

Starting a Food Business in the Home

Starting a food business from home can be a rewarding business venture but is only for those committed to maintaining the highest level of hygiene and food safety. Producing food in your home for many people to eat is a serious undertaking and is not the same as cooking for the family. You will be entering into a highly regulated business area with serious legal obligations. Food business operators are legally responsible for producing food that is safe.

The information in this factsheet details the legal requirements, pitfalls and risks associated with operating a food business in the home. It is recommended that you read through the detailed information relevant to starting a food business which is available on our website on <https://www.fsai.ie/business-advice/starting-a-food-business>

Food Hygiene Legislation

Operating a food business from home does not exempt your business from the requirements of the food hygiene legislation (Regulation EC 852/2004). This legislation sets out requirements for:

- **Registration** of the business with the Health Service Executive (HSE)
- **Hygiene** rules to be complied with
- **Training**
- Food safety management system based on the principles of **HACCP** (Hazard analysis and critical control points) to ensure the production of safe food
- **Traceability** systems and **recall** procedures in the event of unsafe food being placed on the market

Where food of animal origin, e.g. meat, poultry, eggs, fish, unpasteurised milk, is being processed, you may also need to comply with the legislation setting down specific hygiene rules for foods of animal origin (Regulation 853/2004) and in some cases, the business may require **approval** by the HSE.

You should contact your local HSE office as soon as possible to check if your home is suitable for the intended food business activities. Contact details for local HSE offices are available at <https://www.fsai.ie/business-advice/starting-a-food-business/register/hse-contact-details>

Additional Legislation

Compliance with additional legislation may be required depending on the type of product which you intend to make, e.g. labelling, additives, marketing standards for eggs, nutrition and health claims etc.

Full details of all food legislation can be found on our website at <https://www.fsai.ie/enforcement-and-legislation/legislation/food-legislation>

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Possible Pitfalls when Operating a Food Business from Home

Operating a food business from home can present specific problems that you should be aware of.

- 1) Food can become contaminated due to:
 - Normal domestic activities – there must be proper segregation of business and domestic food preparation and activities
 - Poor hygiene – not washing hands properly or frequently enough, particularly after using the toilet, handling refuse etc., dirty cloths and tea towels, poor cleaning practices, dirty equipment/utensils etc
 - Working when ill, particularly when suffering from vomiting/diarrhoea, infected skin wounds, flu, coughing and infections of the mouth, throat, eyes or ears
 - Changing/feeding babies in food preparation areas
 - People or pets entering food preparation areas
 - Facilities being too small
- 2) Production of too much food for the size of the area.
- 3) Insufficient/unsuitable refrigerator space to keep food chilled.
- 4) Lack of equipment necessary to cool food fast enough after cooking.
- 5) The type of food being produced or the process involved presents too high a risk to take place safely in a domestic kitchen.
- 6) Food may be supplied to a vulnerable group, e.g. babies and young children, pregnant women and the elderly.

Food labelling

Food which is prepacked by the manufacturer before being brought for sale at a farmers market or other food stall is subject to the full labelling rules and all of the mandatory information, must then appear on the product label. More information on what is required to be declared on the label is available in our factsheet 'Food Information for Consumers at Markets Operated by Country Markets Limited' which is available at: <https://www.fsai.ie/publications/food-information-for-consumers-at-markets-operated>. These rules also apply where it is intended to sell your produce in local retail premises.

Other Useful FSAI Publications

- Factsheet: business start-up information
- Food Information on Prepacked Foods
- Allergen Information for Non-Prepacked Foods
- Country Markets' Guide to Good Hygiene Practice
- Information on Nutrition and Health Claims
- Guidance Note No.29 - The Use of Food Marketing Terms

If after reading this factsheet and suggested publications, you have any questions, you can email our Advice Line on info@fsai.ie

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