



# Food Safety Guidance for Farmers' Market Traders



## HOW THIS LEAFLET WILL HELP YOU

This leaflet will explain how to meet the food safety laws that apply to you while trading at a farmers' market. It covers the basic areas that apply to typical farmers' market stalls. To make it readable and straightforward to understand, it is not a detailed guide but you should find information here about how to obtain further advice on some of the more complicated food safety issues.

Farmers' markets are the subject of routine checking by food safety officers from your local Environmental Health and Trading Standards Department, who may visit you on the day a market is held. In addition, the farm or other premises from which you operate may also be subject to inspection.

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## 1. THE RULES OF HYGIENE - CONTROLLING HAZARDS



The law requires you to identify possible hazards to food safety, know which of these is actually important for the type of food that you prepare or sell and to provide suitable controls to stop problems occurring. While this can be complicated for some businesses, simple measures are all that is required for most traders at a farmers' market. The most important of these are described below.

### i. Transportation

- Food transported to a market must be wrapped, covered or placed in suitable containers to prevent contamination. Vehicles and containers should be kept clean and in good repair and the food should be kept separate from other items. For example, if you are accustomed to transporting farm dogs, game birds or containers of agricultural diesel in the back of your LandRover, you should think about how you can avoid tainting or direct contamination of fruit and vegetables.
- Simple cardboard boxes and paper-lined crates are fine for most agricultural produce but you will need higher grade materials, such as metal or plastic crates, for bakery products and meats.
- Some foods must be kept cold (below 8 °C) to prevent the growth of dangerous bacteria. These include soft or semi-hard cheeses, most other dairy products, cooked meat and vegetable products, most smoked or cured meat and fish and shellfish. Insulated containers with icepacks and a thermometer are usually sufficient and the temperature must be checked from time to time (and preferably written down in a log book). Larger volume traders should consider using refrigerated vehicles.

## ii. Preparation

- The surface that you lay out or prepare food on must be smooth and impervious so that it can be thoroughly cleaned. If you are using wooden tables, you must provide plastic sheeting or other suitable covering material.
- You will need to wash and dry your hands from time to time and if facilities are not provided on site, you must bring your own. For stallholders selling open foods, such as meats, or high risk unwrapped foods such as cooked meats, dairy products and seafoods, there must be handwashing facilities at the stall. These should include a supply of hot water, towels, bowl, soap and preferably a nailbrush. For hot water, insulated flasks should be sufficient in most cases.
- If you are using knives or other serving implements you will need washing facilities for these, which must not be the same as those used for handwashing - separate bowls or sinks must be used.
- Wear clean protective overclothing while handling unwrapped food.

## iii. Display and Service

- To avoid possible contamination, food must not be placed directly onto the floor. It is best to keep all unwrapped food off the ground by at least 45cm.
- Make sure that high risk and low risk foods are well separated- for example, keep raw foods away from cooked foods. The high risk foods described in ii above should be protected from the public touching, coughing or sneezing in the display area.
- Check the temperature of chilled foods from time to time and preferably keep a record of this in a logbook. Make sure you know the correct temperature for the food that you are selling.
- Regularly wipe down surfaces with a clean (preferably disposable) cloth using a food grade cleaner/disinfectant.
- If the market does not have refuse services, make sure you have sacks or containers for waste food and water.

## iv. Cooking

Raw ingredients and cooked food must be adequately separated to avoid cross-contamination. Good hand washing facilities must be available. Food must be thoroughly cooked to 75°C or above. A food probe thermometer with food-safe disinfectant wipes should be used to confirm this.

## iv. Training and basic hygiene measures

It is not obligatory in law for all market traders to have attended courses on training in food hygiene but you must at least be aware of the basic principles that apply to the safe handling and preparation of food. However, if you have no experience of running a retail food stall or business, or if you are manufacturing food at home or from other premises, you will need some specific training. In any case, food hygiene training courses are always strongly recommended for anyone involved in the running of a food business. Indeed, you may find that your local market will require evidence of such training before allowing you to join. If you are in any doubt as to what is required, your local Environmental Health Department will be happy to advise you.

For basic retailing operations, such as for selling fruit and vegetables, or for bakery products that do not contain meat or cream, the following advice should be of help.

