

Retail Readiness Checklist for Kansas Food Businesses

A resource developed in partnership between
K-State Extension Community Food Systems and
Kansas Department of Agriculture
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Acronym Key

Kansas SBDC: Kansas Small Business Development Center

KDA: Kansas Department of Agriculture

KVAFL: Kansas Value Added Foods Lab

Phase	Requirement	Complete	Description	Category	Applies to	Contact for support
Business development	EDI (Electronic Data Interchange)		The ability to exchange orders, invoices, and other documents electronically with retailers using standardized formats. Many mid- to large-scale retailers require EDI to streamline purchasing and inventory systems.	Electronic / Financial Systems	Vendors	Distributor or retail partner requirements; GS1 US standards; NetWork Kansas advisors
Business development	EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer)		Receiving payments directly to your bank account rather than by check. Most retailers pay vendors via EFT, so having this set up ensures timely, trackable payments.	Electronic / Financial Systems	Vendors	Your commercial bank; Kansas SBDC (business finance guidance)
Business development	Liability insurance		Insurance that protects your business if a product causes harm or injury. Retailers typically require proof of product liability coverage before they will carry your products.	Insurance	Vendors	Local commercial insurance agents; Kansas SBDC referrals; Food Liability Insurance Program (FLIP) or similar programs
Business development	Business name		The official name under which you sell your products. Consistent use across licenses, labels, banking, and marketing ensures legal clarity and brand recognition.	Legal / Structural	Vendors	Kansas Secretary of State Business Center; Kansas SBDC
Business development	Business registration		Formal registration of your business with the state (e.g., LLC, sole proprietorship, corporation). Retailers need confirmation that you are a legitimate, authorized business entity.	Legal / Structural	Vendors	Kansas Secretary of State (business filing portal); Kansas SBDC
Business development	EIN / Tax ID		A federal Employer Identification Number issued by the IRS. Retailers use this to set you up as a vendor and for tax reporting purposes.	Legal / Structural	Vendors	IRS EIN application portal; Kansas SBDC
Business development	Commercial bank account		A business-only bank account separate from personal finances. Retailers require this for payments and it supports accurate bookkeeping and financial professionalism.	Legal / Structural	Vendors	Local banks or credit unions; NetWork Kansas referral network; Kansas SBDC

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Product development	Develop marketing plan		A defined strategy for how you position, price, promote, and sell your product. Retail buyers want to see that you understand your target customer and how you will drive sales. Consider sampling, etc. (especially for small independent retailers)	Marketing	Vendors	Kansas SBDC marketing advisors; NetWork Kansas
Product development	Nutritional facts panel		A standardized nutrition label showing calories and nutrients per serving. Most packaged foods sold at retail must include this to comply with FDA labeling regulations. Required for products with over \$50k in sales	Labeling Compliance	Products	KVAFL
Product development	Ingredient statement in descending order		A complete list of ingredients ordered by weight from most to least. This is required by law and helps consumers and retailers assess allergens and product composition.	Labeling Compliance	Products	KVAFL
Product development	Certifications		Any relevant verified claims (e.g., organic, gluten-free, kosher, halal, non-GMO). Certifications can expand market access and meet specific retailer or customer requirements.	Labeling Compliance	Products	KVAFL; KDA (organic program guidance); From the Land of Kansas trademark program
Product development	UPC barcode		A scannable Universal Product Code unique to each product size or variation. Retailers rely on UPCs for checkout, inventory tracking, and sales data.	Labeling Compliance	Products	KDA From the Land of Kansas program (official barcode provider); GS1 US (official barcode provider)
Product development	Expiration / "best by" dates		A clearly marked date indicating product freshness or shelf life. Retailers require this to manage inventory and ensure food safety and quality.	Labeling Compliance	Products	KVAFL (shelf-life testing)
Product development	Food Processor or Food Establishment License		The required state or local license for producing packaged food for sale. Retailers must verify that products come from an inspected and approved facility.	Food Safety	Vendors	KDA Food Safety & Lodging Program
Product development	Food safety training		Complete appropriate food safety training—such as ServSafe or Better Process Control School—based on product type and production method to ensure safe handling, processing, and regulatory compliance.	Food Safety	Vendors	KVAFL, K-State Extension Community Food Systems team
Product development	Process Authority Letter		Obtain a Process Authority Letter for each product produced, verifying formulation and processing methods meet food safety standards.	Food Safety	Products	KVAFL

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Product development	Product name		The specific name of the item as it appears on packaging and in retailer systems. Clear naming avoids confusion and helps buyers and consumers quickly understand the product.	Product ID / Classification	Products	Kansas SBDC (marketing guidance); KDA From the Land of Kansas program
Product development	Product category		The retail category your product fits into (e.g., salsa, granola, frozen entrée). Buyers are organized by category, so correct placement is essential for pitching and shelf location.	Product ID / Classification	Products	KVAFL; Kansas SBDC (marketing coaching);
Product development	Product description		A concise explanation of what the product is, key attributes, and differentiators. Retailers use this in product databases, online listings, and shelf tags.	Product ID / Classification	Products	Kansas SBDC (marketing coaching); NetWork Kansas advisors
Product development	Product photography		High-quality images of the product and packaging. Buyers and marketing teams rely on these for line reviews, websites, and promotional materials.	Marketing	Products	KDA From the Land of Kansas program
Product development	Graphic design/ Branding for product		The visual identity of your packaging, including logo, colors, typography, and layout. Strong branding communicates professionalism and helps products stand out on shelf.	Marketing	Products	Canva free version or similar design tools; commercial graphic design firm
Wholesale development	Shelf-ready packaging		Packaging that protects the product and is ready for direct retail display. Durable, attractive packaging reduces handling for retailers and improves shelf appeal. Cases configured for easy stocking. Producers should consider: how many units per case; how many facings on the shelf?	Packaging	Products	Kansas SBDC
Wholesale development	PLU / SKU		Internal retailer codes used to track and manage inventory for each product. You may assign SKUs, but retailers often create their own for ordering and stocking.	Product ID / Classification	Products	GS1 US (barcode & product ID system); Kansas SBDC (inventory systems coaching)
Wholesale development	Sell size specifications		The exact size or weight of the unit sold at retail (e.g., 12 oz jar). Buyers need consistent sizing to compare products and set pricing. Case pack, case weight, individual size, unit of measure	Product ID / Classification	Products	KVAFL (packaging + shelf life testing)
Wholesale development	Shipping (per case) info		Details on how many units are packed per case and case dimensions/weight. This supports retailer logistics, ordering quantities, and freight planning. Gross Weight, Net Weight, Case Length, Case Width, Case Height	Product ID / Classification	Products	Kansas SBDC (operations/logistics advising); NetWork Kansas mentors

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Wholesale development	Sell sheets for each SKU		A one-page product info sheet with image, description, pricing, pack size, and key attributes. Buyers use sell sheets for evaluation, internal approval, and store communication.	Sales collateral	Vendors	Kansas SBDC (marketing materials); Canva free version or similar design tools
Wholesale development	Category pitch		A tailored explanation of how your product fits and performs within a retailer's category. A strong pitch shows market awareness and why your product will sell in their stores. Why their product fits retailer's assortment, what sets their product apart	Sales collateral	Vendors	Kansas SBDC (retail sales coaching); KDA From the Land of Kansas program
Wholesale development	Reliable production capacity		The ability to consistently produce enough product to meet demand. Retailers need assurance you can keep shelves stocked without interruptions.	Supply Chain / Fulfillment	Vendors	Kansas SBDC (retail sales coaching)
Wholesale development	Defined order minimums, lead times		Clear requirements for smallest order size and time needed to fulfill orders. Buyers rely on this to plan purchasing and inventory cycles.	Supply Chain / Fulfillment	Vendors	Kansas SBDC (business planning); NetWork Kansas advisors
Wholesale development	Distribution strategy		How product moves from you to stores (direct delivery, distributor, warehouse). Retailers need to know logistics and who handles ordering and transport. Self-ship vs. third-party distributor, broker	Supply Chain / Fulfillment	Vendors	KDA From the Land of Kansas program (market connections); Kansas SBDC (operations planning); distributor partners or third-party logistics companies
Wholesale development	Pallet configuration		How cases are stacked on a pallet for shipping (cases per layer, layers per pallet). Standardized pallets improve warehouse efficiency and freight compatibility. Pallet TI & HI, Total Cases per pallet	Supply Chain / Fulfillment	Products	Kansas SBDC (operations planning); distributor partners or third-party logistics companies
Wholesale development	Warehouse info		Details on where product is stored or shipped from, including distributor warehouses if used. Retailers require this for routing, compliance, and receiving. Temperature Range, COO, Seasonality	Supply Chain / Fulfillment	Products	KDA business development resources; NetWork Kansas Impact Investment Center
Wholesale development	Cost information		Your wholesale price, suggested retail price, and margin structure. Buyers evaluate profitability and price competitiveness before authorizing a product. MSRP, Regular Wholesale Cost, F.O.B. Cost, Delivered Cost	Supply Chain / Fulfillment	Products	Kansas SBDC; NetWork Kansas Impact Investment Center

Resources for Selling Food Products Wholesale in Kansas

Kansas State University

Community Food Systems Team, Kansas State University Extension

A food business navigator can meet with you to discuss your business goals. You will be introduced to resources to support your business at the time you need them.



Kansas Value-Added Foods Lab

This facility offers services like product development, technical assistance, and product testing to ensure food businesses' products are safe and up to standard.



K-State Meat Science Lab

Laboratories housed within the Animal Science & Industry Department provide processors many resources from development to analysis of meat products.



Direct to Consumer Guide

This publication identifies the regulations you must meet to sell your products direct to consumer and what you need to do if you are going to sell wholesale.



Food Labeling for Kansas Food Producers

This fact sheet assists food producers in quickly understanding correct food labeling procedures to meet federal guidelines.



Kansas Department of Agriculture

Food Safety and Lodging

Promotes public safety by regulating the production and sale of food products in Kansas. This link provides information on licensing requirements, food safety and food processing.



From the Land of Kansas Program

From the Land of Kansas offers benefits and support in online marketing, e-commerce, discounts for food testing, low cost UPC codes and more. Membership is free.



Food Labeling Information

Detailed information to explain food label guidance with federal guidelines.



Incubator Kitchen Resource Guide

Use this guide to locate a KDA-approved shared-use commercial kitchen near you.



Kansas Small Business Development Center

Assists with the growth of Kansas small businesses by providing free one-to-one advising services. Become a client at no cost.



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