Statewide Shared-Use Food Production Facility Opportunity in Maine

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PREPARED BY:
camoin associates

www.camoinassociates.com

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Report Objectives

In January 2025, the State of Maine Department of Economic and Community Development published a comprehensive analysis of the food and beverage processing sector in Maine and how it fits within the wider New England Economy. The analysis is entitled the State of Food & Beverage Processing in Maine.[1]
That report focused on four key components:

1. A regional economic baseline assessment of the sector
2. Infrastructure mapping and real estate market analysis
3. Case studies focusing on collaborative food processing models
4. Engagement with key food sector organizations, producers, and stakeholders

Throughout the research process, a key theme was identified across the board:
Maine's small food and beverage producers stand to benefit from stronger access to shared-use processing facilities.

This study aims to provide an in-depth examination of Maine's landscape of shared food processing assets and the potential for additional facilities throughout the state.[2] Specifically, the objectives of the report are to:

- **Define and describe shared-use food processing facilities** by outlining what they are, the components that make them successful, and the range of operational and organizational models used across Maine and beyond.
- **Analyze Maine's food processing economy** to identify statewide trends in agriculture, seafood, and small-scale food entrepreneurship that influence demand for shared facilities.
- **Identify regional market drivers** across six distinct sub-market regions, highlighting concentrations of farming, fishing, and food manufacturing activity and how these shape opportunities for shared-use food processing facilities.
- **Inventory existing shared-use processing facilities in Maine** and examine their operational models, user types, and current capacity.
- **Assess growth potential** for existing shared-use processing facilities and the ability of shared infrastructure to help small businesses scale and succeed.
- **Highlight priority opportunity areas** by identifying broad areas where different types of shared-use food processing facilities could be most viable, based on user demand, existing assets, and regional market conditions.

[1] *Final Report – State of Food Processing – Maine DECD- 0.pdf*

[2] *This project is commissioned by the Office of Business Development and is funded by the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan.*

Inside Shared-Use Food Processing Facilities

A successful shared-use processing facility brings together several interconnected components that determine its effectiveness and long-term viability. These include an **operational model**, which ranges from flexible community kitchens to advanced incubators and co-packers; **the organizational model**, which defines ownership and governance structures such as for-profit, non-profit, government, or hybrid approaches; and **facility infrastructure**, which covers the essential space, utilities, storage, and equipment needed for safe and efficient operation. Equally important are **user types**, from caterers and consumer packaged goods (CPG) start-ups to farmers, fishermen, mobile vendors, and community groups, whose varied needs for space, equipment, and scheduling shape how the kitchen is designed and managed. Aligning these elements allows shared-use food processing facilities to balance affordability, scalability, and accessibility for diverse food entrepreneurs and partners.

User Types

Shared-use food processing facilities serve a wide range of users whose needs directly shape how facilities are designed and operated. Caterers, meal prep businesses, and personal chefs require large prep areas, storage, and scheduling flexibility for event-driven work. Consumer packaged goods (CPG) start-ups rely on shared-use food processing facilities for batch production, packaging, and compliance, but may quickly outgrow these spaces. Home-based producers use community kitchens to transition into licensed, scalable operations with access to commercial-grade equipment. Farmers and fishermen use them to create value-added products, often requiring specialized equipment for freezing, peeling, or processing seafood. Food trucks and mobile vendors need commissary space, flexible hours, and access to amenities like waste disposal or parking. Community users, such as instructors and non-profits, benefit from community kitchens as multi-purpose spaces for education, training, and engagement.

80% of shared kitchens support food truck operations.

2025 Shared Kitchen Operator Report

A community kitchen is typically the model with the lowest barrier to entry for both kitchen users and kitchen operators.

Operational Model

Shared-use food processing facilities can operate in different ways depending on user needs and resources. **Community kitchens,** often located in existing community facilities, offer low-barrier, flexible access but are limited to one user at a time. **Dedicated station rentals** allow simultaneous use among multiple members with more consistent scheduling and secure storage, though start-up costs are higher. **Incubator kitchens** combine shared production space with business development support, such as technical assistance and mentorship, but require significant resources to establish and manage. **Co-packers, co-manufacturers, or private label providers** operate at scaleon behalf of food businesses, taking on production, packaging, and compliance, though higher minimums can exclude smaller producers. Across these models, the balance of cost, complexity, and level of support defines how well the facility meets the needs of different users.

Organizational Model

The structure of a shared-use food processing facility influences its financing, management, and sustainability. For-profit models are most common, emphasizing efficiency, scalability, and private financing, but they may be less accessible to smaller producers. Non-profit kitchens often combine community development, training, and technical assistance with facility access, though they require ongoing fundraising and often face space constraints. Government models, though less common, can provide stability and leverage public financing, but require experienced operating partners and are subject to political shifts. Hybrid approaches, such as public–private partnerships, cooperatives, and anchor institutions (e.g., universities, schools, hospitals), fill gaps by combining resources and reducing risk, though they require careful coordination.

60% of shared-use kitchens are for profit

34% are non-profits

2025 Shared Kitchen Operator Report

Facility Infrastructure

"In 2023, 52% of [shared-use] kitchens are under 3,000 square feet."

2025 Shared Kitchen Operator Report

Successful shared-use food processing facilities depend on thoughtful facility design and reliable infrastructure. Most operate in relatively small footprints (under 10,000 SF), but many report outgrowing their spaces within a few years. Storage, particularly cold and freezer capacity, is consistently a limiting factor, and adequate utilities such as three-phase power, plumbing, water, gas, and HVAC are essential in multi-user food processing facilities. Strategic location and access to highways support efficient supply chains and distribution. Equipment choices should balance versatile, multi-functional tools with specialized items for niche users, such as bakers or fish processors. Amenities such as 24/7 access, loading docks, and labeling or packaging rooms enhance usability. Finally, many facilities provide specialized accommodations, from gluten-free or allergen-free production to USDA-inspected meat processing and fermentation space, reflecting demand for niche food sectors.

Regional Market Drivers

REGION 1:

AROOSTOOK COUNTY

Aroostook is Maine's agricultural center, with large-scale potato, broccoli, and cattle production, along with production of other agricultural goods, that together generate one-third of the state's agricultural market value. The region has relatively few small-scale food entrepreneurs compared to other parts of the state.

Aroostook County is ranked #1 in Maine for crop production as well as cattle and calf production.

REGION 2:

PISCATAQUIS & SOMERSET COUNTIES

This region is anchored by dairy and forage crops, with farms that are larger than average but contribute a modest share of statewide production. It stands out for having the highest per-capita density of home kitchens and mobile food licenses, despite limited seafood, catering, and industrial capacity.

REGION 3:

HANCOCK, PENOBSCOT, WASHINGTON COUNTIES

Region 3 combines robust agriculture with a major fisheries sector, producing blueberries, vegetables, dairy, and $234 million in seafood landings, including Maine's largest aquaculture presence. Food entrepreneurs are present in moderate numbers.

Region 3 has a robust seafood economy as a national leader in aquaculture and one of Maine's largest commercial fishing industries.

REGION 4:

ANDROSCOGGIN, FRANKLIN, OXFORD COUNTIES

Agriculture here is diverse but smaller in scale, with poultry, eggs, and apples leading production. Seafood and catering play a limited role, while beverage manufacturing is a notable industry.

Androscoggin County leads the region as an animal production powerhouse, holding the #1 position statewide for poultry and egg production.

REGION 5:

KENNEBEC, KNOX, LINCOLN, WALDO, SAGADAHOC COUNTIES

Region 5 is one of Maine's major food economies, with dairy, hogs, livestock, and blueberries inland, and nearly $200 million in fisheries value along the coast. The area has a high number of small-scale food entrepreneurs.

Kennebec County dominates Region 5'S agricultural output as Maine's #1 dairy producer.

REGION 6:

CUMBERLAND & YORK COUNTIES

Southern Maine is the state's entrepreneurial hub, with the largest volume of caterers, food trucks, and small manufacturers. Agriculture is smaller and more mixed, but seafood and aquaculture remain important, generating over $100 million in landings.

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Regional Opportunities

Recommendations of Regional Opportunities

Based on the research detailed throughout this report, the table below provides recommendations for each region. For each of the facility types recommended, the space needed to satisfy demand is unlikely to surpass 5,000 square feet; most shared-use processing facilities nationwide operate within small footprints of less than 10,000 square feet.

REGION	IDENTIFIED NEEDS	RECOMMENDED FACILITY TYPE(S)
REGION 1: AROOSTOOK	There is limited demand for general shared-use processing facility because most farms in the region are large and already scaled, leaving fewer small-scale producers who would typically rely on shared facilities. However, there is a potential need for USDA-certified processing space to support the region's strong beef market. In addition, shared infrastructure could help diversify and add value to crops beyond potatoes, such as broccoli.	A specialized USDA-certified processing facility for meat and vegetables is recommended, rather than a general incubator.
REGION 2: PISCATAQUIS & SOMERSET	This region has the highest per-capita concentration of home kitchen and mobile vendor licenses in the state, which reflects unusually strong small-scale food processing activity relative to its population size. These entrepreneurs would benefit from access to licensed commercial facilities that allow them to expand beyond the limitations of home-based production.	A shared kitchen incubator (entry-level, with storage and compliance support) is already being developed in Skowhegan. Our recommendation affirms the need for this facility but does not identify demand for an additional incubator beyond the one already underway.
REGION 3: HANCOCK, PENOBSCOT & WASHINGTON	There is significant untapped potential to expand freezing and processing capacity for vegetables, particularly by building on the existing infrastructure already in place for blueberry freezing. At the same time, the region's seafood economy is underdeveloped, with species such as oysters, clams, and scallops lacking sufficient processing capacity to capture greater value locally.	A dual-purpose facility supporting both vegetable flash-freezing and seafood processing along Route 1 would help strengthen local value retention. Other options would be to utilize existing assets, including community kitchens, to incorporate specific seafood processing and vegetable flash-freezing capability at smaller scale.

Recommendations of Regional Opportunities (continued)

REGION	IDENTIFIED NEEDS	RECOMMENDED FACILITY TYPE(S)
REGION 4: ANDROSCOGGIN, FRANKLIN & OXFORD	The region is characterized by many small farms that could benefit from value-added processing opportunities. In particular, there is a strong need for facilities that support apple processing, USDA-certified poultry and egg processing, and small-scale vegetable processing, all of which would help farmers and food entrepreneurs expand into higher-value markets.	A shared-use food processing facility supporting apple, poultry, and vegetable processing as well as users like caterers and home-kitchen CPG producers is recommended, ideally sited within a service center near major producers. A community-led shared kitchen is already being advanced through the Lewiston Local Foods Action Plan, which could complement this effort.
REGION 5: KENNEBEC, KNOX, LINCOLN, WALDO & SAGADAHOC	This region has a high number of small farms and food business licenses, creating strong demand for shared-use processing infrastructure. Dairy production is especially concentrated here, while the coastal counties also serve as major seafood hubs, creating dual needs for expanded dairy and seafood processing capacity.	Two specialized facilities are recommended: 1. A dairy-focused shared-use processing facility located inland along the I-95 corridor (e.g., Augusta, Gardiner, or Hallowell). 2. A seafood-focused shared-use processing facility located in coastal towns near Route 1 to add value to aquaculture and wild-caught species. This could take the form of investing in existing community assets to better serve the fishing and seafood sector.
REGION 6: CUMBERLAND & YORK	Although the region is already well served by Fork Food Lab and several large seafood processors, there remains unmet demand for shared facilities among consumer packaged goods (CPG) startups, caterers, and food trucks. These small and early-stage businesses require flexible space to test, produce, and scale their products, suggesting a need for additional incubator-style facilities even if large-scale agricultural or seafood processing needs are already being met.	Rather than building new facilities, the priority should be to provide support to Fork Food Lab to complete its build-out, adding capacity for meat processing, light fruit and vegetable processing, and other proposed expansions that would help to scale additional food and beverage markets.

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Introduction To Shared-Use Food Processing Facilities

This section of the report introduces the concept of shared-use food processing facilities, outlining what they are, why they matter, and the core components that make them successful. It reviews space, equipment, and infrastructure requirements alongside different operational and organizational models. Together, these elements frame how shared-use food processing facilities function as platforms for business growth, workforce development, and community impact.

What Is a Shared-Use Food Processing Facility?

A shared-use food processing facility is a licensed commercial space equipped with the infrastructure, equipment, and regulatory compliance required for safe food production, which multiple businesses or entrepreneurs can rent on an as-needed basis. These facilities are designed to lower barriers for small-scale food producers, start-ups, farmers, caterers, and other food businesses by providing affordable access to specialized equipment and space that would otherwise be cost-prohibitive to purchase or maintain individually. They often support a range of functions such as recipe testing, small-batch manufacturing, packaging, labeling, and cold or dry storage.