- Keep yourself clean and wear protective clothing.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly before handling food, after using the toilet, handling raw food or waste and after every break.
- If you have a skin, nose or throat problem or an infected wound, do not handle unwrapped food.
- If you have a stomach upset, do not handle food for at least 48hrs after you are free of symptoms
- Ensure that cuts, spots or sores are covered with a brightly coloured waterproof plaster.
- Do not smoke, eat or drink where open food is handled.
- Clean as you go - keep all equipment and surfaces clean and disinfected.
- Avoid unnecessary handling of food.

### **Food Safety Management System**

All food businesses must prepare documentation which explains what food safety hazards are relevant to their operation and how these will be controlled and monitored. This documentation is called a food safety management system. If you are handling low risk food such as cakes, preserves or vegetables this documentation will be very simple. Suffolk Food Liaison Group have prepared a low risk food safety management template which is suitable for these types of businesses. Contact your local Environmental Health department to obtain a copy. If you are handling high risk foods then the recommended system is the Food Standards Agency's Safer Food Better Business pack. You can obtain a free copy by calling 0845 606 0667.



## **2. DO I NEED TO BE REGISTERED?**

There are many types of legal requirements in food safety legislation that involve licensing, approval or registration. As these all have their own distinct legal meaning, despite being at first sight rather similar, the whole area can be confusing for all concerned. This section will deal with the registration of food businesses under EC Regulation 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs, which is a straightforward procedure for letting your local authority know that you are running a food business.

You may come across formal approvals (near enough to licences for most people) for premises that cut up or joint wholesale raw meat, or produce meat, dairy or fish products. These will be dealt with later.

Registration involves contacting your local authority for a form which you fill in and return. There is no fee and no 'food test' to pass. For market stalls, you do not need to register each market site, only the premises where you normally keep the stall and its materials overnight. In most cases, this will be your farm or smallholding.

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### 3. LABELLING, WEIGHTS AND INGREDIENTS

This is an area that is largely enforced by Trading Standards Officers, except for Use-By dates where Environmental Health staff have powers as well. It can be a very complex subject and **if in any doubt about anything described below**, contact Trading Standards at Suffolk County Council for advice.

#### i. Weights and Measures

As a general rule, most loose foods such as fruit and vegetables must be sold by net weight, using approved metric weighing equipment. If food is pre-packed, the metric weight must be marked on the pack, but you can also give an additional imperial weight declaration provided it is less prominent than the metric one. Some pre-packed foodstuffs must be sold in specific quantities; these include potatoes, jams, honey, dried fruit and dried vegetables. There are also strict controls on the type of equipment you can use to weigh your products, whether this is sale to the consumer, or pre-packing the products before sale. Some goods can be packed to a minimum weight. Others will fall within the average weight system.

#### ii. Labelling

Food labelling can be very specific but as a general rule, the following advice applies:

##### **Labelling requirements for products sold loose**

If you sell products which are loose or which you have pre-packed yourself and are trading from a stall under your own name, you are caught within the 'pre-packed for direct sale' provisions. These exempt you from the full food labelling requirements.

##### **Name of the food**

The name of the food used must be sufficiently precise to inform the purchaser of the true nature of the food and to enable it to be distinguished from products with which it could be confused and if necessary include a description of its use.

What this means in practice, is that the product may have a short name, or marketing name but this must be qualified with a clear and accurate description of the product. The description will be considered the true legal name for the product.

Some products such as melons and potatoes must be labelled with their variety.

##### **Quantitative Ingredients Declaration**

If you sell any meat products, you will be required to indicate the actual percentage of meat in the product. This should be calculated at the 'mixing bowl stage' i.e. based on the recipe, not the final cooked product. It is no longer correct to give a 'minimum meat content'. For farmers' markets, this is a chance for exploiting any superior meat content of your product over those that are available in the high street.

##### **Indication of additives**

If your ingredients contain any of the following additives, these need to be declared. You can do this by stating for example, 'contains Colours and Preservatives'.

- Antioxidants
- Colours
- Flavour Enhancers
- Flavourings

- Sweeteners
- Preservatives
- Flour Treatment Agents

### **Claims**

There are other strict requirements in relation to claims you can make about the products or any of the ingredients. Should you wish to use any of the following terms, such as organic, fresh, natural, authentic, traditional, pure and other similar claims, you should contact Trading Standards for advice on using these claims.

