This study aims to improve the regulatory process for Michigan’s artisan processors—that is, processors who use handcrafting methods and who are closely involved throughout production.

I am conducting interviews with artisan bread, cheese, and jam producers and Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) food safety inspectors.

This information sheet provides an overview for prospective research participants. If you have questions or are interested in participating, please contact me. See contact information below.

What the Interviews Involve

Whom I am interviewing:
- Approximately 12 MDARD Food and Dairy Division inspectors and approximately 24 artisan bread, cheese, and jam producers throughout Michigan.
- Interviews last 1–1½ hours but can be shorter if needed.

Information that I am looking for includes:
- Artisans’ experiences being licensed and inspected, and inspectors’ experiences working with artisans.
- Suggestions for training or information needs of producers or inspectors.
- “Best practices” for artisans in meeting regulations.

A better understanding of the producer-inspector dynamic can foster the growth of artisan businesses, improve regulatory compliance, and inform the work of MDARD and other regulatory agencies.

Interviews are conducted between January and September 2012.

About the Project

The project’s objectives are to learn more about:
- artisan views of and experiences with regulations and inspections; and
- food safety inspector experiences with and perceptions of artisan agrifood processing.

The project’s presentations and reports will aim to:
- help develop resources and networks for artisans;
- improve processor knowledge about inspections and regulatory compliance;
- identify ways to improve inspector directives and trainings;
- increase regulator awareness of artisans’ educational needs; and
- improve each group’s understanding of the other’s perspectives and expectations.

Confidentiality

This study is part of my doctoral dissertation research. Information is confidential. Participants will not be identified. Notes and information from specific interviews will not be shared with producers, MDARD, or others.

Contact

Jenifer Buckley
PhD Candidate
Michigan State University
Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation, and Resource Studies
Natural Resources Building
480 Wilson Rd., Room 131
East Lansing, MI 48824
office 517/355-5962, cell 517/862-3943, jbuckley@msu.edu, www.msu.edu/~jbuckley

This project and all associated reports and support materials are supported by the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture – National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA), under Project Number GNC10-134. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed within do not necessarily reflect the view of the SARE program or the U.S. Department of Agriculture. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

This work has also been supported by funds from a grant to Michigan State University from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to establish a pasture-based dairy program at the Kellogg Biological Station.