



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Resilience: Resource sheet for Food and Drink SMEs

The food and drink industry is a critical component of our nation's food security. In recent years businesses have faced a number of pressures such as labour shortages, economic volatility and global supply challenges. During this time maintaining business resilience has been key.

Whilst some of those events have been wholly unexpected and unpredictable, the key thing about resilience is that some of the impacts could be anticipated and planned around: does your business depend on a single customer? What alternative routes to market for your products have you not considered? Is your workforce prepared to face changes in the supply chains?

Despite these challenges, very few businesses today have resilience plans. This is particularly acute for SMEs. With relatively small teams (particularly in micro businesses), SMEs have fewer people to rely on for support.

With this in mind, now is the time to consider what your business needs to do to be more resilient. Some of the actions you can take include using NICRE's resilience toolkit; preparing a risk plan; and making use of your local and national support organisations.

If you have any questions or feedback on the guide, please email foodanddrinkpromotion@defra.gov.uk.

Why focus on Business Resilience?

- Resilient organisations are adaptive, competitive, agile and robust
- Small businesses tend to focus on the internal environment and ignore macroenvironmental factors. As such they are often unprepared for a crisis
- Having a strategic objective and resilience plan will help businesses to survive and prosper
- The leader of an SME has a key role to play in the resilience of their business

Tools available to you: NICRE's Resilience Toolkit (free, modular, and online)

<https://resilience.nicre.co.uk/>

The toolkit helps business owners to consider how resilient their business is, what risks they should be most concerned about, and how to put a crisis plan in place. It was developed by the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise (NICRE).

This tool was academically evidenced and developed specifically for SME businesses. It looks at six different parts of business resilience, which can be done as separate modules. It is free, and quick to use, providing self-help, immediate results. It will guide you through the three steps of checking your resilience, evaluating the risks, and planning for a crisis.

1. The resilience health check tool

- Businesses who are resilient tend to have three things in common. They have a good medium-term plan, they invest in people and team building, and they have a culture of preparedness, openness and collaboration
- Ideally, a quick health check could be done on an annual basis. This will allow you to reflect on changes in your business, such as client portfolio, size of workforce, and supply chains and operations
- It is worth including different people in your business to allow you to consider a greater diversity of risks

2. The risk analysis tool

- SMEs often overlook risk planning as they simply don't have the time or feel they are unfamiliar with the skills needed to plan for risks. It's important to be able to identify and name the main threats to (and in) your business

3. Crisis planning

- Once you are aware of the risks to your business you can then plan for these. It's much better to make a plan for a worst case scenario than to ignore it
- Make a critical risk plan and keep a copy in several places so that you can access this in an emergency

Support organisations

Regional Food Groups

<https://www.foodfromengland.co.uk/regional-groups>

Regional Food Groups play a key role in the coordination of local support, providing a range of service that can include training, resource on access to finance, networking, and dedicated experts.

LEP Network

<https://www.lepnetwork.net/about-leps/location-map/>

The 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are business led partnerships between the private, public and third sector. They build local economic growth and prosperity across the country, with many focusing on the food production and rural agendas. All have Growth Hubs which offer free, impartial and targeted business support from establishment to scale up.

LEPs have access to or can signpost businesses to funding opportunities often linked to innovation and the net zero agenda. Skills is another key focus with many running Skills Bootcamps which can upskill your existing workforce or provide new entrants. LEPs have strong networks in their region so they can link you to new supply chains, trade opportunities and sector groups.

Growth Hubs

<https://www.lepnetwork.net/local-growth-hub-contacts/>

Growth Hubs specialise in supporting businesses with business funding, providing direct support and guidance. They cover specific geographic areas, with some area falling under more than one Growth Hub.

Government resources

<https://helptogrow.campaign.gov.uk/my-business-needs-support/>

On this government webpage, you will find a number of business specific support that includes the Business Support Helpline, support with energy costs, finance through the British Business Bank, and more.

Enterprise Nation

<https://www.enterprisenation.com/>

Enterprise Nation is a free-to-join community of businesses and business advisers dedicated to linking up and shortcutting the route to identifying trusted business support.

On top of the support, Enterprise Nation also organises a number of thematic and regional events that cover training, opportunities, and networking opportunities.