

Governing Food Safety in Malaysia's Homemade Food Sector: Challenges, Gaps, and Emerging Regulatory Needs

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ABSTRACT Malaysia's homemade food sector has expanded significantly through digital platforms, yet its rapid growth has outpaced the regulatory mechanisms designed to ensure safe food production. A critical governance gap persists, as home-based producers are not covered under existing food premises legislation, resulting in limited oversight, unclear responsibilities, and constrained enforcement within private households. Foodborne incidents linked to informal production further highlight the urgency of addressing these regulatory blind spots. Current Ministry of Health initiatives rely on general guidelines and voluntary certification, but no structured system exists for monitoring compliance, verifying hygiene standards, or tracing online micro-enterprises. This research investigates how homemade food producers understand and practise food safety, how food technologists navigate enforcement challenges, and how digital platforms shape behaviour within the informal food economy. By articulating these structural and behavioural gaps, the study provides foundational insight for designing more inclusive, context-appropriate approaches to governing Malaysia's rapidly expanding home-based food sector.

KEYWORDS *Food Safety Governance; Homemade Food Producers; Informal Food Sector; Digital Platforms and Regulation; Malaysia.*