

# FOOD SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR FARMERS' MARKET TRADERS

## How this Leaflet will help you?

This document 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 that prepare, handle or sell food or drink (including giving free samples), whether open or wrapped.

To make it readable and straightforward to understand, this is not a detailed guide but you will 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 local Environmental Health and Trading Standards Departments. They may visit you on the day a market is held or, in addition, the farm or other premises from which you operate may also be subject to inspection.**

## THE RULES OF HYGIENE – CONTROLLING HAZARDS

The law requires you to identify possible hazards to food safety, to know which of these is actually important for the type of food 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:

### Transportation

Food transported to a market must be wrapped, covered or placed in suitable lidded containers to prevent contamination.

Vehicles and containers must be kept clean and in good repair and the food should be kept separate from other items. For example, if you transport dogs, game birds or containers of diesel in the back of your vehicle, you must avoid tainting or directly contaminating fruit, vegetables and other food.

Simple cardboard boxes and paper-lined crates are fine for most agricultural produce but you will need higher-grade materials that can be easily cleaned 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 logbook). Larger volume traders should consider using refrigerated vehicles.

## Preparation & Cooking

The surface on which you lay out or prepare food must be smooth and impervious so that it can be thoroughly cleaned and where necessary disinfected. 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. These should include a supply of hot water, towels, bowl and soap. For hot water, insulated flasks should be sufficient in most cases.

**For stallholders selling open foods, such as meats, or high risk unwrapped foods such as cooked meats, dairy products and seafood, there must be handwashing facilities at the stall.**

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.

Clean protective overclothing must be worn whilst handling unwrapped food.

## Cooking

Raw ingredients and cooked food must be adequately separated from each other to avoid cross contamination. You must also wash your hands after handling raw meats and before touching other foods or equipment. Food must be thoroughly cooked to 75°C or above. A food probe thermometer with food-safe disinfectant wipes should be used for testing.

## 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. High-risk foods should be protected from the public touching, coughing or sneezing in the display area. This could be achieved by sneeze guards or by covering foods.

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 and decide what you will do if the food is not at this temperature.

Regularly wipe down surfaces with a clean (preferably disposable) cloth using a food safe cleaner and disinfectant.

If the market does not have refuse services, make sure you have sacks or containers for waste food and water. Waste food must be disposed of correctly and waste food containing animal proteins (or meat) must not be used as pig feed.

## Training

Market traders do not have to attend a formal food hygiene course **but** you must have an understanding of the basic principles that apply to the safe handling and preparation of food.

If you are manufacturing or preparing high-risk food you will need to be trained to a level appropriate to your business. This means completing training to a level equivalent to the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health's (CIEH) Foundation Certificate in Food Safety. Food hygiene training is strongly recommended for **anyone** involved in the running of a food business. For advice contact your local Environmental Health Department.

## Basic hygiene measures

All food handlers should follow these rules:

- Keep yourself clean and wear clean protective clothing.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before handling food, after using the toilet, handling raw food or waste and after every break.
- If you have an infected wound, skin, nose or throat problem do not handle unwrapped food.
- If you have a stomach upset, do not handle food for at least 48hrs after you are free from 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 (and wash your hands before restarting work).
- Clean as you go – keep all equipment and surfaces clean and disinfected.
- Avoid unnecessary handling of food – use bags, tongs or other appropriate tools instead.

## Food safety management systems

Most food businesses must prepare documentation that explains what food safety hazards are relevant to their operation and how they will be controlled and monitored. The type of system you adopt will depend on your business.

A very low risk business such as a stall selling vegetables will need to follow good hygiene practice, whereas a food manufacturer will need a fully documented Hazard

Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan.

A caterer or a stall holder selling home-made meat pies is somewhere in between. The Food Standards Agency has produced packs for caterers and retailers entitled *Safer Food Better Business*. If you require advice on the type of system to adopt, contact your Environmental Health Service.

## DO I NEED TO BE REGISTERED?

**All businesses that prepare, handle or sell food or drink need to register as a food business.**

To register, contact your local authority for a form which you need to 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 and/or food overnight. You should contact your local Environmental Health Department for advice if you are in any doubt. Your premises will still be subject to inspection for food safety purposes.