### **Allergenic Ingredients**

You are *not* required to list allergenic ingredients on your labels, but you should be aware if any of your products contain allergens. This will be important if any of your customers ask for this information. You might want to consider having a file at your stall with a list of the ingredients for each of your products which you, or any staff on your stall can reference. You can contact Trading Standards for a list of allergenic ingredients.

### **Declaration of net weight**

This is required to be given on the packaging in 'grams' or 'kilograms' or with the permitted abbreviations 'g' or 'kg'. Please note, no other abbreviations are permitted.

You should be aware, that you are not permitted to use household scales to determine the net weight. You must use scales which have been 'stamped' as fit for use for trade and which are suitable for your purposes. If you are not sure if the scales you are using are suitable, Trading Standards will be able to advise you.

### **Full Labelling requirements**

If you sell pre-packed products which you have not manufactured and packed yourself, you will need to comply with the full labelling requirements. These are briefly outlined below.

- **Name of the food**

The name of the food used must be sufficiently precise to inform the purchaser of the true nature of the food and to enable it to be distinguished from products with which it could be confused and if necessary include a description of its use.

The name of the food must also be accompanied by an indication of its physical treatment, such as 'pasteurised' or 'previously frozen'.

- **Ingredients List**

The ingredients are required to be listed in descending order of weight determined as at the time of use in preparation of the food. Ingredients that make up less than 2% of the final product are still required to be listed but are permitted to be given their generic name (for example herbs and spices).

- **Compound Ingredients**

These are ingredients, which are not single ingredient foods, i.e. they are made up of other foods. All compound ingredients need to be named together with the ingredients they contain.

- **Quantitative Ingredients Declarations (QUID)**

There is a requirement to give an indication of the percentage of an ingredient in the product (as determined at the 'mixing bowl' stage) if it is:

- Featured in the name of the food (and governs consumer choice when considering whether to purchase the product)
- Emphasised on the labelling in pictures, words or graphics

You are exempt from giving a QUID for any products, which are used in quantities in less than 2% *and* are used as a flavouring.

You will always need to QUID the meat in a meat product.

- **Country of Origin**

A statement about the country of origin should be indicated on the label if a consumer could be misled as to the true origin of the food. This will apply to Italian Sauces manufactured in the UK.

- **Specified Allergenic Ingredients**

Your products will need to be labelled with any allergens they contain. It is important also to consider the allergens in compound foods used in your products, and also where the name of the ingredient doesn't identify that it contains an allergen (e.g. cheese contains milk, or celery in seasoning mixes).

- **Appropriate durability Indication**

Depending on the nature of your products this may be a best before date or a use by date. The format of the date will depend upon the shelf life of the product. Best Before dates are mainly for foods whose quality decreases over a medium to long shelf life, such as cakes and biscuits. Use By dates are for foods which deteriorate rapidly and may end up posing a risk to health, such as chilled meat products.

- **Any storage conditions**

- **Instructions for use**

It is best practice to give cooking instructions to enable customers to make proper use of the product. These need not be complex, nor need they cover all cooking alternatives.

- **Name and address of registered office**

Products should be labelled with a name and address of either (or both) the manufacturer/ packer or the seller of the product.

- **Traceability**

For traceability legislation, you are required to demonstrate where your products are from, and where these products are supplied to. Traceability must cover all your food products, to include both meat and non-meat ingredients.

- **Declaration of net weight**

There are also specific requirements for indicating genetically modified and irradiated ingredients.

### iii. Prices

Prices must be clearly displayed, either per item or per kilogram, litre, square metre or metre as appropriate. Certain products must be sold by net weight and for these products you must display the price per kilogram. Examples include meat, fish and soft fruits sold in punnets. The price can be displayed as a list at the stall or shown directly on the product.

### iv. Business Names

It is a legal requirement to clearly display to customers, the full business name and address of the owners of the stall.

## v. Other Considerations

Some foods, such as jams and fruit juices, have specific labelling and compositional requirements. This leaflet cannot cover all aspects of the law and just to re-emphasize the advice of the opening paragraph in this section, Trading Standards Officers at Suffolk County Council will be happy to discuss the requirements in more detail with you and help you comply with the legislation.

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### 4. SELLING YOUR FARM-PRODUCED MEAT



Many aspects of the sale of meat have their own sets of rules and regulations. While there are some exceptions from these special controls, it is very important that traders are aware of what the law requires. It is a complicated and bureaucratic area and needs explaining in a little more depth than some of the other subjects in this leaflet.

#### i. Slaughtering your animals

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If you are going to supply meat to the public your animals must be slaughtered at a licensed slaughterhouse. At the slaughterhouse the animals will be checked by qualified meat inspectors to make sure that they are fit to enter the human food chain.

#### ii. Getting your meat cut for you

You may well be used to having some of your animals sent to a local slaughterhouse (if you are fortunate enough to have one) and the meat cut up there or at a local butchers before being sent back to you for your own consumption. However, you may need to think again about doing things this way if you intend to sell this meat from your own premises or stall.

If you have a local meat cutting plant that will cut your meat for you at a reasonable price, you must use it. Often, however, there is no local cutting plant or the plant is just not interested in cutting small quantities for you. In these circumstances it is acceptable for a local butcher to cut your meats at their shop. You must sell meat cut at a local butchers directly to the public, and not supply it to any other food businesses.

#### ii. Cutting up meat yourself

You may cut the meat yourself at your farm or other premises you own providing it is only going to be sold from your farmers market stall. You may not supply the meat to any other food businesses.

The advice above is not exhaustive and it is understandable that you may find even what is given here confusing! You will find a sympathetic and constructive approach from Environmental Health staff.

## 5. MANUFACTURING FOOD AT HOME FOR SALE FROM YOUR MARKET STALL



This is an area that covers everything from jams and cakes to frozen and chilled meals and meat products. Special rules and regulations can apply to some of these foods, particularly when making meat, fish and dairy products, which will include pre-packed meals and dishes. **If you do not comply with these rules, the consequences can be very serious.** It cannot be stressed enough that when thinking about starting such a business you must get advice from your local Environmental Health Department. There is really too much here to cover in any great depth in this leaflet but it can help to give a few pointers.

### i. Making low risk items such as cakes and jams

Generally these present few problems and many people safely produce a range of jams and non-dairy cakes from home. You must make sure you know about the basics of food hygiene and law and also the labelling and shelf-life requirements that apply. Before starting out, contact your local Environmental and Trading Standards department for advice.

### ii. Making high risk items such as meat, dairy and fish products

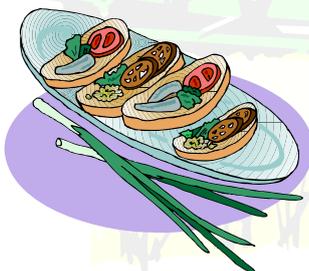
These foods are much higher risk because they support the growth of harmful bacteria and are often sold ready to eat without further cooking. A mistake in their preparation and handling can have serious consequences for public health. If you intend to produce such products which include hams, pates, ice-cream, cheeses, yoghurts and prepared foods such as meat pies, lasagne, shepherds pies etc. you must contact your local Environmental Health department for advice before you start. You will almost certainly need to undertake some formal training in food hygiene and you will be required to prepare a detailed documented food safety management system for the operation.

In addition, attractive traditional recipes, which may be perfectly safe for immediate consumption, do not always lend themselves to a production process, packaging or an easily assessable shelf life for prolonged storage.

You should note that production of these types of products is normally subject to specific legislation which requires prior approval of the premises used. The Food Standards Agency has recently confirmed that Farmers Market traders are exempt from this legislation. However if you intend to supply the food to any other businesses approval will be required.

Although this can sound quite daunting, with a little dedication it is perfectly possible to set up a business to produce these kind of products and many operate successfully from small units. Before starting out, contact your local Environmental and Trading Standards department for advice.

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## 6. GIVING AWAY FREE SAMPLES

You will want to introduce your customers to as wide a range of your foods as possible and having tasting samples available is a good way to get their attention. Bear in mind that even though you may give samples away free of charge, the law sees this transaction as a sale, and their production and handling is still subject to legal control. Samples need to be protected from contamination such as undue handling, usually either from inquisitive pets or equally inquisitive children, so ensure samples

are stored high up. If your customers have to handle your food, try and make sure they don't touch other samples on the plate - cocktail sticks or tongs help to stop this. Most importantly, don't leave food that must be chilled for safety reasons out of chill control for long periods, so keep quantities to a minimum and throw out uneaten food if it has been out of refrigeration for a long time. The law permits a maximum of four hours in most cases but it is best if high risk food is disposed of after one hour out of chill control. Bear in mind that for some foods, such as hard cheeses, temperature control is not critical to safety and longer periods are acceptable, so seek advice if in any doubt.

