

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Home chefs come under food safety dept lens

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Chennai: People who make and sell food from home will now need approval from the food safety department.

Food safety officials are tracking home chefs through the latter's social media pages and are checking retail stores across the city to trace home-based food products. It is mandatory for all selling food out of their home kitchens to obtain approval from the state department to continue their sales.

Violation of this rule can land them in prison or entail a fine up to Rs 5 lakh. To apply one must log on to the FSSAI portal, [foscos.fssai.gov.in](https://foscos.fssai.gov.in), after which the state officials would grant the registration and licences.

Officials said they expedited the process in the past three months after home food businesses proliferated during the lockdown. During these months the department has registered about 150 businesses.

"We initially began tracing them based on complaints from consumers. They often complained of poor quality of the products. But every time we went to check we found there were many more home food businesses running inside residential complexes," said A Ramakrishnan, designated food safety officer of the city. Besides social media and retail stores, the officials are planning to reach out to residents' welfare associations so they could bring more home chefs under their fold.

Businesses that have a turnover of less than Rs 12 lakh per annum must get registered with the state food safety department and those with more than Rs 12 lakh need to have a state license. The licences are issued within three weeks. But if the home-chef fails to apply, they will be issued a warning notice, failing which they will be penalised accordingly.

The drive, however, has not gone down well with a few.

“Before insisting on registration, authorities must first spread awareness or circulate IEC materials about the FSSAI rules, the dos, and donts,” said T Sadagopan, president of the Tamil Nadu Progressive Consumer Centre. The FSSAI rule on licensing and registration of home food business was issued in 2011.

Home-based chefs welcomed the move and said this will help improve their quality. “I got to know about this rule only now and I have spoken to the official concerned. I will register as soon as possible,” said Priya Tanna, a home-chef in West Mambalam.