Beyond physical space, many shared-use food processing facilities also provide business development support, such as training, technical assistance, regulatory guidance, and networking opportunities, helping food businesses grow, scale, and bring compliant products to market.

Components of a Shared-Use Food Processing Facility

Designing and sustaining a successful shared-use food processing facility requires aligning multiple interdependent elements: who the users are, how the facility operates, what organizational structure supports it, and the infrastructure that underpins day-to-day functions. Together, these components determine whether a facility can balance affordability, efficiency, and scalability while meeting the diverse needs of food entrepreneurs and community partners.

POTENTIAL USER TYPES

Shared kitchens serve caterers, CPG start-ups, farmers, fishermen, mobile vendors, and community groups. Each has unique space, equipment, and scheduling needs. Identifying target users ensures facilities are designed to align with demand and support growth.

OPERATIONAL MODEL

Shared-use food processing facilities can operate in many ways, from low-barrier community kitchens to advanced incubators and co-packers. The right model balances user needs with available resources and determines the level of support provided.

INFRASTRUCTURE OF FACILITY

Successful shared-use food processing facilities depend on thoughtful infrastructure like space, utilities, storage, equipment, and amenities. Strategic investments in flexible, compliant, and user-friendly facilities ensure both functionality and long-term viability.

ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL

Ownership and governance shape how a kitchen is financed, managed, and sustained. For-profit, non-profit, government-backed, and hybrid models each carry trade-offs in flexibility, mission, and financial stability.

Potential User Types

Understanding who will use a shared-use food processing facility is a critical first step in planning or expanding a facility. The needs of the users will directly shape the design, equipment, operating model, and overall functionality of the space. Without a clear picture of the intended users, facilities risk misalignment between what is offered and what is required for businesses to succeed.

The following section outlines the primary categories of shared-use food processing facilities users and highlights their distinct needs. From caterers and consumer packaged goods (CPG) start-ups to farmers, fishermen, mobile vendors, and community groups, each type of user engages with shared-use food processing facilities in different ways. Recognizing these differences not only informs infrastructure and operational planning but also ensures that the facility can serve as an effective platform for business growth, community impact, and regional food system resilience.

Caterers, Meal Prep, and Personal Chef Businesses

Caterers, meal prep businesses, and personal chefs rely on shared-use food processing facilities to produce meals for events, corporate clients, or private functions. They benefit from access to large prep areas, reliable scheduling, and temporary storage that accommodates the scale of their orders. Shared-use food processing facilities are cost-effective for these businesses, especially since their schedules are often irregular and event-driven. Having access to commercial-grade equipment allows them to prepare food efficiently for large groups.

At Maine's Fork Food Lab, for example, 19% of users identify as catering and events businesses. Similarly, the 2025 Shared Kitchen Operator Report found that 87% of shared kitchens support caterers, 63% support meal prep businesses, and 56% support members who use the kitchen for private chef services.[3]

Early-Stage Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) Businesses

CPG companies, such as small snack brands, beverage start-ups, and sauce producers, often turn to shared-use food processing facilities as a way to scale their production without investing in expensive facilities. These businesses require reliable access to storage as well as specialized equipment for packaging, labeling, and compliance with food safety regulations. Shared-use food processing facilities provide a cost-effective platform for batch production and sometimes, even access to co-packing services, which are critical for growing into retail or wholesale markets. However, these companies may quickly outgrow the shared space as their sales increase, or they may need advanced equipment that not every facility offers. At Fork Food Lab, 35% percent of members identify as CPG businesses, while the 2025 Shared Kitchen Operator Report found that 74% of member businesses engage in CPG-related activities.

[3] *The 2025 Shared Kitchen Operator Survey Industry Insights Report analyzes data from over 200 shared kitchens in the US, Canada, Australia, Ireland, and South Africa. The data and resulting report provide information on industry trends, operational challenges, and financial models. More information on the report can be found here: https://www.thefoodcorridor.com/blog/2025-shared-kitchen-industry-report/*

Home Kitchen Producers

Many food businesses begin in home kitchens, where entrepreneurs test recipes and build a small customer base through direct sales, farmers' markets, or online platforms. As these businesses grow, they often face regulatory and capacity limitations that make scaling from a home kitchen more challenging. Shared commercial kitchens become an attractive next step, providing not only additional space but also access to equipment they would not typically invest in at home, such as commercial ovens, mixers, or blast chillers.

Equally important, shared kitchens are fully licensed facilities, allowing home-based producers to move into retail, wholesale, and institutional markets that require certified production environments. This transition expands their opportunities while also connecting them to other food entrepreneurs in a collaborative environment.

Farmers and Fishermen

Farmers and fishermen can use shared-use food processing facilities to transform raw crops or catch into value-added products, creating new revenue streams and expanding market opportunities. For small to mid-sized producers, access to processing infrastructure is often the barrier to producing items like chopped, peeled, diced, or frozen vegetables, or filleted and packaged seafood. Shared-use food processing facilities that offer this kind of processing capability, sometimes combined with co-packing models for products such as pickles, sauces, or soups, allow producers to move beyond direct-to-consumer sales and enter wholesale or institutional markets.

Unlike typical incubator kitchens, these operations often require specialized equipment, such as blast freezers, vacuum sealers, industrial peelers, or fish-processing tools, which may not be standard in a multi-user kitchen. In some cases, these models also help capture value from crops that would otherwise be left in the field or from by-catch that would go unused, turning waste into profitable products and strengthening regional food resilience. Farmers and fishermen using shared-use food processing facilities may need a different level of assistance compared to traditional food entrepreneurs, particularly in navigating food safety regulations, accessing appropriate markets, and coordinating logistics across seasonal production cycles.

According to the 2025 Shared Kitchen Operator Report, 29% of member businesses report using shared kitchen space while also identifying as farmers.

Food Trucks/Mobile Vendors

Food trucks, pop-up vendors, and farmers' market stands typically need commissary space to meet health code requirements, prepare food, and clean up after service. Their needs are distinct: flexible hours, affordable rates, and reliable access to commercial-grade facilities. Shared-use food processing facilities are ideal for mobile vendors because they provide licensed space, meet regulatory requirements, and often offer extras such as parking, waste disposal, and water/ice access.

Some facilities also go a step further by offering dedicated parking for mobile units, allowing food trucks to store vehicles on-site while also simplifying compliance and logistics. In certain cases, shared-use kitchen incubators can host pop-up events or special food truck gatherings on their property, giving vendors opportunities to sell directly to consumers while also creating community visibility. These features add significant value for mobile vendors, though they require facilities to have adequate space and infrastructure to manage vehicle storage and events.

At Fork Food Lab, 35% of members are food trucks or mobile vendors, and the 2025 Shared Kitchen Operator Report indicates that 80% of shared kitchens support food truck operations.

Community Users and Education

Food entrepreneurs, culinary instructors, and non-profit groups also find shared-use food processing facilities valuable. Cooking instructors and community groups may use kitchens as teaching or demonstration spaces, making them multi-purpose community assets. Shared-use food processing facilities enable innovation and education, while also providing a supportive environment.

OPERATIONAL MODELS

There are many ways to structure and operate a shared-use food processing facility, each with different benefits, challenges, and target users. Models range from low-barrier, flexible community kitchens to more advanced incubators and co-packers that support businesses at scale. The following outlines potential operational models and their core components. Note that this overview of operational models and components only includes those that include a physical production space. Some education-focused models exist that provide programming, such as entrepreneurial and business training, in the absence of a physical commercial kitchen. This type of model is useful when the cost of constructing a new commercial kitchen space is prohibitive, or for organizations that want to use educational programming as a first step of a longer-term plan to eventually integrate kitchen space.

Community Kitchen

A community kitchen is typically the model with the lowest barrier to entry for both kitchen users and kitchen operators. Under this model, a kitchen user rents the space by the hour or shift. While equipment and workstations are shared across multiple users, only one user books the kitchen at a time. These spaces would typically exist within a community center, church, or other community-based establishment.

Advantages

- Community kitchens can have a small footprint; they do not require a significant amount of space and can start at only a few hundred square feet.
- Many buildings like this already exist throughout the state, so it is easier to maximize available kitchen space; commercial/commissary kitchens already exist in churches, church facilities, community centers, rec centers, schools, etc. Offering these kitchens as rentals to food businesses can offer an additional income stream for these organizations.
- This type of space offers flexible usage and affordable pricing.

Disadvantages

- Because only one business or user can occupy the space at a given time, there may be scheduling conflicts or overcrowding.
- Due to the rental model, users who have consistent and regular production schedules are less likely to have their needs met by this type of kitchen.
- Oversight is needed on the part of the operator to ensure the kitchen is cleaned and meets safety requirements between each rental.

Potential User Types:

- Caterers, Meal Prep, and Personal Chef Businesses
- Community Users and Education

Examples of Co-Packers throughout Maine:
Smithereen Farm's Minke Kitchen (Pembroke), Halcyon Grange (North Blue Hill), Unity Community Kitchen (Unity), Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program's Community Kitchen (Brunswick), and others.

Shared-Use Dedicated Station Rental

Unlike a community kitchen, this model allows multiple kitchen users to operate within the space at any given time. Under this operational model, users rent a specific station or kitchen zone on a part-time or full-time basis. The rental often includes storage (including cold, dry, or frozen storage) and prep space.

Advantages

- More consistency for users with regular production schedules.
- Allows more users to access commercial kitchen space during peak hours.
- Easier scheduling management on the part of the kitchen operator.
- More secure storage and food safety compliance compared to a community kitchen.

Disadvantages

- Requires a higher start-up cost for kitchen operators due to greater space and equipment needs.
- Risk of underutilization if tenants don't use the full capacity.
- Higher cost to users may limit access for very small producers and food businesses.

Potential User Types:

- Caters, Meal Prep, and Personal Chef Businesses
- Early-Stage Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) Businesses
- Farmers and Fishermen

Shared-Use Kitchen Incubator

A shared-use kitchen incubator is very similar to a dedicated station rental facility but also incorporates access to business development services such as technical assistance, mentorship, and educational training, access to capital, resources like logistics management, or marketing support.

Advantages

- Providing a strong ecosystem for early and mid-stage businesses to grow.
- Allowing a low-cost option to experiment and create prototypes without major capital investment risk.
- Often provide assistance for technical aspects such as supply chain management.

Disadvantages

- Very high start-up costs, with expensive equipment and capital costs up front.
- Resource-intensive to operate.
- Requires staff with diverse skillsets beyond facility management, expanding to areas such as supply chain management, equipment maintenance, business assistance, etc.
- Often not financially self-sustaining as a for-profit model; outside financing is generally required.

Potential User Types:

- Caterers, Meal Prep, and Personal Chef Businesses
- Early-Stage Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) Businesses
- Home Kitchen Producers
- Food Trucks/Mobile Vendors

Examples of Incubators throughout Maine:
There is currently **one example of an operational shared-use kitchen incubator in Maine:** Fork Food Lab (Portland). However, multiple efforts are underway to bring a similarly modeled facility to Skowhegan (Kitchen at 185), Bangor (Bangor Central Kitchen), and Lewiston (LA Community Market). These projects are all at various stages of planning and development, though the Bangor Central Kitchen has recently secured funding and expects to move towards construction in 2025–2026.

Co-Packer

A co-packer, short for contract packer, is a business that manufactures and packages food products on behalf of other companies. Under this model, a food entrepreneur can contract with a co-packer to produce their recipe at scale in a licensed facility that meets all required food safety standards. Co-packers may provide a range of services beyond production, including ingredient sourcing, labeling, packaging, and sometimes even distribution. Instead, they lease them to non-profits or contract with private operators.

Advantages

- Allows businesses to scale production rapidly without the capital investment of building or operating their own facility.
- Reduces the regulatory and compliance burden, as co-packers typically maintain all necessary licenses and certifications.
- Enables entrepreneurs to focus on branding, sales, and distribution rather than day-to-day manufacturing.
- Provides consistency in product quality through professional equipment and standardized processes.

Disadvantages

- High minimum production runs may exclude very small or early-stage businesses.
- Reduced flexibility in making changes to recipes, packaging, or production schedules once under contract.
- Upfront costs, including formulation or setup fees, can be prohibitive.
- Less direct control over quality and process compared to in-house production.

Potential User Types:

- Early-Stage Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) Businesses
- Farmers and Fishermen

Examples of Co-Packers throughout Maine:
There are **multiple co-packers** in Maine, like DennyMike's Sauces & Seasonings, Pemberton's Food, and Stonewall Kitchen.

ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS

The way a shared-use food processing facility is organized has a major impact on how it is financed, managed, and sustained over time. Ownership and governance can take many forms, ranging from privately run companies to mission-driven non-profits, publicly backed facilities, or hybrid arrangements, each shaping the balance between financial viability, community benefit, and user access. The following section describes the primary organizational structures found in Maine and beyond.

