

# Managing food safety

Guidance on how to manage food safety in your business.

Food safety management is about complying with food hygiene and food standards. You must ensure that you have food safety management procedures in place. You also need to consider:

- the suppliers you use
- how you trace the food you buy, and the food you sell to other businesses
- how you transport food

## Managing food safety procedures

You must put in place food safety management procedures based on the principles of [Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point](#) (HACCP).

HACCP is a system that helps you identify potential food hazards and introduce procedures to make sure those hazards are removed or reduced to an acceptable level.

These procedures will help you produce and sell food that is safe to eat, providing you:

- keep up-to-date documents and records relating to your procedures
- regularly review your procedures to ensure they reflect what you produce or how you work

To help you put your food safety management procedures in place, we provide information packs for small businesses.

[Safer Food, Better Business \(SFBB\) information packs](#)  
[Food safety management guides for caterers and retailers in Northern Ireland](#)

Food safety procedures may not be necessary if processes in your business are very simple. In this case, you can comply with the legal requirement by following good hygiene practice. For more information, contact your [local authority](#).

## Food hygiene

Food businesses and handlers must ensure that their practices minimise the risk of harm to the consumer. Part of complying with food safety is managing [food hygiene](#) and [food standards](#) to make sure that the food you serve is safe to eat.

## Packaging and labelling

The law sets out what is required to be shown on food [packaging and labelling](#). Labelling is regulated to protect consumers who should have the correct information to make confident and informed food choices based on diet, allergies, personal taste or cost.

You can find additional information using the [Business Companion](#) website, which provides in-depth guides on what the law says on preparing and selling food, including hygiene, composition, labelling and packaging.

## Food allergens

To keep your food allergic customers safe, you must follow the allergen information rules by:

- providing accurate allergen information
- handling and managing food allergens adequately in the kitchen

You can find our allergen advice in:

- [allergen guidance for industry](#)
- [allergen guidance for manufacturers](#)

## Food additives

If you use an additive in food, you must:

- only use an [approved additive](#)
- only use it if it is [approved for use in that food](#)

## Suppliers

It is important to use a reputable supplier to ensure the products you buy have been stored, processed and handled safely. When food is delivered, you must always check that:

- it is chilled and frozen food is cold enough
- the packaging is not damaged
- it is what you ordered

If you do not think that the food delivered has been handled safely or is poor quality, don't use it and contact your supplier immediately.

You can find more information on suppliers and contractors in our [Safer food, better business for caterers pack](#).

## Traceability

Traceability rules help keep track of food in the supply chain. They ensure that efficient and accurate withdrawals and recalls of unsafe foods from the market can be made in the event of any food safety problems.

You must keep records of:

- all the suppliers that provide you with food or any food ingredients
- the businesses you supply with food or food ingredients

The records should include:

- name and address of supplier
- name and address of business you are supplying
- type of and quantity of products
- dates of transaction and of delivery

You can also record:

- batch number
- invoices
- receipts of food products purchased

Often this information will be on the invoice.

All your records need to be kept up-to-date and be available for inspections at all times. They will be checked if there is a safety problem with food you have sold. The [General Food Law Regulation \(EC\) 178/2002](#) does not specify how long traceability records should be kept, although this may be required by sector specific legislation.

## Food safety inspections and enforcement

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing food hygiene laws. Authorised officers have the right to enter and [inspect your premises](#) at any reasonable time without making an appointment. Authorised officers can take [enforcement action](#) to protect the public, such as seizing foods suspected to be unfit for human consumption.

## Product withdrawal and recall

A food incident is where concerns about actual or suspected threats to the safety, quality or integrity of food and feed require intervention to protect consumers.

### Withdrawal

When you know or suspect that food or feed you have supplied is either harmful to health, unfit for people to eat or does not meet legal requirements, you will need to withdraw it from sale.

### Recall

The product could be recalled if it has already reached customers.

Customers should be informed to return or dispose of the product.

You must immediately tell your [local authority](#) if you need to withdraw or recall your products.

You can find more information on [product withdrawal and recall](#) in our Safer food, better business packs.

## Training

If you are responsible for developing and maintaining a business's food safety management procedures, you must have had suitable training on food safety and hygiene to do this. Skills can be learned by:

- training while working
- self-study
- relevant previous experience.

You must make sure that any member of staff who handles food is trained in food hygiene and safety, including [allergens](#), before they start work.

It is a good idea to [keep a record of any training you or your staff have done](#), so you will be able to show this to authorised officers when they visit your premises.

- Our [SFBB information packs](#) can help to train you and your staff.
- We provide free online [Allergen training](#) and [Traceability training](#) for businesses.
- You can also get in touch with your [local authority](#) about food hygiene courses.

**Remember:** When you start a new food business or take over an existing business, you must [register with your local authority](#).