

New law for businesses that sell food

A new law for all businesses that sell food comes into effect today.

“The Food Act 2014 is designed to modernise food safety in New Zealand. It will make it easier for businesses to make sure their food is safe,” says Scott Gallacher, Deputy Director-General Regulation and Assurance, at the Ministry for Primary Industries.

From today, anyone who starts a business that involves food must follow the new law. This includes anything from restaurants, to corner dairies, market stalls, or internet cake sellers.

Existing businesses also need to make changes, although they have longer to do so.

“The new law applies to a wide range of businesses, and includes any which make, sell, grow or transport food commercially. This includes those who serve food as part of their business, like education providers or care homes for example.

“We’ve made it easy for businesses to see how the new law applies to them with an online tool. Businesses should visit the MPI website and use ‘Where do I fit?’

“The new law is designed to help businesses and consumers. It moves from a one-size-fits-all approach, to one that regulates businesses according to risk. This will help keep regulation and costs down for many businesses, especially lower risk businesses, like those who grow fruit and vegetables or sell only pre-packed food.

“It also offers businesses greater flexibility. People can sell food they have made at home, for example, but must meet the same food safety standards as other businesses.

“By focusing on what’s most important to food safety, the law will help ensure safer food for consumers. At the same time, keeping costs down for businesses will also keep costs down for consumers.

“The new law also introduces other measures to help businesses keep time and costs down. For example, those who manage food safety well will need less frequent checks.

“Although the new law starts today, existing food businesses don’t have to make changes straight away. They will move over to the new Act at different times over a three year transition period.”

By making food safety requirements more efficient for businesses, the Act fits with wider government efforts to deliver better public services.

Businesses should visit www.mpi.govt.nz/foodact to find out what they need to do.