



## STEPS FOR SUBMISSION OF LOW-ACID CANNED FOOD (LACF) PRODUCTS



Low-acid foods are any foods, other than alcoholic beverages, with a finished equilibrium pH greater than 4.6 and a water activity ( $A_w$ ) greater than 0.85. Tomatoes and tomato products having a finished equilibrium pH less than 4.7 are not classed as low-acid foods.

Low-acid canned foods (LACF) are shelf-stable (non-refrigerated) low-acid foods packed in hermetically sealed (airtight) containers. LACF products include, but are not limited to: canned vegetables, black olives, beans, hominy, rice, noodles, soups, fish, meat, and some dairy and non-dairy beverages.

Since LACF products may support the growth of *Clostridium botulinum* and the production of the neurotoxin that causes botulism, commercially prepared LACF must be packed under a valid Cannery License issued by the California Department of Public Health, Food and Drug Branch (FDB). The manufacture of LACF products must follow an Official Scheduled Process. Information about botulism is provided in the flyer "What is Foodborne Botulism?"

The first step towards obtaining an Official Scheduled Process and Cannery License is to have the product evaluated by the University of California Laboratory for Research in Food Preservation (UCLRFP). UCLRFP provide scientific and technical expertise related to control of *C. botulinum* under contract with FDB.

This document describes the steps for submitting a LACF food product to UCLRFP for evaluation.

1. Complete a separate "Request for Official Sterilization Process" form for each product to be evaluated. Please use a separate form for each product you wish to have evaluated and be as specific as possible when you complete the form. Please refer to "How to Complete the Request for Official Sterilization Process Form".
  - It is very important, and ultimately to your advantage, for the UCLRFP to receive very accurate and detailed information about the ingredients; formulation (recipe), thermal processing procedures; and container and closure specifications associated with your products. This prevents delays and provides the most accurate evaluation of the products.
2. You must keep a copy of the Request for Official Sterilization Process form for your records. This document will also be reviewed by FDB staff during cannery inspections.
3. Send the completed Request for Official Sterilization Process form to:

UCLRFP – New Products  
12647 Alcosta Blvd., Suite 195  
San Ramon, CA 94583

4. The evaluation may take 4-6 weeks. UCLRFP personnel may contact you during the evaluation process in order to obtain additional information and/or request you to take additional action before the evaluation can be completed.
5. Once UCLRFP has completed the evaluation, the information will be sent to FDB. Please **do not** contact UCLRFP to request the results of the evaluation.
6. If the product needs to be packed under a Cannery License, FDB will issue you an Official Scheduled Process letter for each product submitted to UCLRFP. This letter will inform you about the parameters of the Official Scheduled Process and all critical factors associated with the Official Scheduled Process.
  - Note: If there are any subsequent changes in your formula, equipment specifications, thermal processing procedures, and/or container/closure systems, you must re-submit the product to UCLRFP for re-evaluation.
7. You will need to submit a Cannery License application. Please be sure to review the Procedure for Obtaining a Cannery License.
8. If a Cannery License is not required, FDB the Official Scheduled Process Letter will indicate that the product must be manufactured, packed, and held (stored/warehoused) under a valid Processed Food Registration (PFR) issued by FDB. You can learn more about PFR requirements and obtain an application form from the PFR webpage.

**Important Note:**

Your product formulation is protected under the law. Specifically, California Health and Safety Code Section 110165 states that it is unlawful for any person to use to his own advantage, or to reveal to any person other than to the director or officers or employees of this department, or to the courts when relevant in any judicial proceeding under this division, any information acquired under authority of this division concerning any method or process which as a trade secret is entitled to protection.