

## **Why Cannabis Edibles Require Extra Food Safety Standards**

## **Why Cannabis Edibles Need Extra Food Safety Measures: Experts Call for Third Party Certification to Prevent Recalls and Protect Consumers**

### *A Troubling Tour Reveals Food Safety Gaps Inside a Licensed Cannabis Edibles Facility*

On a 4/20 tour of a licensed cannabis edibles manufacturer in Denver, Andrew Wood, director of business development at ASI Food Safety, was alarmed by what he witnessed: workers without hairnets or gloves, and standing water pooling on the floor, a perfect breeding ground for bacteria.

Such lapses, Wood noted, are not isolated incidents but recurring risks across the legal cannabis industry. He and other food safety experts warn that these avoidable hazards could lead to costly recalls, brand damage, and even lawsuits if companies fail to pursue higher safety standards through third-party certification.

## **Experts Warn That State Regulations Alone Do Not Go Far Enough to Protect Consumers**

While the federal government regulates food safety for traditional products, cannabis edibles fall under state-level oversight, creating a patchwork of rules and enforcement. Some states classify cannabis edibles as food, while others treat them like pharmaceuticals, leading to inconsistent safety requirements.

According to Wood, many cannabis businesses adopt a “bare-minimum mindset”, doing only what regulations explicitly require. “We’re not going to do this unless we’re told to,” he explained.

Darwin Millard, technical director at Cannabis Safety & Quality (CSQ), agrees. “If it’s not required, it’s seen as extra,” he said, stressing that state regulations often fall short of protecting consumers.

## **Vertically Integrated Cannabis Companies Often Overlook Food Safety Audits**

One unique aspect of the cannabis industry is the prevalence of vertically integrated businesses that control cultivation, processing, and retail. Wood argues that this structure can lead to blind spots in food safety because companies prioritize regulatory compliance over proactive risk management.

“They don’t look at the other half of the business and say, ‘We need a food safety audit,’” Wood said, pointing out that self-policing often leads to preventable hazards slipping through the cracks.

## **The Cost of Compliance Versus the Cost of Catastrophic Losses**

One of the biggest barriers to widespread adoption of third-party food safety certification is the perceived cost. Many cannabis operators see Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) audits as expensive and burdensome.

But Millard counters that certification is an investment rather than an unnecessary expense. His company offers audits that take one to three days and cost between \$1,800 and \$5,400 annually. Compared to fines, lawsuits, or reputational collapse, he calls it “insurance to prevent catastrophic loss.”

Wood emphasizes that GMPs are not one-size-fits-all and can be customized to fit each company’s operations. ASI Food Safety offers tailored solutions, from writing standard operating procedures to establishing traceability systems that protect both businesses and consumers.

## **States Like Maryland and Connecticut Set Higher Bars for Cannabis Food Safety Standards**

A few states are beginning to set stricter precedents. Maryland requires cannabis manufacturers to pass GMP audits and comply with the Code of Federal Regulations, while Connecticut enforces pharmaceutical-level standards for certain cannabis products.

However, these examples remain the exception rather than the rule. The majority of states still lack comprehensive food safety requirements, leaving consumers vulnerable to contamination risks.

## **Industry Voices Call for a Shift From Compliance to Responsibility in Cannabis Manufacturing**

Dave Owens of Proper Brands, a CSQ-certified company in Missouri, views food safety as a moral and business imperative rather than a regulatory checkbox.

Owens also believes that consumers play a role in driving change by demanding higher standards from the brands they support. “Hold companies you’re doing business with accountable. Ask them about their food safety and quality management system,” he urged.

## **Consumer Trust and Industry Longevity Depend on Safer Production Practices**

For Wood, Millard, and Owens, the message is clear: the cannabis industry cannot afford to treat food safety as optional. Inconsistent practices put public health at risk, destabilize consumer trust, and jeopardize the long-term viability of legal markets.

The experts argue that third-party certification and Good Manufacturing Practices provide a path forward for edibles makers. By embedding food safety into core business values, cannabis companies can avoid costly recalls, protect their reputations, and build consumer confidence.

# **Building a Safer Future for Cannabis Edibles Through Third Party Certification**

As cannabis edibles continue to grow in popularity, the risks of contamination, recalls, and lawsuits increase without stronger safeguards. Experts stress that third party certification is not just a regulatory add on but a business necessity for an industry still striving to earn mainstream trust.

By prioritizing food safety now, cannabis manufacturers can protect consumers, strengthen their brands, and ensure the industry's long-term success.

Email: [info@cannabisriskmanager.com](mailto:info@cannabisriskmanager.com) | Phone: +415-226-4060

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