

Advice to businesses selling food online

This factsheet aims to help businesses who sell food online understand their obligations under food law – including the need to register as a food business.

Registering as a food business

If you are selling food online it is a legal requirement to register your business with your local authority 28 days before you intend to trade. If you are already trading and have not registered you need to do so as soon as possible. Registering your business is free of charge.

The registration form requires basic details of your food business activities and the address(es) where you carry out food operations. This would also include your office, even though you may not physically handle any food products.

Once you are registered you may be inspected by your local authority. You can find out more about inspections here:

www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/hygieneratings/food-law-inspections

What is your responsibility as a food business operator?

You are responsible for making sure that the food you sell or supply is safe and meets all applicable legal requirements. Under EU law [Regulation \(EC\) No 178/2002](#), you must ensure that:

- the food you sell or supply is safe (it is fit for human consumption and not injurious to health)
- you are able to identify the businesses from whom you have obtained food, ingredients or food-producing animals and the businesses you have supplied with products. You must be able to produce this information on demand. This is known as traceability.
- unsafe food is withdrawn from sale or recalled from consumers if it has already been sold. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) and local authority must be notified.
- labelling, advertising and presentation of food do not mislead consumers.

You can find links to FSA Guidance here:

www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/regulation/foodlaw

www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/startingup

What is the best approach to make sure that the food is safe?

You should apply [Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point \(HACCP\)](#) principles, which requires carrying out a simple risk assessment of what your business does. [Regulation \(EC\) No. 852/2004](#) sets out the basic hygiene requirements for businesses, including the need for a food safety management system based on the principles of HACCP. If you do not handle or transport food you will only need to have very simple procedures and records, which includes what to do in the event of a food incident / recall. Read the FSA's [food incident guidance](#).

What additional rules are there for selling food online?

You must:

- ensure that food is safe when it is delivered to consumers
- make the same level of information available online as on the food labelling to the consumer - **before** the purchase is made.
- ensure that the food business's legal name and address are provided on the website. You can provide these on the 'Contact Us' page.

You can find out more about the rules which apply to all products (not just food) when you sell online, including information requirements and cancellation rights here:

www.businesscompanion.info/en/quick-guides/distance-sales/consumer-contracts-distance-sales

What does compliance look like?

Food must be:

- safe to eat
- hygienically made, packaged, transported and stored
- what it says it is
- labelled correctly
- made with the right ingredients.

Businesses must have:

- registered with the local authority for all its activities
- a food safety management system based on HACCP principles and traceability
- A 'HACCP aware' person

Further information can be found here:

www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/guidancenotes/hygguid/generalfoodlaw

Good Practice Advice

- use only reputable and trusted suppliers
- stay informed, for example by becoming a member of a Trade Association and / or having regular training on food law and HACCP principles
- gain local authority help through the Home Authority or Primary Authority scheme. See here for more information – <https://primaryauthorityregister.info/par/index.php/home>

For more information on legal requirements and good practice advice, please see 'Selling and buying food online – Questions and Answers'.