



January 30, 2018

RE: Unattended Food Sales Establishments

City and County Business Licensing Offices,

The purpose of this communication is to draw attention to a new trend in food sales operations. This new business model concerns automatic vending or merchandising of food products. These operations go by several names, including:

- Micro-markets,
- Self-service Food Markets, and
- Self-service Retail Convenience Stores

The Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA), in keeping with terminology used by the Conference for Food Protection, refers to these types of operations as “Unattended Food Sales Establishments.” These establishments operate in the realm of food sales, subjecting them to the requirements of GDA’s Retail Food Sales regulations and the Georgia Food Act. However, their modes of operation offer key differences to traditional food sales operations. Chief among these differences are that these vending units are typically housed within a controlled access facility. Therefore their food sales operations are not publically accessible.

Based on their locations in controlled access facilities, nature of the products typically vended, and the lockout measures utilized by these machines for inventory control; at this time GDA has decided not to license and inspect these types of facilities. GDA reserves the right to enter these facilities, ascertain compliance with the provisions of our applicable laws and regulations, and to make inspection of said facilities as necessary to protect consumers’ health and wellbeing.

This decision represents GDA’s current rationale for regulating Unattended Food Sales Establishments. The requirements for licensure and inspection, as stated in the Georgia Food Act, may be implemented in instances of public health significance. Additionally, the Commissioner of Agriculture reserves the right to promulgate regulations regarding licensing and inspection of these establishments in the future, given the authority vested in him by the Georgia Food Act.

If you have any questions about GDA’s Food License, or Unattended Food Sales Establishments, please contact the GDA Food Safety Division at 404-656-3627.

Sincerely,

Natalie Adan
Division Director
Food Safety Division
Georgia Department of Agriculture