

Key regulations

There are a number of key pieces of legislation which underpin the work we do.

Food Standards Act 1999

The main purpose of the [Food Standards Act 1999](#) is to establish us as the Food Standards Agency.

It is there to provide us with functions and powers and to transfer certain functions in relation to food safety and standards.

The Act was introduced in the House of Commons in 1999.

It sets out our main goal to protect public health in relation to food. It gives us the power to act in the consumer's interest at any stage in the food production and supply chain.

Food Safety Act 1990

England and Wales

[The Food Safety Act 1990](#) (as amended) provides the framework for all food legislation in the England, Wales and Scotland.

The main responsibilities for all food businesses covered by the Act are to ensure that:

- businesses do not include anything in food, remove anything from food or treat food in any way which means it would be damaging to the health of people eating it
- the food businesses serve or sell is of the nature, substance or quality which consumers would expect
- the food is labelled, advertised and presented in a way that is not false or misleading

Important

References to EU legislation in FSA guidance

Directly applicable EU legislation no longer applies in GB. EU legislation retained when the UK exited the EU became assimilated law on 1 January 2024, published on legislation.gov.uk. References to any legislation in FSA guidance with 'EU' or 'EC' in the title (e.g. Regulation (EC) 178/2002) should now be regarded as assimilated law where applicable to GB. References to 'Retained EU Law' or 'REUL' should now be regarded as references to assimilated law.

For businesses moving goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, information on [the Windsor Framework](#) is available on GOV.UK.

The Windsor Framework was adopted by the UK and EU on 24 March 2023. The Framework provides a unique set of arrangements to support the flow of agrifood retail products from Great Britain (GB) to Northern Ireland (NI), allowing GB standards for public health in relation to food, marketing and organics to apply for pre-packed retail goods moved via the NI Retail Movement

Scheme (NIRMS).

England and Wales

PDF

[View Food Safety Act 1990 - a guide for food businesses as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (531.99 KB)

The Food Safety Order 1991

Northern Ireland

PDF

[View Northern Ireland Food Safety Order 1991 business guide as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (301.5 KB)

General Food Law

Whether you work in a food business or you are a consumer interested in food law, there are general requirements that you should know about.

This overview covers the main legislation on the following areas:

- food imports and exports
- safety
- traceability
- labelling
- product withdrawals and recalls

[General Food Law](#)

Codes of Practice

[Browse codes of practice for food and animal feed](#)

Food Information Regulation

The domestic Food Information Regulations 2014 came into force on the 14 July 2014 and enables local authorities to enforce assimilated Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 on food information to consumers (FIC Regulations).

Businesses need to provide allergen information if the food contains any of the [14 allergens](#) as listed in the 'FIC regulations'. [Guidance for food businesses on providing allergen information and best practice for handling allergens.](#)

A backstop criminal offence will be in place where there is failure to comply with an improvement notice, with an offender being liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5. Criminal offences will continue for the contravention of certain provisions, namely mislabelling of foods containing allergens because a failure to comply with the allergen provisions may result in a risk to consumer health and safety.

The regulations take up certain derogations and national flexibilities permitted by the FIC namely:

- derogation from the need to give mandatory information for milk and milk products in glass bottles intended for reuse. Taking up this derogation maintains the current exemption.
- derogation from minced meat composition standards on fat and collagen to meat protein ratios in the FIC. Taking up this derogation allows businesses to continue to supply the UK market with traditional minced meat provided it is sold under a national mark.
- to retain the requirement for the name of the food to be given for foods sold non-prepacked.
- to retain the requirement for a quantitative indication of the meat content for meat products sold non-prepacked.
- to introduce the specific means by which allergen information provided on a mandatory basis for non-prepacked food has to be given.
- update other food labelling and standards legislation to reflect the FIC Regulation and the introduction of the Food Information Regulations 2014.

Northern Ireland

Our guide for businesses sets out the roles and responsibilities under the Order, as well as details of its enforcement.

Managers of large and medium-sized businesses are to read the guide in detail. Staff will need to know the main responsibilities outlined in the introduction.

Small businesses should also be aware of these responsibilities and can use the rest of the guide for reference about the Order.

[The Food Safety Order 1991 legislation](#)