

The Food Safety (NI) Order 1991
The Materials and Articles in Contact with Food Regulations (NI)
1987 as amended
The Plastic Materials and Articles in Contact with Food Regulations (NI)
1998 as amended
The Tin in Food Regulations (NI) 1992

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These Regulations make certain requirements in relation to materials which come into contact, or are likely to come into contact with food. The Regulations require that under normal or foreseeable conditions of use, food contact materials must not transfer their constituents in quantities which would cause the above.

THE PLASTIC MATERIALS AND ARTICLES IN CONTACT WITH FOOD REGULATIONS (NI) 1998 (AS AMENDED)

These Regulations specify the types of plastic that can be used for packaging and other food applications. They deal specifically with food contact plastics and contain provisions concerning the constituents of the plastic and migration limits.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP ENSURE THE PACKAGING I USE COMPLIES WITH THESE REGULATIONS?

We would recommend that you provide your packaging supplier with the following information, ideally in writing:-

- Type of foods you will be packing.
- The length of time the food will be in the packaging and the temperature(s) food will be stored at.
- Any processing the packaging will undergo, e.g. heat sealing, vacuum packing, freezing, boil in the bag etc.

You should obtain written confirmation that the packaging material you are supplied with is suitable, based on the above information. You should also ask your supplier to state which legislation the materials comply with.

We would suggest that new batches of packaging be tested before use for the presence of taint. In-house tests could be as simple as operatives using their own sense of smell to detect peculiar or excessive odours.

In addition operatives could place product into packaging samples. The samples could then be left for a period of time, after which the food could be tested to detect the presence of taint. You may also wish to consider checking retained samples at the end of their shelf life for taint. Records should be maintained for any such tests.

Once you have performed such tests for two consecutive batches, without evidence of taint, you could adopt a periodic testing regime.

Some cling film manufacturers are beginning to place restrictions on the type of food, type of heating methods to be used, etc, on their films. The restrictions are normally detailed somewhere on the product packaging itself. Examine cling film and other packaging materials you use for the manufacturer's usage information. If you are using other types of packaging materials and they are not accompanied by usage instructions, it is advisable to obtain such information, ideally in writing from your supplier.

THE TIN IN FOODS REGULATIONS (NI) 1992

These Regulations set a legal limit of 200mg/kg for tin in food. If cans are badly dented and contain acidic food such as tomatoes, rhubarb, pineapple, etc, the internal tin surface of the can may be broken down by the acid resulting in high levels of tin in the food. High levels of tin can cause stomach upsets in some people. Degradation of the internal surface of tins may also occur when food, particularly acidic food, has been left in open cans.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP ENSURE THAT THE FOOD I SELL DOES NOT CONTAIN EXCESSIVE LEVELS OF TIN?

It is advisable to examine canned goods for damage on receipt. Once cans are opened the contents should be transferred to an appropriate food grade container for storage.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE PACKAGING I USE OR THE FOOD I SELL FAILS TO COMPLY WITH THE ABOVE LEGISLATION, WILL I BE COMMITTING AN OFFENCE?

Yes. Failure to comply with these requirements is a criminal offence. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £5000 for each offence.

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