Food supplements

What food supplements are and what you need to do as a business to sell them.

What a food supplement is

A food supplement is defined in EU law as 'any food the purpose of which is to supplement the normal diet and which is a concentrated source of a vitamin or mineral or other substance with a nutritional or physiological effect, alone or in combination and is sold in dose form'.

Food supplements include:

- vitamins
- minerals
- amino acids

In the UK, food supplements are required to be regulated as foods and are subject to the provisions of general food law.

Registration

To sell food supplements you must register as a Food Business Operator (FBO) with your local authority.

Selling your products

It is your responsibility to ensure that food supplements you sell are safe for consumption. There are certain things you should do to make sure they are safe.

Using a reputable supplier

Your supplier should be registered as a business with their local authority and provide fully referenced invoices and receipts.

Don’t buy supplements over the internet unless you are confident the supplier is reputable.

Beware of counterfeit products, particularly if you are buying products over the internet when the product price is cheaper than from other suppliers.

Keeping records

Keep records so you can identify the business you bought food supplements from and who you sold them to. You must also keep documents like invoices and delivery notes and produce these documents if they are requested by enforcement authorities.

Labelling

Make sure the food supplements you sell are labelled correctly. If they are not, contact you supplier and arrange for return of the products or do not accept them in the first place.
How food supplements should be labelled

The product must be labelled as ‘food supplement’ and not ‘dietary supplement’.

The product label must include:

- the name and address of the manufacturer, packer or importer into the European Union
- a list of ingredients, including common allergens which must be emphasised
- conditions for use, including information on the recommended daily dosage and a warning not to exceed this
- storage instructions including a statement that the product should be stored out of the reach of young children
- a ‘use by’ or ‘best before’ date
- a nutritional declaration containing the names and amounts of the vitamins, minerals or other substances such as amino acids, fatty acids or plant extracts, that form the primary part of the product
- a statement that food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a varied diet

This information must be either on:

- the packaging
- a label attached to the packaging
- a label which is clearly visible through the packaging

Importing supplements

If you import and sell goods from countries outside the EU, you are legally responsible for all aspects of those goods, including composition, safety and labelling of the products.

Legal requirements

In addition to these requirements, you must comply with specific food labelling and supplements legislation.

The Food Information Regulations 2014 and The Food Supplements (England) Regulations 2003
The Food Information (Wales) Regulations 2014 and The Food Supplements (Wales) Regulations 2003
The Food Information Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and The Food Supplements Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003