day of *January*, 202~~5~~⁶



DAVID M. APATANG
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands