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Department of Public Health and Human Services

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Cottage food law expands opportunities for Montana producers**

For the first time, Montana will have a cottage food law that goes into effect on October 1, 2015.

The 2015 Legislature passed the new law with broad support, sponsored by Rep. Kathleen Williams (D-Bozeman).

Cottage food refers to a growing industry in Montana that allows entrepreneurs the ability to prepare low-risk food in their home kitchen and then sell those products directly to consumers.

Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Director Richard Opper said the new law provides exciting opportunities for Montana's numerous local food producers. "This new law will increase access for consumers to delicious, locally produced food in locations all over Montana, while at the same time helps provide new business opportunities," he said.

Low-risk food, such as jams, jellies, dried fruit, dry mixes and baked goods, means the product doesn't require it being kept at specific temperatures in order to keep safe for human consumption, Opper added.

The new law includes several key safety measures to protect consumers. Cottage food producers must register with the local county sanitarian. They are allowed to market their products online, but can only sell in direct face-to-face transactions. Special labeling is required for cottage foods indicating the source of production.

According to Ed Evanson of the DPHHS Food and Consumer Safety Section, the law also allows greater flexibility for temporary and mobile food establishments. For example, mobile food operations, who often provide food at seasonal events such as summer fairs will be held to a consistent standard, pay an annual fee to the state, and be allowed to operate in any jurisdiction of Montana without additional permits or licenses. "This new law creates more consistency from county to county and makes it easier for temporary and mobile food establishments to operate," he said.

Several organizations who support locally produced food were instrumental in bringing this legislation forward, including Grow Montana and the Alternative Energy Resources Organization. The ultimate proposed legislation was a product of joint efforts between several state agencies including the Department of Livestock, Department of Agriculture and DPHHS.

For more information about cottage food or retail food establishments, contact your county sanitarian, or the DPHHS Food and Consumer Safety Section at 406-444-2837.

Information can also be found at a newly developed cottage food web page at [dphhs.mt.gov](http://dphhs.mt.gov).