For-Profit (e.g., C-Corp, LLC)

For-profit ownership is the most common model for traditional co-packers and larger shared-use facilities. According to the Food Corridor's 2025 Shared Kitchen Operator Survey, 60% of shared incubators and shared-use kitchens are for-profit enterprises. Under this structure, the facility is operated as a business, with revenue generated through rental fees, per-unit production contracts, or service charges.

Advantages

- → Access to private financing for facility build-out and equipment.
- → Strong incentive for efficiency, consistency, and scaling capacity.
- → Flexible decision-making compared to non-profit or government models.

Disadvantages

- → Requires minimum production volumes to be profitable, which may exclude small or start-up producers.
- → High capital and equipment costs make it difficult to break even, especially with seasonal products.
- → Less incentive to provide technical assistance or workforce development.

What We Heard:

During interviews, stakeholders consistently emphasized that for-profit facilities in Maine are most likely to succeed if they can secure higher production volumes, establish anchor accounts, and build strong relationships with distributors.

Examples of for-profit ownership throughout Maine:

Pemberton's Foods illustrates how small to mid-sized for-profit co-packers can successfully serve local producers in Maine. Their facility demonstrates the potential of privately operated models to provide specialized services that meet the needs of regional food businesses.

Non-Profit

Many shared-use food facilities are operated as non-profits, with missions tied to community development, workforce training, or farmer support. The 2025 Shared Kitchen Operator Survey found that about 34% of incubators and shared kitchens operate as non-profits. Revenue comes from user fees, but facilities also rely on grants, philanthropy, and public partnerships.

Advantages

- Can prioritize affordability and access for start-up and small producers.
- Eligible for foundation and government grant support.
- Well-suited for pairing kitchen access with workforce training and technical assistance.

Disadvantages

- It can be challenging financially and requires continuous fundraising and subsidies to self-sustain.
- Operationally resource-intensive, requiring staff with expertise in both facility management and business support.
- Space limitations are common, and we heard from stakeholders that several facilities had already outgrown their space by the time they moved in.

What We Heard:

Stakeholders emphasized that these facilities often evolve over time by beginning as community kitchens and expanding into light co-packing or value-added processing (e.g., salsas, jams, dried teas) to meet producer demand.

Examples of non-profit ownership throughout Maine:

An example of the non-profit model in Maine is **Unity Food Hub** and **Community Kitchen**, which was established to support small farms and food entrepreneurs while also strengthening local food access. Operated with a mission-driven approach, the facility has combined commercial kitchen space with aggregation and distribution services, supported by grants and partnerships. Like many non-profit food hubs and kitchens in Maine, Unity's model reflects the challenges of balancing affordability for users with the financial realities of operating and maintaining equipment.

Government (e.g., city, county, state, municipality)

In some cases, local governments play a direct role by owning facilities or providing capital investment. The Food Corridor's 2025 Shared Kitchen Operator Survey found that only about 4% of shared kitchens and incubators are government-owned. Governments typically do not operate shared-use food processing facilities directly. Instead, they lease them to non-profits or contract with private operators.

Advantages

- Ability to leverage bonds, HUD funds, and other public financing tools.
- Long-term stability of public ownership.
- Can embed food processing within broader regional development strategies.

Disadvantages

- Bureaucratic processes can slow decision-making and reduce flexibility.
- Requires an experienced operating partner to manage technical aspects.
- Political changes may shift priorities or funding

Development in Progress:

The Bangor Central Kitchen is being developed as a city-owned facility (18,000 sq. ft.), funded by bonds and the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The City of Bangor intends to own the building but may contract out operations. While this project is still underway and changing based on community needs, potential planned services include shared kitchen space, cold storage, co-packing, and support for food trucks.

Other Models

Hybrid ownership and governance models can address gaps in the market where no single actor can sustain operations.

- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Governments or community development organizations finance the facility, while a private operator manages day-to-day operations. This reduces risk and ensures professional management, technical expertise, and multiple funding opportunities to sustain the facility. Results from the 2025 Shared Kitchen Operator Survey show that public–private partnerships account for only about 1% of incubators and shared kitchens.
- **Cooperatives:** Owned by member businesses or farms, co-ops can provide shared processing capacity. However, interviews highlighted difficulties in making co-ops work for start-ups and small businesses due to limited supply and capital intensity. Cooperative ownership models need experienced operational managers and the capacity to produce, process, and ship products.
- **Anchor Institutions:** Universities, schools, and hospitals can act as hosts for shared-use facilities, tying processing to procurement and training. Stakeholders cited the role of school kitchens in meal preparation and preservation as an important opportunity for integrating workforce training with food access.

Infrastructure Considerations

Operating a successful shared-use food processing facility requires careful consideration of multiple infrastructure and facility components to serve diverse users effectively while maintaining regulatory compliance and operational efficiency.

Space Planning and Size Considerations

The scale and layout of facilities can vary significantly based on intended use and target market. According to the Food Corridor's 2025 analysis of 186 shared-use food processing facilities, the majority operate within relatively compact footprints. In 2023, 52% of shared-use facilities operate in spaces under 3,000 square feet, while 86% operate with under 10,000 square feet. The most common size category, representing 40% of all the kitchens surveyed, falls within the 1,000–2,999 square foot range.

This data suggests that **shared-use food processing facilities can operate effectively in modest spaces when properly designed.** However, operators must balance space constraints with the need to accommodate multiple users and diverse production requirements. The compact nature of most facilities necessitates strategic space allocation to maximize functionality while ensuring adequate room for safe food production practices. That said, 41% of the Food Corridor's surveyed kitchens note that they have plans to expand in the next 1–2 years, with 16% saying expansion is due to needing a bigger facility.

Key takeaway:

The vast majority of shared-use facilities operate with minimal space, under 10,000 SF. Effective operation is possible in small spaces, however many may find that they outgrow these small spaces after a few years of operation.

Utilities and Plumbing Infrastructure

Electrical infrastructure represents a critical foundation for shared-use facility operations. Three-phase power is essential for most commercial kitchen equipment, including larger mixers, ovens, refrigeration units, and specialized processing equipment. The electrical system must be designed to handle simultaneous operation of multiple high-demand appliances across different user stations without compromising performance or safety. Without careful and thoughtful electrical design, facilities may find themselves in a position where expansion is constrained due to limited capacity to accommodate new equipment.

Kitchens can also strategically design electrical systems to be flexible. For example, outlets and electrical infrastructure can be installed to allow equipment to easily move around to be more flexible for users. Additionally, keeping HVAC and electrical systems in the ceilings can reduce the floor space needed to accommodate utility infrastructure, maximizing the space that can accommodate food production.

For smaller community kitchens that only accommodate one user at any given time, many of these considerations may be "nice to have" rather than required for operations. For example, three-phase power may not be required for single-user commercial kitchens that are likely to have fewer major appliances running at the same time. Plumbing systems may be simplified with fewer wash stations. However, an adequate HVAC system is non-negotiable in any type of commercial kitchen, to ensure that air quality and temperature control needs are met in food production environments.

Key takeaway:

For multi-user facilities, three-phase power, robust plumbing, reliable water and gas supply, and adequate HVAC are non-negotiable.

For single-user community kitchens, some of these items may be more "nice to have" rather than critical for operation.

Location and Access

Strategic location planning significantly impacts operational efficiency and cost management for shared-use processing facilities. Highway access provides substantial advantages for supply chain management, enabling operators to secure ingredients and supplies at reduced costs through improved distribution logistics. This accessibility also benefits facility users who may need to transport finished products to various distribution points or retail locations.

For multi-user kitchens and incubators, the facility design must accommodate efficient product flow, requiring at least one entrance capable of accommodating full pallet deliveries. This requirement ensures that users can receive bulk ingredients and supplies without logistical complications, supporting cost-effective operations for food entrepreneurs and small-scale producers utilizing the space.

For shared kitchen incubators that also act as shipping and receiving hubs, incorporating efficient product flows is an essential component of planning and design. Highway access and loading docks should be placed at the forefront of these designs.

Key takeaway:

To handle shipping and receiving of supplies and ingredients, a facility needs at least one entrance that can fit a full pallet.

Access to the highway can help reduce supply chain costs.

Storage Infrastructure

Storage capacity represents one of the most critical and commonly underestimated aspects of facility design. Operators consistently report that storage space, particularly cold and freezer storage, becomes a limiting factor faster than anticipated, particularly for incubators. Successful facilities must incorporate comprehensive storage solutions, including cold storage, freezer capacity, and dry storage areas.

The storage infrastructure should be designed with flexibility to accommodate varying user needs while maintaining food safety standards. Adequate cold chain management requires sufficient refrigerated and frozen storage capacity to serve multiple users simultaneously without compromising temperature control or cross-contamination prevention.

Key takeaway:

In-house dry, cold, and frozen storage is non-negotiable. Often, more storage space is needed than an operator might expect.

Essential vs. Specialized Equipment

Essential Equipment with Multi-Functional Design

Equipment selection in shared-use processing facilities requires balancing basic functionality with specialized needs across diverse user groups. According to the Food Corridor, approximately one-third of shared-use facilities included mixers as standard equipment in 2023, while other commonly featured items include kettles, skillets, or blast chillers. The equipment selection should prioritize multi-functional units that maximize space efficiency while serving diverse production needs.

Small facilities particularly benefit from focusing on versatile equipment that can accommodate multiple cooking methods and food production processes. This approach optimizes both space utilization and capital investment while providing users with access to professional-grade equipment they might not otherwise afford independently.

Specialized Equipment for Niche Applications

Beyond basic equipment, successful shared-use processing facilities often incorporate specialized equipment to serve specific market niches or production requirements. Facilities catering to fish processing might include dedicated fillet stations with appropriate drainage and cleaning systems. Similarly, bakery-focused spaces benefit from specialized equipment such as proofing ovens, commercial cookie decorators, and dough handling systems.

The selection of specialized equipment should reflect the target user base and local market demands. This targeted approach allows facilities to command premium pricing for specialized access while building strong communities of practice around specific food production methods.

Key takeaway:

Small facilities with space constraints should focus on multi-functional equipment that can be used by a wide variety of producer types, such as mixers, kettles, and skillets.

Larger spaces that attract a diverse range of producers may benefit from providing niche equipment. Specialized equipment needs can also help facilities accommodate niche production capabilities, such as fish processing or baking.

Operational Amenities and User Services

According to the Food Corridor, 89% of shared-use processing facilities offer 24/7 access. 24-hour access represents a critical amenity that maximizes facility revenue while accommodating diverse user schedules. Many food entrepreneurs operate shared kitchen businesses as secondary ventures in addition to their primary job, requiring evening and weekend access for production activities. This flexibility significantly enhances the facility's value proposition while optimizing space utilization across all hours.

Additional amenities that enhance facility functionality include dedicated event spaces for promotional activities and food demonstrations, specialized packing and labeling rooms, loading dock facilities, and on-premise retail spaces. Shipping and receiving logistics management services can provide additional value for users while creating supplementary revenue streams for facility operators. In 2023, most of these amenities are found only in larger, more specialized kitchens. According to the Food Corridor, 63% of kitchens note that the only amenity on-site (aside from a commercial kitchen) was additional prep space.

Key takeaway:

24/7 access greatly enhances the facility's value proposition, especially for producers pursuing a food business as a second job.

Nice-to-have amenities could include event space, packing and labeling rooms, loading docks, or retail space.

Specialized Production Accommodations

The growing demand for specialized dietary and production accommodations represents a significant opportunity for shared kitchen operators. According to The Food Corridor study, approximately 71% of certified kitchens provide at least one specialized product accommodation, indicating strong market demand for these services. Examples of specialized certifications include being USDA inspected, while special product accommodations could include dedicated space for gluten-free, kosher/halal, pet foods, allergen-free foods, or vegetarian/vegan foods.

Facilities can either dedicate their entire space to specialized products, production methods, or food accommodations. Alternatively, they can flex their space to maximize usability for a wider set of potential users.

Key takeaway:

Most facilities accommodate at least one product specialization, with gluten-free being the most common. There is growth potential for niche areas such as pet food, fermentation, and USDA-inspected meat processing space.

Common Niche Accommodations

Gluten-free production represents the most frequently accommodated dietary restriction in shared facilities, according to the Food Corridor Study, which found that 35% have dedicated gluten-free space. These accommodations require dedicated preparation areas, separate storage systems, and specialized cleaning protocols to prevent cross-contamination. Facilities must implement strict segregation procedures and often designate specific time blocks for gluten-free production.

Meanwhile, 25% of shared-use facilities in the Food Corridor sample provide dedicated fermentation space. Fermentation accommodations present unique challenges due to biological considerations, including temperature control, timing requirements, and specialized equipment needs. Fermentation processes often require dedicated spaces with precise environmental controls and extended time commitments that must be carefully managed alongside other kitchen users. Despite these challenges, fermented foods are growing in popularity in terms of consumer preferences as well as producer entries. This includes a broad umbrella, including products like pickles, sauerkraut, kimchi, and kefir.

Growth Areas and Emerging Niches

Pet food production has experienced remarkable growth, with the number of shared-use facilities accommodating pet food manufacturing increasing fivefold over the past five years, according to the Food Corridor. This niche requires an understanding of pet food safety regulations and often involves different regulatory oversight compared to human food production.

USDA inspection capabilities, vegan production protocols, and comprehensive allergen-free accommodations represent additional specialization opportunities. Each accommodation type requires specific infrastructure modifications, training requirements, and operational procedures to ensure compliance and safety.

Previous analysis has identified the need for expanded meat processing capacity throughout Maine. USDA-inspected kitchens allow for the commercial production of meat and poultry products, which can help fill this gap in processing capacity in Maine. Currently, Fork Food Lab is USDA-certified and can accommodate commercial meat processing.

Flexibility and Space Management

Successful shared-use processing facilities design their spaces to flex between different specialized production requirements. This flexibility might involve moveable equipment, modular workspace configurations, or designated time-based allocations for different production types. The key is maintaining regulatory compliance while maximizing space utilization and revenue generation across diverse user needs.

The infrastructure and facility needs of shared-use processing facilities extend beyond basic cooking capabilities to encompass comprehensive production ecosystems that serve diverse food entrepreneurs. Success requires thoughtful planning that balances regulatory requirements, operational efficiency, and user flexibility while maintaining the financial viability necessary for sustainable operations.

MAINE.
ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Maine's Food Processing Economy and Regional Market Drivers

This section examines the broader context shaping Maine's food processing sector. It highlights statewide trends in agriculture, seafood, and food entrepreneurship, including growth in caterers, food trucks, and small manufacturers. It then drills into regional drivers, where farming, fishing, and food businesses cluster across the state, and compares these patterns to demand for processing capacity. Understanding these geographic strengths and gaps is essential for identifying where shared-use food processing facilities can add the most value.

Key Findings

Summary of Market Findings by Region

Category	Region 1: AROOSTOOK	Region 2: PISCATAQUIS & SOMERSET	Region 3: HANCOCK, PENOBSCOT & WASHINGTON
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS	• Maine's agricultural powerhouse • Potato market is large but established • Strong in other crops • State's leader in beef cattle production	• Dairy and hay dominate • Productive farms but smaller market value • Larger avg. farm size, suggests more mature and established	• 282K acres • Blueberries ($42M), vegetables, potatoes, dairy are top products • Washington County national leader in aquaculture
SEAFOOD PRODUCERS	Inland, no commercial landings	Inland, no commercial landings	• Major hub: $234M ex-vessel value • Approximately 4,100 harvesters • Lobster ($209M) plus clams, scallops, elvers
MOBILE KITCHENS	Fewest licenses statewide; Suggests limited demand	Smaller but very active vendor base, strongest concentration per capita statewide	Moderate volume of food trucks and vendors, average concentration
HOME LICENSE PRODUCERS	Small base, below-average per capita	Smaller but very active vendor base, strongest concentration per capita statewide suggests excess demand for support	Moderate volume of licenses, though average per capita concentration
CATERING & MEAL PREP	Minimal catering businesses	Minimal catering businesses	Some catering presence, but declining
OTHER FOOD MANUFACTURERS	Concentration in fruit/vegetable preserving and specialty food manufacturing; half of food manufacturers are very small enterprises (<5 employees)	Niche presence in preserving and bakeries	• Many food processors are very small • Potential for seafood-related value-add

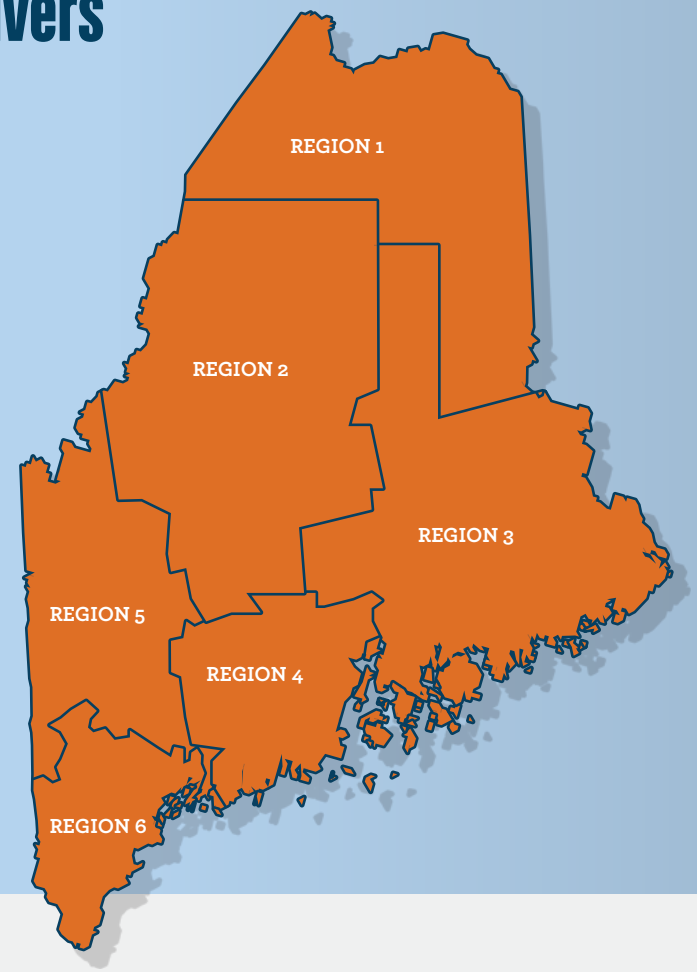
Key Findings

Summary of Market Findings by Region

Category	Region 4: ANDROSCOGGIN, FRANKLIN & OXFORD	Region 5: KENNEBEC, KNOX, LINCOLN, WALDO & SAGADAHOC	Region 6: CUMBERLAND & YORK
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS	• Poultry & eggs (#1 statewide), apples, potatoes are top products • Many farms that tend to be smaller on average	• Major producer of dairy (kennebec is the state's leader), hogs, and blueberries • Diversified livestock and crops	• Small-scale farms (avg. 80 acres) • Crops include vegetables, apples, berries • Cumberland is #2 aquaculture-producing county in Maine
SEAFOOD PRODUCERS	Inland, no commercial landings	• Major hub: $191M ex-vessel value • Knox County is state's leader in seafood value • Lobster ($165M) plus oysters, clams, elvers	• Major hub: $103M ex-vessel value • Lobster ($86M) plus oysters, clams, menhaden, herring
MOBILE KITCHENS	High volume of license-holders, average concentration per capita	High volume of license-holders and high concentration per capita suggest strong demand	Highest volume statewide; nearly one-third of state total
HOME LICENSE PRODUCERS	High number of licenses with average density	• Around 25% of state's total licenses • Above average per capita	Highest total (866 licenses) but lowest per capita concentration (1.6 per 1,000)
CATERING & MEAL PREP	Minimal catering businesses	Moderate catering activity and growing	• Nearly two-thirds of Maine's caterers are located here and there has been strong recent growth • Strong base to support small catering businesses
OTHER FOOD MANUFACTURERS	• Specialization in bakeries and beverage manufacturing • Relatively low share of businesses are small compared to other regions	• Strong presence of very small-scale manufacturers • High relative concentration in seafood processing	• Largest number of small manufacturers (<5 employees) • Regional strength in confectioneries, seafood processing, and beverage manufacturing

Overview of Maine's Market Drivers

Understanding Maine's market drivers for food-related industries requires examining the interplay between agricultural production, seafood harvesting, and the infrastructure that supports food processing and distribution. This chapter explores how farms, fisheries, processors, and shared-use food processing facilities are distributed across the state's **six sub-market regions**, highlighting geographic specializations and structural differences that influence economic potential. The analysis is designed to identify where crops and seafood are produced relative to where shared-use food processing facilities are located, providing insights into opportunities and challenges for scaling local food systems. By evaluating regional concentrations in agriculture and seafood, this section helps establish a foundation for strategic recommendations that can strengthen Maine's food economy and inform targeted investments.



Methodology

To assess Maine's market drivers, we combined multiple data sources and developed a custom framework to evaluate regional strengths and gaps. The analysis employs the following metrics:

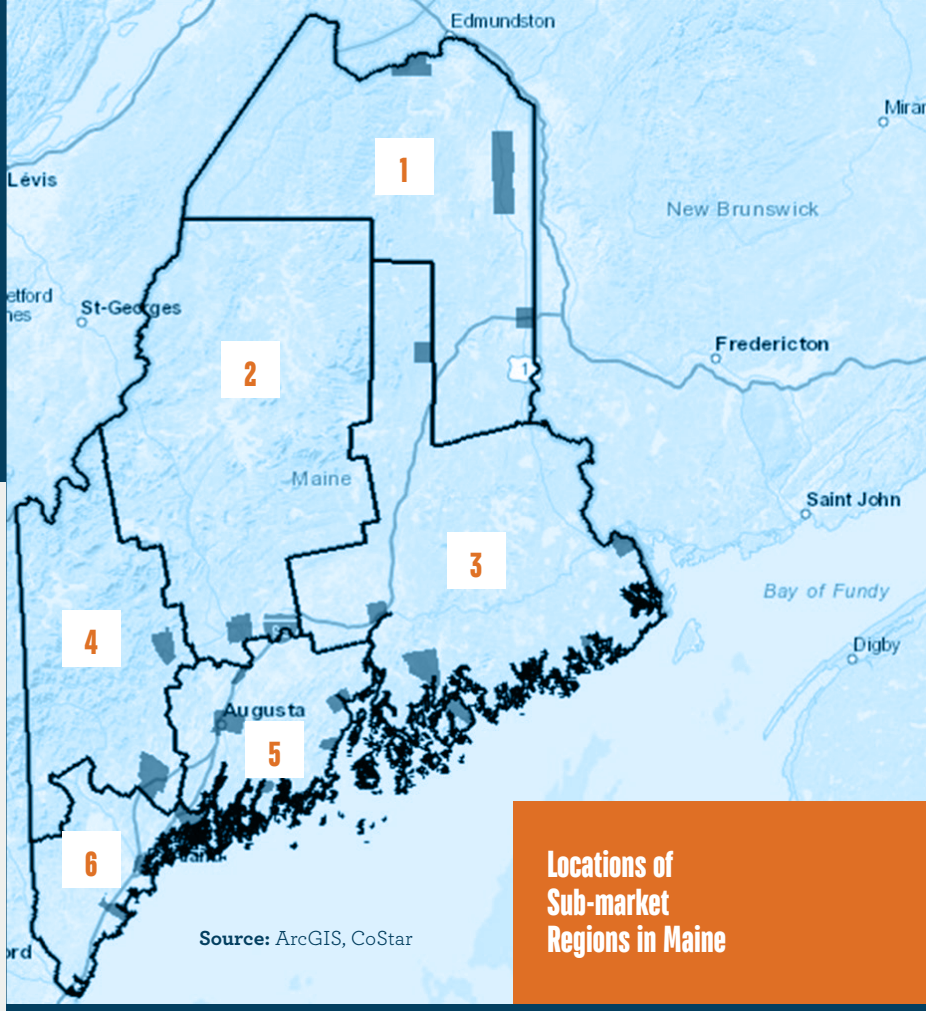
- **Agricultural Production:** Number of farms, land in cultivation, and market value of agricultural output by region, using data from the Census of Agriculture.
- **Seafood Harvesting:** Ex-vessel value and number of harvesters by region, with species-specific detail for lobster, clams, scallops, oysters, elvers, and other catch.[4]
- **Land Use Concentration:** The share of a region's land devoted to agriculture compared to the statewide average.
- **Economic Concentration:** Each region's share of statewide agricultural market value compared to its share of statewide GRP.
- **Existing Food System Players:** Counts of food-related business establishments – including catering firms, food manufacturers (by establishment size), home kitchen and food truck licenses, and shared-use food processing facilities by using Lightcast and state licensing data.

Together, these measures help identify regions where agriculture and seafood play an outsized role in the economy, where potential kitchen users are concentrated, and where structural gaps exist between production and processing.

[4] *Ex-vessel value is the price that commercial fishermen receive for their catch at the point of landing, i.e., when the seafood is first sold to dealers, processors, or wholesalers right off the boat.*

Study Sub-market Regions

The map to the right shows the six sub-market regions referred to in this analysis. The map also shows the Primary Service Centers[5] located within each sub-market region, indicated in purple. The Primary Service Centers are included on the map for reference, as a potential food processing facility would likely be located within a service center or very nearby.



Source: ArcGIS, CoStar

Locations of Sub-market Regions in Maine

Throughout this report, data and recommendations are organized around six distinct regions, or "sub-markets," that together encompass the entire state of Maine. Each sub-market consists of a group of counties and is used to identify key trends within the food and beverage processing sector, both within and beyond Maine's major population centers. By analyzing each sub-market individually and in the context of the broader statewide landscape, this study aims to provide a geographically equitable analysis that reflects the full range of economic and cultural diversity across the state. Recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate in a state as varied as Maine, recommendations are tailored to the unique assets, challenges, and opportunities present in each sub-market.

Region	Counties Included	Regional Service Centers Included
1	AROOSTOOK	Fort Kent, Presque Isle, Caribou, Houlton
2	PISCATAQUIS, SOMERSET	Skowhegan
3	PENOBSCOT, WASHINGTON, HANCOCK	Bangor, Ellsworth, Bar Harbor, Calais, Machias, Eastport, Patten
4	FRANKLIN, OXFORD, ANDROSCOGGIN	Farmington, Lewiston, Auburn
5	KENNEBEC, WALDO, KNOX, LINCOLN, SAGADAHOC	Waterville, Augusta, Hallowell, Belfast, Camden, Damariscotta
6	CUMBERLAND, YORK	Brunswick, Portland, Biddeford

[5] *Maine's Regional Service Centers are identified by the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry following a statutorily defined methodology that considers employment concentrations, commercial trade activity, service sector jobs, and housing services. Regional Service Centers can be primary, secondary, small, or specialized, and are intended to identify both economic and cultural hubs throughout the state.*

Agricultural and Seafood Producers

Maine has a strong base of agricultural production throughout the state, with varying specialties in each of the six sub-market regions. Agriculture is highly concentrated in certain areas, with Region 1 (Aroostook County) standing out as the clear engine of Maine's farm economy – both in terms of land under cultivation and market value generated. Other parts of the state also play important roles, but overall, the picture is one of uneven distribution: a handful of regions account for the bulk of farmland and value, while others maintain many farms but at smaller scales and with lower overall output.

Key Agricultural Production Statistics by Regional Sub-market, 2022

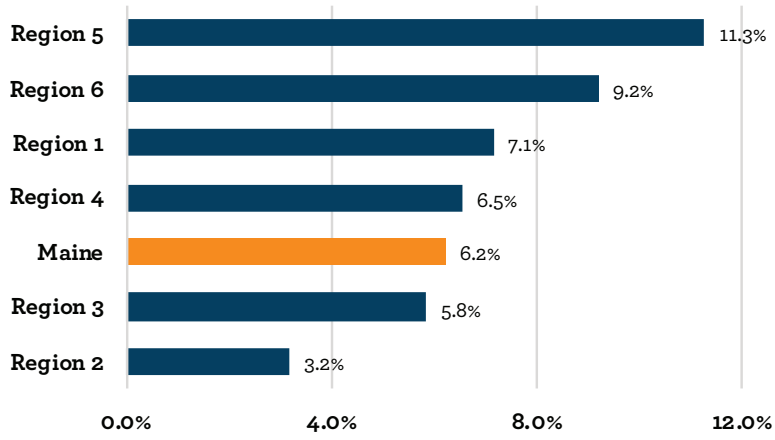
Region	Farms	Share of State's Total Farms	Land in Farms (acres)	% State Farmland	% of Land in Farms	Avg. Size of Farm (acres)	Market Value of	Share of State Total Market Value	Average Market Value per Farm
REGION 1	720	10%	305,052	25%	7%	424	$291,073	33%	$404,268
REGION 2	710	10%	160,268	13%	3%	228	$106,849	12%	$152,207
REGION 3	1,213	17%	282,128	23%	6%	219	$196,218	23%	$151,989
REGION 4	1,146	16%	177,462	14%	7%	150	$74,159	9%	$62,634
REGION 5	1,815	26%	192,691	16%	11%	107	$128,277	15%	$71,543
REGION 6	1,430	20%	107,445	9%	9%	80	$72,951	8%	$54,198
MAINE	**7,036**	**100.0%**	**1,225,046**	**100%**	**6%**	**174**	**$869,526**	**100%**	**$123,582**

Source: 2022 Census of Agriculture, Camoin Associates, 2020 Decennial Census

Evaluating the concentration of agricultural production in terms of both land use and market value helps to reinforce this finding. Some regions, such as Region 1, have agriculture that is not only land-intensive but also disproportionately important to the local economy. Others, such as Regions 5 and 6 (covering coastal and southern Maine), devote a large share of land to farming but generate more modest economic output, while regions with larger urban economies see farming play a smaller relative role. Taken together, these patterns illustrate both the geographic specialization and the structural diversity within Maine's farm sector.

The adjacent chart shows the share of land used for farming across different Maine regions compared to the state average. Region 5 stands out with the highest share at 11%, followed by Region 6 at 9%. Regions 1 and 4 each report around 7%, slightly above the statewide average of 6%. Region 3 aligns with the state average, while Region 2 has the lowest share at just 3%. Overall, farming activity is more concentrated in Regions 5 and 6, whereas Region 2 contributes very little, highlighting significant regional variation in farmland use across Maine.

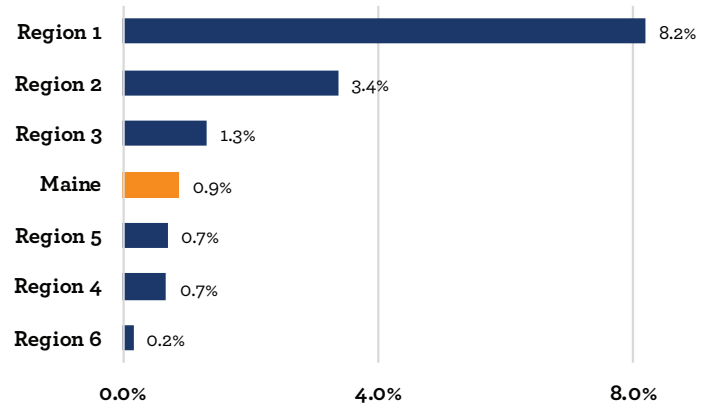
Share of Geography's Land Used for Farming



Source: 2022 Census of Agriculture

Despite concentrated agricultural land use in regions 5 and 6, evaluating each region's concentration in terms of market value tells a different story. Region 1 stands out, with agricultural products making up 8% of its GRP, well above Region 2 at 3% and all other regions, which fall near or below the state average of 0.9%. Region 6, despite its high farmland share, records the smallest agricultural contribution to GRP at just 0.2%. Together, the charts highlight that some regions rely heavily on agriculture for economic output while others contribute more land, underscoring the wide variation in agricultural intensity and economic dependence across Maine.

Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold as a Share of Total GRP by Geography



Source: 2022 Census of Agriculture

Seafood production tells a different story, with value spread more evenly across the coast. Region 3 leads in both ex-vessel value and number of harvesters, but Regions 5 and 6 are also major contributors, and a substantial share of landings is not tied to a single region at all.[6] Throughout the state, seafood harvesters brought in almost $716 million of ex-vessel value in 2024, with lobster alone accounting for over $534 million.

Commercial Seafood Landings by Region, 2024

	AMOUNT			SHARE OF STATE TOTAL		
	Ex-Vessel Value	Harvesters	Weight	Ex-Vessel Value	Harvesters	Weight
REGION 3	$233,992,121	4,107	47,172,566	33%	35%	24%
REGION 5	$190,729,653	2,550	47,411,896	27%	22%	24%
REGION 6	$103,192,710	1,594	29,126,836	14%	14%	15%
REGION NOT SPECIFIED	$188,071,181	3,336	75,448,403	26%	29%	38%
Total	**$715,985,665**	**11,587**	**199,159,701**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Source: Maine Department of Marine Resources

Lobster dominates across the board, but the presence of oysters, soft clams, elvers, scallops, and herring reflects some diversification by region. Unlike agriculture, seafood is not necessarily concentrated in a single hub but instead forms a distributed backbone of coastal economies.

Top 5 Wild-Caught Fisheries by Region, 2024

Rank	REGION 3		REGION 5		REGION 6	
	Species	Ex-Vessel Value	Species	Ex-Vessel Value	Species	Ex-Vessel Value
1	Lobster	$209.4M	Lobster	$165.2M	Lobster	$85.9M
2	Soft Clam	$8.5M	Oyster	$7.3M	Oyster	$3.2M
3	Sea Scallop	$5.3M	Atlantic Menhaden	$6.0M	Soft Clam	$2.9M
4	Elver	$5.2M	Elver	$3.8M	Atlantic Menhaden	$2.7M
5	Atlantic Menhaden	$3.5M	Soft Clam	$2.5M	Atlantic Herring	$2.4M

Source: Maine Department of Marine Resources

[6] *Regions 1, 2, and 4 are landlocked and therefore did not have any reported seafood landings or similar information.*

Market drivers by region

Maine's agricultural and seafood economies vary widely by region, with each area defined by different products, scales of production, and market dynamics. From Aroostook's large-scale potato and crop farms to Washington County's blueberries and aquaculture, and from dairy hubs in central Maine to small, diversified farms along the coast, these market drivers shape both current production and the opportunities for value-added processing. Understanding these regional strengths and gaps is critical for identifying where shared-use food processing facilities can have the greatest impact, whether by expanding capacity for established commodities, diversifying processing options for emerging crops, or supporting small producers seeking to reach new markets.

REGION 1: Aroostook County

Aroostook County is the **agricultural powerhouse of the state, with over 305,000 total acres of farmland accounting for 25% of the state's total farmland.** Meanwhile, the county contributed 33% of the total market value of agricultural products sold within the state in 2022. Overall, 7% of the land in Region 1 is used as farmland.

Region 1's agricultural production is **characterized by larger, more established farms.** For example, despite the region accounting for the largest share of the state's farmland, it has the second-lowest number of farms, leading to the largest average size of farm (424 acres). Aroostook County also has the largest average market value per farm ($404,000).

Aroostook County's agricultural market value is almost 100% attributable to crop production (rather than animal production). Potatoes are by far the largest crop, and production of broccoli is growing. Aroostook County is ranked #20 across all counties for vegetable/potato production in the US.

Despite its **strengths in crop production, Aroostook County is also ranked #1 in Maine for cattle and calf production**, indicating a strong market for beef coming from the County.

Implications for Shared-Use Food Processing Facilities

Potato farms in Aroostook County tend to be large and already scaled, with existing markets, lending to a significant volume of potato processing. Despite the county's specialty in potato growing, efforts to support small and scaling value-added processing should focus on other crops, such as broccoli. In addition, enhanced access to USDA-certified processing space could help to grow the region's beef market.

REGION 2: Piscataquis and Somerset Counties

Region 2 contains over 160,000 acres of farmland and accounts for 13% of the state's total farmland. With 710 farms, the region represents 10% of Maine's total farm count. Region 2 contributed 12% of the total market value of agricultural products sold statewide in 2022. Farms here are slightly larger than the statewide average, with an average size of 228 acres. The region also sees a relatively strong average market value per farm at $152,207, indicating **a productive agricultural sector concentrated on fewer, larger farms relative to its share of total land.**

The agricultural market in Region 2 is characterized by dairy and dairy support crops, such as hay for forage. In Piscataquis County, the largest product by market value is by far milk from cows, while Somerset County's two largest agricultural industries are milk from cows and hay for forage.

Implications for Shared-Use Food Processing Facilities

While agricultural production is a relatively small market in Region 2, its concentration of dairy production and related industries may provide opportunities for small-scale value-added dairy product manufacturing. This opportunity may be limited, as Maine's largest concentration of dairy production is located in neighboring Region 5, and as Region 2 has relatively little dairy production in comparison. Additionally, with larger-than-average farms, it is likely that these farms have existing dairy contracts and are less likely to pivot to small-scale value-added production.

REGION 3: Hancock, Penobscot, and Washington Counties

With 1,213 farms and over 282,000 acres of land in farms, Region 3 is the **second-largest major agricultural production zone within the state, accounting for 17% of farms and 23% of farmland.** Region 3 was responsible for 23% of the total market value of agricultural products sold in 2022, aligning closely with its share of land and farms. The average farm size in this region is 219 acres, above the statewide average, and the average market value per farm is approximately $152,000, another strong indicator of the region's **robust agricultural economy.** While Region 3 is similar to Region 1 in that it accounts for a large share of the state's total farmland and total market value, it has many more farms that are smaller in size compared to Region 1, but large compared to the state.

Washington County dominates the region's specialty crop production as Maine's #1 producer of fruit and berries, with blueberries generating close to $42 million in value as of 2022. The county also leads the state in aquaculture production and holds the **#4 position nationally among aquaculture-producing counties,** largely driven by the presence of one major aquaculture producer. Hancock County's agricultural production is similarly dominated by blueberry cultivation. Penobscot County is the state's 4th-ranked county for overall agricultural market value, with vegetables and potatoes serving as the primary crops, while animal production focuses heavily on milk from cows, followed by cattle and calves.

Region 3's producer economy is also characterized by a high volume of commercial seafood landings, with over 4,100 harvesters bringing in almost $234 million in ex-vessel value in 2024, approximately one-third of the state's total harvesters and landings value. Region 3's largest species by value is lobster, accounting for $209 million, more than both Region 5 and Region 6. Other top species are clams, scallops, and elvers, though each of these species brings in less than $10 million of ex-vessel value each.

Implications for Shared-Use Food Processing Facilities

Blueberry processing is a mature processing sector in Region 3, with most blueberries currently being frozen. That said, there are untapped opportunities to adapt some processing capacity to apply to other types of crops, particularly those from smaller farms. This shared processing capacity could apply to vegetables grown in Penobscot County, potentially offering processing options located closer to major trade corridors for nearby Aroostook County.

Meanwhile, shared seafood processing facilities could be beneficial to capture greater value from Region 3's vast fishing economy, particularly for smaller-volume species such as clams and sea scallops. Facilities that specifically cater to fish and marine product processing could help to retain value in the state's seafood sector, particularly along the coastline on Route 1, where fresh seafood could more easily be transported from the ocean for processing, and also have better access to major routes for further distribution of processed products.

REGION 4: Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford Counties

Region 4 is home to 1,146 farms and 177,000 acres of farmland, accounting for 14% of the state's farmland and 16% of its total farms. However, this region produces only 9% of the market value of agricultural products sold in Maine. The average farm size is 150 acres, slightly below the statewide average, and the average market value per farm is $62,634. Altogether, Region 4 can be **characterized by its many farms that tend to be smaller, on average.**

Androscoggin County leads the region as an animal production powerhouse, holding the **#1 position statewide for poultry and egg production** while also **ranking #4 for milk from cows**.

The county additionally produces significant corn and apple crops. Oxford County focuses primarily on crop production with strong potato cultivation and diverse vegetable production, complemented by substantial apple orchards. The county **ranks #2 statewide for poultry and eggs**, housing approximately 25,000 layer chickens. Franklin County maintains minimal agricultural production overall, with forage crops (which support the dairy and poultry industries) representing the largest crop by acreage, and chickens used for meat comprising the primary animal production.

Implications for Shared-Use Food Processing Facilities

Based on both Androscoggin and Oxford counties' strengths in apple and chicken/egg production, expanded processing capacity could focus on the value-added production of these two agricultural products.

Value-added apple processing could include facilities that provide equipment and space to produce products such as cider or apple sauce, and they should ensure cold storage capabilities suited to apple storage. Meanwhile, USDA-certified space to process both meat and eggs could help support the heritage poultry industry. Finally, small-scale vegetable processing could support the diverse but small-scale vegetable production in the region.

REGION 5: Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Waldo, and Sagadahoc Counties

Region 5 has the largest number of farms (1,815), making up 26% of the state's total. Despite this, it represents only 16% of the state's farmland, indicating a high density of small farms. Indeed, the average farm size in this region is just 107 acres, the second smallest statewide, behind Region 6. The region contributes 15% of the state's total market value of agricultural products sold, with an average market value per farm of $71,543, pointing to a **diversified but smaller-scale agricultural presence.**

Kennebec County dominates the region's agricultural output as **Maine's #1 dairy producer**, with dairy accounting for 65% of the county's total agricultural market value. Lincoln County contributes unique production strengths as the **state's #1 producer of hogs and pigs**, while also maintaining significant nursery and floriculture operations, blueberry production, forage crops, and poultry and egg operations. Waldo County focuses primarily on livestock with milk from cows as the leading product, though it ranks #5 statewide, while blueberries serve as the top crop. Knox County maintains relatively modest agricultural production centered on hay and blueberries, with some poultry and egg operations. Sagadahoc County, while having limited overall agricultural production, shows significant aquaculture activity, followed by forage crops and poultry and egg operations.

It is also important to note the significant presence of Maine's fisheries in Region 5. In 2024, Region 5 had 2,550 harvesters bringing in almost $191 million of value from the ocean. Notably, Knox County had the highest ex-vessel value among all counties with commercial landings in 2024. The top species harvested in Region 5 in 2024 was lobster, with over $165 million in ex-vessel value. Oysters, Atlantic menhaden, elvers, and soft clams also brought in between $2.5–$7.5 million each.

Implications for Shared-Use Food Processing Facilities

There are multiple distinct opportunities to support processing capacity for small and mid-size producers in Region 5. First, shared dairy processing along the I-95 corridor in Kennebec County, in locations such as Gardiner, Augusta, Hallowell, or other towns with close proximity to the highway, would be well-suited for the region based on its high volume and concentration of dairy production. Additionally, a shared dairy processing facility in this region would be able to support the concentration of dairy farmers in nearby Region 2, where milk production is also a major component of the agricultural landscape.

Meanwhile, Region 5's coastal counties would benefit from a seafood-based shared facility, with the objective of adding value to smaller harvests of aquaculture and wild-caught species. Similar to in Region 5, this type of facility would ideally be located close to the coast in close proximity to Route 1, to facilitate easier logistics links both from the ocean as well as to major consumer markets.

REGION 6: Cumberland and York Counties

Region 6 includes 1,430 farms and just over 107,000 acres in farmland, accounting for 9% of total farmland and 20% of total farms in the state. The region has the smallest average farm size (80 acres) and the lowest average market value per farm ($54,198), **suggesting smaller-scale, potentially less commercially intensive agricultural activity.** Region 6 contributed 8% of the state's total market value of agricultural products sold in 2022.

Region 6's food production is dominated by the fishing and seafood industry, with ex-vessel value totaling over $103 million in 2024 compared to $41 million of agricultural production (2022). There are nearly 1,600 seafood harvesters throughout the region, with lobster being the largest fishery by far, at nearly $86 million in ex-vessel value in 2024. Other top fisheries in Region 6 include oysters, soft clams, Atlantic menhaden, and Atlantic herring, each with around $2–3 million in ex-vessel value in 2024.

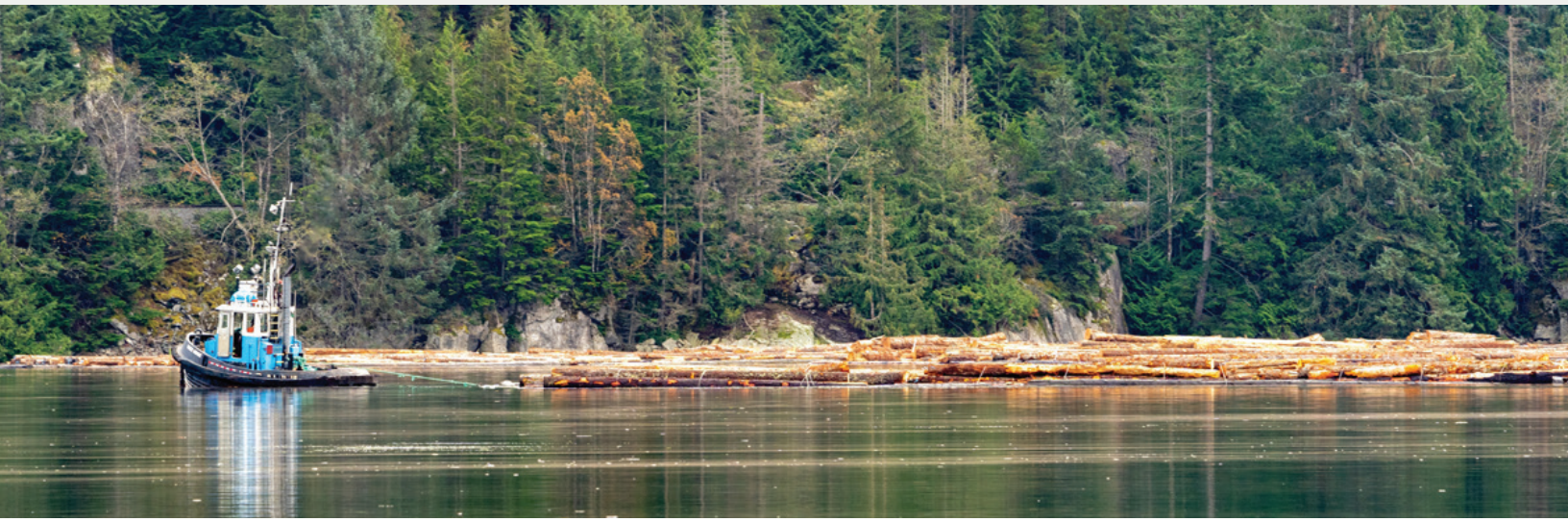
Meanwhile, much of Region 6's agricultural base is within crops that are not food-based, such as nursery, floriculture, and sod. Meanwhile, although not one of its top crops, **Region 6 is the #1 producer of Christmas Trees in the state**.

In terms of food-based agriculture, Region 6 has a strong presence of Aquaculture. Cumberland County alone is Maine's #2 aquaculture-producing county in terms of market value (nearly $10M in 2022), complementing the region's strong fishing economy. Other top forms of agricultural production in the region are vegetables, apples, berries, and milk from cows.

Implications for Shared-Use Food Processing Facilities

Agriculture and seafood production alone are unlikely to generate limited excess demand for shared-use food processing facilities for several reasons. First, Region 6 is already well-served by Fork Food Lab. Additionally, with its agricultural landscape being characterized by small, less commercially intensive agricultural activity (including a concentration of non-food agriculture), there is likely to be less demand for value-added processing of crops. The region's strength in aquaculture and seafood may suggest demand for heightened seafood processing capacity. However, the region is also well-served by both mature and emerging large-scale seafood processors, and more research may need to be done to identify whether these existing processors are adequately meeting the needs for value-added processing.

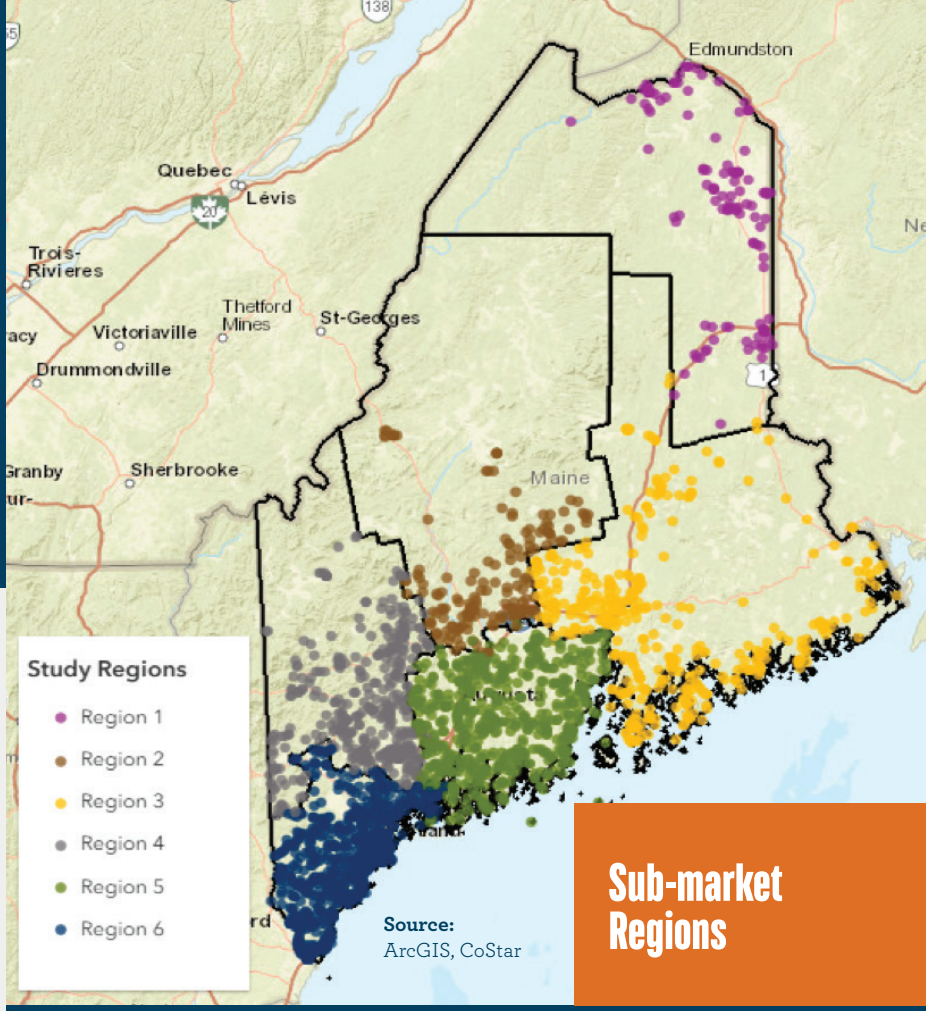
Overall, natural resource-based sectors like agriculture and seafood are less likely to generate excess demand for shared food processing space in Region 6 over and above what already exists. Any excess demand for shared food processing space is more likely to be generated by other categories, such as Mobile kitchens, Caterers, Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) producers, or other potential users.



Potential Demand for Shared-Use Food Processing Feasibility Facility

Mobile Kitchens and Home Licenses

Throughout the state, there are approximately 2,700 businesses that hold either a home kitchen license, a mobile vendor license, or both,[7] averaging approximately two total licenses per 1,000 population. These license holders create a strong base of small-scale food entrepreneurs who are prime candidates for shared kitchen incubators. Assuming only 10% of these license holders are looking to enter a licensed shared-use kitchen incubator, this would represent about 270 total small businesses demanding space, with a minimum of 12 small businesses demanding space in Region 1 and up to 87 in Region 6.[8]



Sub-market Regions

Region	Counties Included	Primary Service Centers Included
1	AROOSTOOK	Fort Kent, Presque Isle, Caribou, Houlton
2	PISCATAQUIS, SOMERSET	Skowhegan
3	PENOBSCOT, WASHINGTON, HANCOCK	Bangor, Ellsworth, Bar Harbor, Calais, Machias, Eastport, Patten
4	FRANKLIN, OXFORD, ANDROSCOGGIN	Farmington, Lewiston, Auburn
5	KENNEBEC, WALDO, KNOX, LINCOLN, SAGADAHOC	Waterville, Augusta, Hallowell, Belfast, Camden, Damariscotta
6	CUMBERLAND, YORK	Brunswick, Portland, Biddeford

[7] *For more information about licenses, please see https://www1.maine.gov/dacf/qar/permits_and_licenses/index.shtml*

[8] *For contextual comparison, across Fork Food Lab's approximately 75 members, 24% are mobile units (about 18–20 businesses). Fork Food Lab provides space to clients extending well beyond the Region 6 geography.*

Home Kitchens and Mobile Food Providers - Licenses and Licenses Per Capita, by Region (2025)

Region	NUMBER OF LICENSES				LICENSES PER 1,000 POPULATION			
	Home Only	Mobile Only	Both	Total	Home Only	Mobile Only	Both	Total
REGION 1	20	48	49	117	0.3	0.7	0.7	1.8
REGION 2	40	68	58	166	5.8	9.9	8.5	24.3
REGION 3	101	214	120	435	0.4	0.9	0.5	1.8
REGION 4	95	171	146	412	0.5	0.8	0.7	2.0
REGION 5	152	353	195	700	0.5	1.2	0.7	2.5
REGION 6	161	418	287	866	0.3	0.8	0.5	1.6
Grand Total	**569**	**1,272**	**855**	**2,696**	**0.4**	**0.9**	**0.6**	**2.0**

Source: State of Maine

Regionally, Region 6 (Cumberland and York counties) has the highest volume of licenses, with 866 total and over 400 mobile vendor licenses. Region 6 accounts for nearly one-third of the state's total licenses for home and mobile kitchens. That said, Region 6 has the lowest concentration of licenses per capita, at 1.6 per 1,000 population.

Overall, Regions 3 (Penobscot, Washington, and Hancock), 4 (Franklin, Oxford, and Androscoggin), and 6 (Cumberland and York) each have high volumes of license holders, but relatively low to average per-capita activity. **These areas may have significant potential based solely on the number of food businesses, particularly home kitchen license holders, but might need to serve broader geographic areas or offer specialized equipment or processing opportunities to attract enough users.**

Region 5 (Kennebec, Waldo, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc) stands out as having both a significant volume of license-holders, approximately 25% of the state's total, as well as a higher-than-average concentration of licenses per capita. The region, encompassing **most of Mid-coast Maine, shows a strong potential for shared-use food processing facility infrastructure to support these food businesses.**

Region 2 (Piscataquis and Somerset), encompassing Somerset and Piscataquis counties, has the highest concentration of licenses per capita, indicating a strong cottage food industry. Overall, Region 2 has 166 total home kitchen and/or mobile vendor licenses, representing around 24 licenses for every 1,000 people. This **unusually high entrepreneurial activity relative to population size suggests that an incubator to serve the region may be in especially high demand, with the density of small food businesses leading to a stronger likelihood of interest in scaling operations.**

Region 1 (Aroostook) has the fewest license holders, at only 117 in total, and a slightly below-average concentration of licenses per capita. **Region 1 is less likely to hold excess demand for shared-use food processing facilities space** based on home kitchens and mobile vendors alone.

Catering and Meal Prep

Maine's Catering Landscape: Establishments and Establishment Growth

	2019	2024	% Change
REGION 1	0	0	N/A
REGION 2	2	1	-50%
REGION 3	16	14	-11%
REGION 4	2	2	0%
REGION 5	11	11	7%
REGION 6	36	46	29%
Total Maine	**66**	**74**	**13%**

Source: Lightcast

From 2019–2024, the number of Maine caterers increased by 13%, though growth was heavily concentrated in Southern and Coastal Maine. Nearly two-thirds of all caterers in the state are located in Region 6, within Cumberland and York Counties. Meanwhile, Regions 1, 2, and 4 have minimal catering activity.[9]

Note that some of these businesses may overlap with those that have home kitchen or mobile food licenses.

Food Manufacturers

Examining existing food manufacturing clusters in each of the regions may help to shed light on the types of food manufacturers that may need access to shared food processing facilities. However, having a high concentration in a given sub-sector does not necessarily indicate opportunity. In some cases, high concentration may signal the presence of mature, scaled industries rather than a cluster of small and growing businesses.

The table below highlights clear niches in Maine's Food and Beverage sector employment.[10] Region 1 dominates in Fruit, Vegetable Preserving, and Specialty food Manufacturing. Region 2 also has a high employment concentration in Fruit, Vegetable Preserving, and Specialty Food Manufacturing, though substantially lower than Region 1. Regions 3, 5, and 6 lead in Seafood Preparation and Packaging, and Region 4 specializes in Beverage Manufacturing

Employment Concentration in Food & Beverage Subsectors (2024)

	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6
Animal Food Manufacturing	1.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0
Grain and Oilseed Milling	3.1	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3
Sugar and Confectionery Product Manufacturing	0.0	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.6	2.0
Fruit and Vegetable Preserving and Specialty Food Manufacturing	16.3	3.7	1.6	0.0	0.1	1.2
Dairy Product Manufacturing	2.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.3	1.2
Animal Slaughtering and Processing	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.4
Seafood Product Preparation and Packaging	0.0	0.0	5.6	0.3	7.6	5.1
Bakeries and Tortilla Manufacturing	0.3	1.8	0.9	3.2	0.9	1.1
Other Food Manufacturing	4.7	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.8	0.2
Beverage Manufacturing	0.2	0.5	0.7	4.5	0.7	2.5

Source: Lightcast

[9] *This data is based on NAICS code 722320: Caterers. There may be additional catering activity not captured in this table, for example, when restaurants also provide catering services. This data only captures businesses whose primary activity is providing single-event-based food services.*

[10] *Employment Concentration or Location Quotient (LQ) quantifies how concentrated a particular sector, cluster, or industry is in a region relative to the nation. It is calculated by comparing an industry's share of total employment in a region to its total share*

Small Food Manufacturers

Data from the Economic Census indicates that as of 2022, approximately half of all businesses in the food manufacturing sector are small and have fewer than five employees. By volume, Region 6 has the smallest food manufacturing businesses (50), with other concentrations in Region 3 and Region 5. Overall, Region 4 has the lowest share of food manufacturing businesses with fewer than five employees, with only about a third of businesses being among this smallest cohort.

Data for the employment size of businesses within each of the food and beverage subsectors is not available at the county level, and therefore, the share of businesses with fewer than five employees cannot be calculated for subsectors at the regional level. However, this data is available at the state level and is displayed below.

Food Manufacturing Businesses with <5 Employees, 2022

Region	Establishments <5 Employees	Total Establishments	Share <5 Employees
REGION 1	7	14	50%
REGION 2*	(D)	12	(D)
REGION 3	21	43	49%
REGION 4*	5	16	31%
REGION 5*	18	41	44%
REGION 6	50	103	49%
Total Maine	**119**	**238**	**50%**

Source: US Census Bureau 2022 Economic Census
Notes: Beverage Manufacturing is excluded due to a lack of data for nearly all counties.
Only includes businesses that were open for the entire year.

* indicates that at least one county in this region has data that is censored to avoid disclosing data for individual companies. These counties include Somerset (Region 2), Oxford (Region 4), and Lincoln (Region 5). No data is available for Piscataquis or Franklin County. For this reason, the total for Maine is greater than the sum of each region.

(D) Indicates that data is censored to avoid disclosing data for individual companies.

Statewide, there are several subsectors that stand out as having a higher-than-average number of businesses with fewer than five employees. These subsectors may represent opportunities for shared food processing infrastructure to support small enterprises. These include:

- Animal Slaughtering and Processing
- Other Food Manufacturing
- Sugar and Confectionery Product Manufacturing

Meanwhile, **Seafood Product Preparation and Packaging** is characterized as having a significantly lower-than-average share of businesses with fewer than five employees (20%). This indicates that most seafood processing businesses are larger, more established, and more scaled than other subsectors. That being said, this may indicate an opportunity for seafood-focused shared food processing facilities to support the entry of new establishments within the sector or to add value to seafood products that aren't represented by the existing stock of food processing businesses.

Maine Food Manufacturing Businesses with <5 Employees by Sub-sector

Sub-sector	Establishments <5 Employees	Total Establishments	Share <5 Employees
Animal Food Manufacturing	(D)	7	(D)
Animal Slaughtering and Processing	11	17	65%
Bakeries and Tortilla Manufacturing	44	88	50%
Dairy Product Manufacturing	(D)	11	(D)
Fruit and Vegetable Preserving and Specialty Food Manufacturing	(D)	19	(D)
Grain and Oilseed Milling	0	5	0%
Other Food Manufacturing	25	42	60%
Seafood Product Preparation and Packaging	4	20	20%
Sugar and Confectionery Product Manufacturing	18	29	62%
Beverage Manufacturing	65	135	48%
Grand Total	**184**	**373**	**49%**

Source: US Census Bureau 2022 Economic Census

Note: (D) indicates that data is censored to avoid disclosing data for individual companies

Other Potential Entrepreneurs

Aside from the potential users listed above, a large portion of potential shared processing users may be less quantifiable, such as:

- Entrepreneurs who operate their food/beverage-based business as a side venture while working a traditional job during regular working hours
- Entrepreneurs who turn to a food or beverage-based business after becoming unemployed

In both cases, the demand for shared processing space is highly driven by overarching macroeconomic conditions (such as increasing unemployment). Additionally, both of these groups are ideal candidates for shared processing space, where barriers to entry are extremely low compared to other types of startups and scale-ups. For example, accessing production space at a shared kitchen might cost somewhere in the low thousands of dollars ($1,000-3,000). This is a much more attractive proposition compared to committing to a $500,000+ investment in the acquisition and renovation of an independent space, not including other costs related to business startup. In these cases, shared production facilities create accessible opportunities for economic mobility, particularly for underrepresented groups that often lack access to traditional capital. While they are difficult to identify and quantify, these entrepreneurs likely make up an outsized share of the potential market for kitchen users.