**See the end of this guide for Local Authority contact details.**

## SELLING YOUR FARM-PRODUCED MEAT

There are a number of rules and regulations for the sale of meat and meat products, with differences depending on the type of customer you sell to and the status of the premises where the meat has been cut or stored. If you would like further information about producing and selling farm products, please contact your local Environment Health Service and Trading Standards Service.

### Meat sales directly from the farm

Farmers are permitted to cut and prepare meat on their farm premises after return from the slaughterhouse (subject to meeting hygiene requirements) and sell that meat to the "final consumer" at the farm gate or at markets. There is no legal restriction concerning the amount of meat that may be sold in this way. Such sales can include those made via the telephone, mail order or the Internet.

The term 'final consumer' means individual members of the public (that is, anyone who is going to buy meat and use it themselves). It does not include people buying it and selling it on. If you are selling to retailers or caterers, contact your Environmental Health Department for further guidance.

# MANUFACTURING FOOD AT HOME FOR SALE FROM YOUR MARKET STALL

## Low risk items such as cakes and jams

Jams and non-dairy cakes are generally safe to produce from home. However, some products, such as pickles, chutneys, pesto and flavoured oils, need more care as dangerous bacteria or toxins can grow if the recipe or the processing is inadequate. It is also critical that customers receive information regarding storage and shelf life. The safest way to determine the shelf life of products is to have them tested in a laboratory. Contact Trading Standards to discuss food labelling requirements.

## High risk items such as meat, dairy and fish products

These foods are higher risk because they support the growth of harmful bacteria and are often sold ready to eat without further cooking. If you intend to make such products (which include hams, pates, ice cream, cheeses, yoghurts and prepared foods such as meat pies, lasagne and shepherds pies), you must contact your local Environmental Health department and Trading Standards department for advice before you start.

## Giving away free samples

Giving samples away is a good way to introduce customers to your products. However, **samples given away free of charge are seen as a legal sale** and their production and handling is still subject to legal control.

Ensure that you protect food from contamination. Provide cocktail sticks or tongs for hygienic service. Only keep small quantities of foods that need to be kept cold out on display and top up from a cool box. The law permits a maximum of four hours out of chilled temperature control but it is good practice to dispose of un-chilled high-risk food after one hour.

If you give away samples of hot food, only keep small quantities out on display. The law permits a maximum of two hours below 63°C but it is good practice to dispose of unheated food after one hour.

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.

## 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, please contact Trading Standards for further for advice.

## **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.

You should be aware that you are not permitted to use household scales to determine 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 the scales you are using are suitable, Trading Standards will be able to advise you.

If you pre-pack large quantities of food, the control systems you might need to use to ensure you pack the right quantities can be complex, so please contact Trading Standards for further advice.

## **Declaration of net weight**

When packed this is required to be stated on the packaging in 'grams' or 'kilograms' or with the permitted abbreviations 'g' or 'kg'. It must also be in the same field of vision as the food name.

Like all labelling the quantity marking must be clearly legible, indelible and easily visible to an intending purchaser under normal conditions of purchase. There are minimum height requirements for food labelling information- a minimum lower case letter height of 0.9mm, unless the packaging has a surface area greater than 80 square cm, in which case the minimum lower case letter height is 1.2mm.

## **Labelling**

Food labelling can be very specific but, generally, the following requirements apply for products sold loose, or which you have packed and are selling direct yourself under your own name (known as 'pre-packed for direct sale').

Such sales are largely exempt from the full food labelling requirements but will require:

### **Name of the food**

The name of the food 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'.

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 percentage of meat ingredients in the product. This should be calculated based on the weight of the finished product. For uncooked products such as sausages, this will be as per the recipe. For cooked products such as hams, any cooking losses will be taken into account. It is no longer correct to declare a 'minimum meat content'. This may be an opportunity to emphasise any superior meat content of your product over those 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 a product or any of its ingredients. If you wish to make particular claims about your product and use terms such as, for example, organic, fresh, natural, authentic, traditional or pure, you should contact Trading Standards for advice on their use.

## Allergenic Ingredients

You are required to provide information about allergens and can either:

- list allergenic ingredients on your labels or
- signpost the consumers to another source for the information- perhaps a notice board, or to ask a member of staff.

