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A New Stage in Food Safety

China's New Food Delivery Rules and the Growing Importance of Verifiable Food Safety Information

Content



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By: Yushan Cao

CHINA'S NEW FOOD DELIVERY RULES AND THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF VERIFIABLE FOOD SAFETY INFORMATION

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On April 2, China's State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) convened in Meituan, Taobao Shangou, and JD.com, three major Chinese online retail and delivery platforms, for an administrative guidance meeting ahead of [new food safety rules for online food delivery](#) taking effect on June 1, 2026. According to the official meeting summary, regulators called on the platforms to strengthen food safety management in five areas: qualification review, management safeguards, public disclosure, emergency response, and coordinated supervision. The message was clear that food safety responsibilities should be embedded more deeply into day-to-day platform operations.

The [regulatory basis](#) is the *Provisions on the Supervision and Administration of Online Catering Service Operators in Fulfilling Food Safety Responsibilities* (《网络餐饮服务经营者落实食品安全主体责任监督管理规定》), issued as SAMR Order No. 123 and effective from June 1, 2026. The rule applies both to third-party online food transaction platform providers and to catering operators that sell through those platforms or through self-built websites. It shifts the focus from one-time onboarding toward ongoing verification and management. Platforms must carry out real-name registration of online catering operators, verify and update key registration information at least once every six months, and in some cases conduct substantive review, including on-site inspection.

At one level, the new rule is about seller identification and platform accountability. It requires online store names, displayed licenses, storefront images, and actual operating addresses to remain consistent with the merchant's offline premises and licensing documents. Operators that do not provide dine-in service must display a prominent "No Dine-In" label. It also strengthens the regulatory response to so-called "ghost kitchens" or "ghost takeout shops," meaning online food businesses whose actual operating location, licensing status, or storefront information is difficult to verify.

But the food safety implications of the rule go beyond identity alone. The same [regulation](#) requires online catering providers to select suppliers with lawful qualifications and keep records of incoming inspection for food ingredients. It also requires platforms to strengthen risk identification through technical monitoring, real-time inspections, and on-site spot checks, with spot-check results kept on file for future review. For operators participating in "Internet + Open Kitchen" programs, related video information must be preserved for at least fourteen days. Taken together, these provisions place greater weight not only on who is selling food, but also on where ingredients come from, whether suppliers are qualified, and what records exist to support food safety oversight.

That same logic can already be seen elsewhere in China’s food regulatory system. A useful domestic example comes from [Beijing](#), where local market regulators have introduced QR-based traceability tools for meat sold in food markets. According to reporting on Tongzhou district’s “electronic voucher management assistant” (扫码溯源) mini-program, consumers who scan the code can see whether the pork, chicken, beef, or lamb they purchased came from a “regular slaughterhouse” and whether inspection and quarantine were qualified. They can also view detailed information from the “meat quality inspection certificate” and the “animal quarantine certificate.” In this case, a simple digital interface brings together seller-facing information, source origin, and inspection or quarantine records in one place.

The same emphasis appears in broader national policy. The April 2025 Opinions on [Further Strengthening Full-Chain Food Safety Supervision](#) calls for closer coordination between production-site clearance and market entry, stronger screening for prohibited or excessive veterinary drug residues, and tighter links between meat inspection and quarantine certification and market inspection. It also calls for an information-based slaughter quarantine certification system and clearer public verification channels for inspection and quarantine certificates. In other words, the policy direction extends beyond identifying market actors and moves toward making origin information and safety verification more visible and easier to check across the chain.

A similar pattern appears in the regulation of imported food, though it operates at a different point in the supply chain. [China Customs’ official service guidance](#) shows that overseas manufacturers exporting food to China must complete registration procedures through digital systems, including the national “single window” platform or the imported food overseas manufacturer registration management system. Customs may conduct document review, video inspection, or onsite inspection as part of the assessment process, and approved manufacturers receive a China registration number. The system therefore creates a formal digital record of who the producer is, where the production entity sits in the chain, and whether it has passed regulatory review before products enter the Chinese market.

Here too, food safety is not limited to identification alone. The same [customs framework](#) requires overseas manufacturers to go through a structured review process and allows customs authorities to assess them through document review, video inspection, or on-site inspection before registration is granted. This links origin verification to safety review at the producer-registration stage, rather than only at the point of retail sale. For imported food, the regulatory logic therefore combines source identification with documented inspection and review procedures before market entry.

Taken together, these examples show that the June 2026 food delivery rule fits into a wider regulatory pattern in which food safety governance increasingly depends on verifiable information. Across different parts of the food system, Chinese regulators are giving greater weight to knowing who is selling, where food comes from, what inspection or quarantine records support it, and how those records can be retained, reviewed, and shared through digital systems. Viewed in this

context, the new food delivery rule extends a broader regulatory effort to make food safety oversight more traceable, documentable, and continuously reviewable across China's food system.