You may find your local market has its own conditions about food samples and they may not be permitted. This is at the discretion of the market organiser rather than any national legal requirement.

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## 7. ANIMAL ATTRACTIONS AT FARMERS MARKETS

Some farmers markets use animals as an additional attraction to the produce stalls. They can be petted, fed or just admired and in most cases these will be part of the host farm or premises and not your direct responsibility as a stallholder.

However, it is possible you may be bringing your own livestock to show to the public. Although most farmers grow up with a degree of immunity to the various bugs that can be transmitted from their animals, the same will not be true for many market visitors and they can be subject to infection. Whatever are your feelings about modern lifestyles, it is inevitable that you will be faced with children and adults whose health could be at risk. In addition, germs such as E. coli O157, which 20 years ago was virtually unheard of in this country, can cause serious illness that can be fatal in young children or cause life-long disability through kidney failure. As a result, you need to be very careful about managing any animals that you have on show.

Most local authority Environmental Health Departments should be able to give you detailed advice on animal handling at farmers' markets but some of the key elements are listed here.

- If you are bringing animals in, first make sure you have the necessary movement permits; contact a Trading Standards Officer at Suffolk County Council Trading Standards department for information.
- Make sure your animals are transported separately from your foodstuffs. The holding pen at the market must be well separated from your food stall and the animals should not have to be led to the pen past or close to other food stalls.
- If the animals are to be petted or fed, they must be supervised and you should have handwashing facilities present, including soap and towels.
- If visitors bring picnics or eat any of the food that they have bought on site, this should not be allowed to take place close to animals.
- Ensure children are supervised by adults and that children do not put fingers in their mouth or kiss the animals.

This is not an exhaustive list by any means but will give you an idea of what is required.

We hope this leaflet is of help to you. If you require any further information, please contact your local Suffolk authority from the list given below:

Babergh District Council - Food and Safety Regulation;  
Telephone: 01473 825884, email: [foodsafety@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:foodsafety@babergh.gov.uk)

Mid Suffolk District Council - Food and Safety Division  
Telephone: 01449 727208, email: [foodsafety@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:foodsafety@midsuffolk.gov.uk)

St Edmundsbury Borough Council - Environmental Health Services  
Telephone: 01284 757054, email: [env.health@stedsbc.gov.uk](mailto:env.health@stedsbc.gov.uk)

Trading Standards Department - Suffolk County Council  
Telephone: 01473 584358, email: [enquiries@tradstan.suffolkcc.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@tradstan.suffolkcc.gov.uk)

Ipswich Borough Council - Environmental Services  
Telephone: 01473 433019, email: [foodsafety@ipswich.gov.uk](mailto:foodsafety@ipswich.gov.uk)

Forest Heath District Council - Environmental Health Department  
Telephone: 01638 719210, email: [env-health@forest-heath.gov.uk](mailto:env-health@forest-heath.gov.uk)

Suffolk Coastal District Council - Environmental Services Department  
Telephone: 01394 444357, email: [foodsafetyteam@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk](mailto:foodsafetyteam@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk)

Waveney District Council - Environmental Services Division  
Telephone: 01502 523106, email: [food@waveney.gov.uk](mailto:food@waveney.gov.uk)

**Useful contacts:**

Foodskills East Anglia (Otley College)  
Telephone: 01473 785543 web: [www.otleycollege.ac.uk](http://www.otleycollege.ac.uk)

Tastes of Anglia  
Telephone: 01473 785883 web: [www.tastesofanglia.com](http://www.tastesofanglia.com)

The National Association of Farmers' Markets  
Telephone: 0845 4588420 web: [www.farmersmarkets.net](http://www.farmersmarkets.net)

Farm Retail Association  
Telephone: 0845 4588420 web: [www.farma.org.uk](http://www.farma.org.uk)

National Farmers Union  
Telephone: 024 7685 8500 web: [www.nfuonline.com](http://www.nfuonline.com)

Natural England  
Telephone: 0114 241 8920 web: [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

The Food Standards Agency  
Telephone: (helpline) 020 7276 8829 web: [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

The Country Land and Business Association  
Telephone: 020 7235 0511 web: [www.cla.org.uk](http://www.cla.org.uk)