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 field observations of production operations, specifically those of artisan bread and cheese makers. I am also conducting observations of food safety inspections by Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) staff.

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.

Jenifer Buckley

What the Observations Involve

What I am observing:

- MDARD food safety inspections of approximately 12 artisan bread and cheese producers throughout Michigan.
- A few hours of the production process of each of these producers—as much as is appropriate and convenient for them, at some point prior to the inspection—in order to understand the inspection better.

What I am looking for:

- Constructive producer-inspector interactions can help both parties identify ways for artisans to meet regulatory requirements while retaining (as much as possible) their own styles of production.
- As I observe inspections, I am particularly interested in the ways that producers and inspectors interact as they address the questions and issues that arise.
- Conversations with artisans and inspectors during an earlier phase of this study indicated that many of these interactions are positive.

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.

The timeline for the observations is fall 2012 to early 2013.

Confidentiality

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

Contact

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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.