You absolutely must be aware of all the allergens in your foods and ensure you and your staff are sufficiently knowledgeable about your products to answer customer queries clearly and accurately. You can contact Trading Standards for a list of allergenic ingredients.

## Full Labelling requirements

If you pre-pack products for sale by other retailers or sell such products made by others, the food label will need to comply with the full labelling requirements. These requirements are extensive and we would strongly recommend you contact Trading Standards for further advice.

## Traceability

You are required to demonstrate who has supplied a product to you, including its ingredients. If you supply to other food businesses, you must be able to show what product you have supplied and the customer details.

## Prices

Prices must be clearly displayed, either per item, or per kilogram/litre, 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.

## Business Names

It is a legal requirement to clearly display to customers the full business name and postal address or registered office of the owners of the stall.

## ANIMAL ATTRACTIONS AT FARMERS MARKETS

Some farmers' markets use animals as an additional attraction to the produce stalls. However, because of the risks of cross contamination with food and the welfare and disease risks in relation to animals, animal attractions are not encouraged by Environmental Health or Trading Standards.

In addition, bacteria such as E.coli 0157 (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 you have on show.

Most local authority Environmental Health Departments will be able to advise on the risks associated with animal handling at farmers' markets but some of the key elements are listed here:

If you choose to use animals as an attraction, first make sure you have the necessary movement permits. Contact your Animal Health unit at the relevant Trading Standards Service for information.

You should assume that all cattle, sheep and goats are infected with E.Coli 157 bacteria, even if the animals look clean and healthy. It can also be found in a range of other animals including pigs and horses.

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.

Petting or feeding of animals is discouraged due to the risk of infection. However, where this is necessary, a competent person must supervise the activity and you should have handwashing facilities present including soap and towels. Food handlers should thoroughly clean and disinfect their hands after contact with any animal and before food, or anything that might come into contact with food, is handled.

If visitors bring picnics or eat any of the food they have bought at the market, this should not be allowed to take place close to animals. Nor should any animals be fed human food – there are strict controls about what some animals may be fed, especially pigs. You could be liable for incorrect feeding even if an animal was fed by a member of the public.

**Ensure children are supervised by adults at all times and that children do not put fingers in their mouth or kiss the animals.**

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Remember, it is in your best interests, and those of your customers, that you are well informed and prepared before you attend a farmers' market. The purpose of this guidance is to help you to prepare before you attend so that it will be an enjoyable and safe experience for you and your customers. However, this we cannot cover all aspects of the law or circumstances that may arise.

Therefore, you are advised to contact your local Environmental Health or Trading Standards Service for more specific enquiries. Please see the contacts given below.

Ashford Borough Council [www.ashford.gov.uk](http://www.ashford.gov.uk) 01233 331111  
Canterbury City Council [www.canterbury.gov.uk](http://www.canterbury.gov.uk) 01227 862222  
Dartford Borough Council [www.dartford.gov.uk](http://www.dartford.gov.uk) 01322 343434  
Dover District Council [www.dover.gov.uk](http://www.dover.gov.uk) 01304 821199  
Gravesham Borough Council [www.gravesham.gov.uk](http://www.gravesham.gov.uk) 01474 564422  
Maidstone Borough Council [www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk) 01622 602000  
Medway Council [www.medway.gov.uk](http://www.medway.gov.uk) 01634 306000  
Sevenoaks District Council [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk) 01732 227000  
Shepway District Council [www.shepway.gov.uk](http://www.shepway.gov.uk) 01303 853000  
Swale Borough Council [www.swale.gov.uk](http://www.swale.gov.uk) 01795 417850  
Thanet District Council [www.thanet.gov.uk](http://www.thanet.gov.uk) 01843 577000  
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council [www.tmbc.gov.uk](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk) 01732 844522  
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council [www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk](http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk) 01892 526121  
Kent County Council- Trading Standards  
[www.kent.gov.uk/business/tradingstandards](http://www.kent.gov.uk/business/tradingstandards)

## **Useful contacts:**

**The Food Standards Agency**

Telephone: (helpline) [helpline@food.gov.uk](mailto:helpline@food.gov.uk)

020 7276 8828

[www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

**Disclaimer**

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