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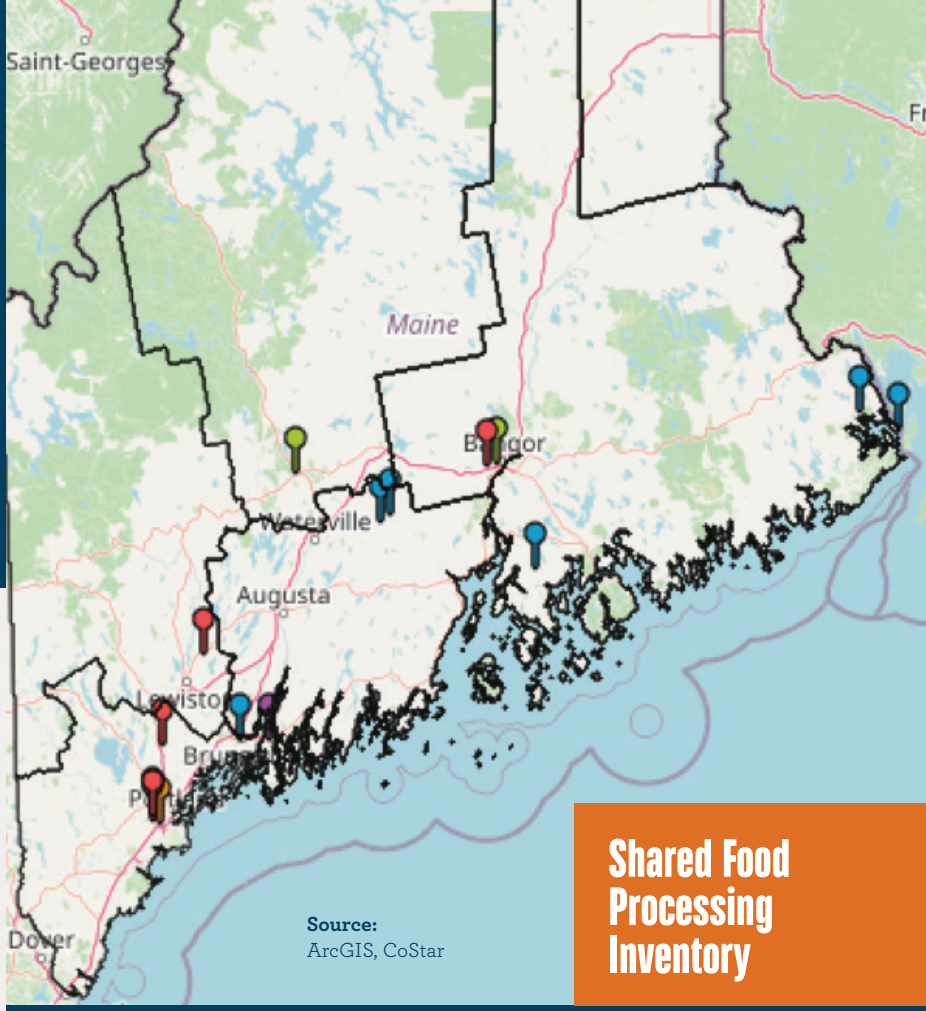
Shared-Use Food Processing Feasibility Facility Opportunities

Inventory of Existing Shared-Use Food Processing Facilities

This section maps Maine's current shared-use food processing facilities, showing how they serve different users and where gaps exist. It then explores the potential to expand or replicate these facilities to meet growing demand from entrepreneurs, farmers, fishermen, and food manufacturers.

Industrial real estate conditions are reviewed to assess the availability of suitable facilities, with special attention paid to cold storage, processing space, and warehouse capacity. This section closes by identifying priority regional opportunities for scaling shared-use food processing facility infrastructure across the state.



Source:
ArcGIS, CoStar

Shared Food Processing Inventory

TYPE	FACILITIES
CO-PACKER	Green Gean's, Pemberton's, Schlotterback & Foss, DennyMike's, Gagne Foods
COMMUNITY KITCHEN	MCHPP, Unity Community Kitchen, HalcyonGrange, Minke Kitchen
INCUBATOR - IN DEVELOPMENT	The Kitchen at 185, Bangor Central Kitchen, Lewiston-Auburn Community Market
CO-MANUFACTURER	Green Gean's, Pembertons's, Schlotterbeck, DennyMike's Sauces & Seasonings, Gagne Foods
INCUBATOR	Fork Food Lab

Community Kitchens

Mid-coast Hunger Prevention Program (MCHPP) Community Kitchen | Brunswick | This kitchen contains about 700 square feet of kitchen space with an additional 700 square feet of pantry, cooler, and freezer storage. While it is used by the MCHPP to prepare meals for soup kitchens and other processing projects for salvaged or gleaned produce, it is also available for rent to the community and the public. MCHPP offers rentals for either a monthly membership or short-term use, with tiered pricing depending on the type of group operating the kitchen, ranging from free to $50/hr for short-term use or free to $15/hr for monthly members.

Unity Community Kitchen | Unity | The Unity Community Center is a mixed-use facility for rent that provides both an event space and a commercially licensed kitchen. The Commercial Kitchen can be rented for between $50–$75 per day, depending on the type of user (occasional/one-time users, regular users, or town community groups), with long-term dry and cold storage available for $30 per month.

Halcyon Grange | North Blue Hill | The Halcyon Grange, like the Unity Community Center, is a mixed-use facility that includes both event space and a rentable community kitchen. The grange's vision is to serve local farming interests and improve economic and social opportunities for families. The kitchen is available for community, private, and commercial use, ranging from small food businesses to educational cooking courses and more. Fees for the kitchen only range from $40 to $75 per day, depending on the type of user and the amount of time the kitchen is used.

Minke Kitchen (Smithereen Farm) | Pembroke | To support its vision for a value-added farm economy, Smithereen Farm created a shared-use processing facility called the Minke Kitchen. The kitchen is a licensed commercial kitchen that is used by Smithereen Farm and is also available to share with other local farms. The facility also offers drying greenhouses to support solar drying for seaweed, herbs, and berries. Additionally, the on-site kitchen manager is available to support procurement of individual processor licenses, and users have access to Smithereen's bulk supplier discounting for certain products. Pricing is not available on the facility's website.

This list of kitchens may not be exhaustive and only includes facilities with active, up-to-date contact information and other publicly available information.

Shared-Use Dedicated Station Kitchens

Based on the available research for inventory, this type of facility is not currently available within the state.

Shared-Use Kitchen Incubators

Fork Food Lab | Portland | Fork Food Lab is currently Maine's only food business incubator, operating a shared commercial manufacturing and processing facility. In addition to processing equipment, kitchen space, dry and cold storage space, and supply chain management assistance, members also have access to start-up assistance, coaching, networking, workshops, educational opportunities, and more perks. As of 2025, members also have access to an event space where they can host pop-ups and other events, as well as a store where food businesses can sell their products, test buyer feedback, and more. Pricing varies depending on the type of user (community membership, food truck/mobile build-your-own membership), ranging from $100 to just over $1,200 per month. Extras and add-ons, such as parking for mobile vendors or additional storage space, can be rented at an additional monthly cost.

In Development

The Kitchen at 185 | Skowhegan | The Kitchen at 185 will be a 5,600 SF shared kitchen incubator located in downtown Skowhegan. The project, which is currently in the fundraising phase of development, will include a shared-use kitchen, flexible event space, fruit and vegetable co-packing room, and dry, cold, and freezer storage space. In addition, The Kitchen at 185 will offer a food entrepreneurial pathway program in addition to other educational and technical services assistance, which is set to begin in 2025 by utilizing classroom and kitchen space elsewhere in the community before the full facility is completed. The project will be owned and operated by the Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship, a program of Main Street Skowhegan.

Bangor Central Kitchen | Bangor | The Bangor Central Kitchen will be an 18,000 SF shared kitchen incubator located at the Maine Enterprise Business Park. The project has secured all necessary funding to proceed and now looks toward planning and building out the facility. While the facility's operational plan has not yet been finalized, it is expected to include food prep and commercial kitchen space along with dry, cold, and freezer storage. The facility follows a public operational model and is spearheaded by the City of Bangor.

Lewiston-Auburn Community Market | Lewiston
The Lewiston-Auburn Community Market will be Maine's first cooperatively run market and shared commercial kitchen, located in downtown Lewiston. The project, currently in the development and fundraising phase, is envisioned as a community-owned grocery store and food hub with shared-use kitchen facilities, cold and dry storage, and food processing space. The market will improve access to affordable and culturally appropriate food in a neighborhood designated a "Low Supermarket Access Area," while also supporting food entrepreneurs through workforce training and business development opportunities. Established as a cooperative in 2022, the project is governed by a 20-member board and has secured more than $4.6 million in funding to date. LACM is advancing site acquisition and design plans, with City Council approval anticipated in 2025.

Co-Packers, Co-Manufacturers, and Private Label

While often used interchangeably, co-packers, co-manufacturers, and private label producers serve different roles in food production. A co-packer typically follows a client's existing recipe to produce and package products at scale, while a co-manufacturer takes a more collaborative role, helping refine recipes, source ingredients, or adjust processes for efficiency. Private label production, by contrast, involves a manufacturer creating products that are then branded and sold under a retailer's or third party's name, rather than the producer's own brand.

Green Gean's | Westbrook | Green Gean's provides **collaborative freeze-drying services** for a wide variety of food products. The Green Gean's team also provides packaging for long-term storage and transportation.

Pemberton's Gourmet Foods | Gray | While Pemberton's creates their own products, such as sauces, jams, and jellies, the company also offers **small-batch co-packing services** for producers with original recipes. Pemberton's offers manufacturing, cost modeling, nutritional analysis, ingredient testing, bottling, labeling, and boxing. Additionally, Pemberton's provides **private-label food services to retailers**, including assistance with recipe development.

Schlotterbeck and Foss | Westbrook | Schlotterbeck & Foss is a specialty food manufacturer specializing in sauces, marinades, and condiments. While the business functions partially as a manufacturer of food service products, it also provides **private-label services for gourmet sauces and condiments**. The company provides recipe R&D, processing, quality assurance, and packaging services to its private label clients.

DennyMike's Sauces and Seasonings | Westbrook
DennyMike's is a specialty sauce and seasoning producer. In 2013, DennyMike's opened a separate **co-packing facility for small and mid-size producers of shelf-stable,** dry ingredients. The facility is wheat-free and nut-free. DennyMike's offers coordination for services ranging from label and logo design to lab analysis and packaging.

Gagne Foods | Bath | Gagne Foods is a manufacturer of fine frozen baked goods, including biscuits, cinnamon rolls, hand pies, and more. In addition to producing its own frozen baked goods, Gagne Foods also provides **contract manufacturing for frozen laminated dough applications**. The business offers chef-led R&D and quality control to produce to the desired specifications and can accommodate organic and vegan product needs.

Appendix A: Data Sources

Lightcast (formerly Emsi Burning Glass) is a global leader in labor market analytics, offering a data platform that gives a comprehensive, nuanced, and up-to-date picture of labor markets at all scales, from national to local. Key components of the platform include traditional labor market information, job postings analytics, talent profile data, compensation data, and skills analytics. Lightcast integrates government data with information from online job postings, talent profiles, and resumes to produce timely intelligence on the state of the labor market. Job and compensation data is available by industry, occupation, educational program, and skill type. Click to learn more.

Esri ArcGIS Business Analyst combines proprietary statistical models covering demographic, business, and spending data with map-based analytics to offer insights on market opportunities for industries, businesses, and sites. Business Analyst integrates datasets covering a wide range of topics, including demographics, consumer spending, market potential, customer segmentation, business locations, traffic counts, and crime indexes, which can be overlaid spatially to produce customizable maps and uncover market intelligence. Data can be pulled for standard and custom geographies, allowing for valuable comparisons between places. Click to learn more.

CoStar is a comprehensive source of commercial real estate intelligence, offering an inventory of over 6.4 million commercial properties spanning 135 billion square feet of space in 390 markets across the US. CoStar covers office, retail, industrial, hospitality, and multifamily markets. Property- and market-level data on absorption, occupancy, lease rates, tenants, listings, and transactions are researched and verified through calls to property managers, review of public records, visits to construction sites, and desktop research to uncover nearly real-time market changes. Click to learn more.

Appendix A: Data Sources

United States Census 2020

Conducted every ten years in years ending in zero, the **US Decennial Census of Population and Housing** is a complete count of each resident of the nation based on where they live on April 1st of the Census year. The Constitution mandates the enumeration to determine how to apportion the House of Representatives among the states. The latest release of the 2020 Census contains data for a limited number of variables, including: total population by race/ethnicity, population under 18, occupied and vacant housing units, and group quarters population. Click to learn more.

CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

The **Census of Agriculture** provides a detailed picture of US farms and ranches and the people who operate them. It provides uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every state and county in the US on topics including agricultural land, animal and crop production, employment, worker demographics, farm business operations, environment, and employment. It is conducted by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) every five years, in years ending in 2 and 7. Click to learn more.

About Camoin Associates

As the nation's only full-service economic development and lead generation consulting firm, Camoin Associates empowers communities through human connection backed by robust analytics.

Since 1999, Camoin Associates has helped local and state governments, economic development organizations, nonprofit organizations, and private businesses across the country generate economic results marked by resiliency and prosperity.

To learn more about our experience and projects in all of our service lines, please visit our website at www.camoinassociates.com. You can also find us on LinkedIn, Facebook, and YouTube.

The Project Team

Jim Damicis
Principal

Tori Conroy
Project Manager

Angela Hallowell
Senior Analyst

Dawn Hammond
Analyst

- Strategic and Organizational Planning
- Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis
- Real Estate Development Analytics and Advisory
- Housing Needs Assessment
- Prospecting and Business Attraction
- Target Industry Analytics and Strategy
- Workforce Development and Talent Retention
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation