PETPOOJA

GUIDE

Licensing a Food Truck in India

Every other food business is licensed where it stands. Yours is licensed where it stops. This guide covers what that changes: the two routes to being legal after the 10 March 2026 amendment, the three undertakings that rule most owners out of the free one, what your certificate actually permits, and what has to be redone the moment you cross a municipal boundary.

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1.2.1(4)
Where You Now Sit
Food truck named in the definition, 10-Mar-2026

₹0
Hawker Registration Fee
Waived with effect from 28-Sep-2024

s.5(1)(b)
The Undertaking
No other means of livelihood

₹20 lakh
Your GST Threshold
Not ₹40 lakh. You supply a service

₹10 lakh
Penalty, No Registration
Imprisonment removed by the 2023 amendment

01 What Changed On 10 March 2026

For the first time, the law says the words food truck.

Until this year a food truck had no settled place in the food safety regulations. Owners registered as a hawker, a stall holder or a small restaurant depending on who they asked, and the answer varied by state. The amendment notified on 10 March 2026 fixed that, and it did something else at the same time that matters far more if you ever intend to move.

10-Mar-2026

Amendment Notified

Gazette of India Extraordinary Part III Sec.4 No.172

01-Apr-2026

New Thresholds Live

FSSAI Order dated 13-Mar-2026

₹1.5 cr

Registration Ceiling

Turnover up to ₹1.5 crore registers

You are a Petty Food Business Operator, and it now says so

The substituted definition reads: "Petty Food Business Operator means any food business operator, who manufactures or sells any article of food himself or a petty retailer, street food vendor, hawker, itinerant vendor or temporary stall holder or food truck or distributes foods including in any religious or social gathering, except a caterer or such other food business including small scale or cottage or such other industries relating to food business or tiny food business." Read the last clause twice. A caterer is expressly carved out, and Chapter 6 is about why that matters to you.

The second change is the one nobody has written about

The same amendment inserted a new provision saying that street food vendors, hawkers, food trucks and carts registered under the Street Vendors Act 2014 shall be deemed registered under the Food Safety and Standards Act 2006.

On its face that is a pure saving: one registration instead of two, one fee instead of two. FSSAI's own FAQ describes it as removing "the requirement of dual registration and dual fee".

What it also does is tie your food registration to a document issued by one town's committee, for one zone, on stated days and at stated times. Your licence has quietly acquired a geography.

The three reforms in the same amendment, and what each does to a truck

Reform	What it says	What it means if you move
Food truck named in the Petty FBO definition	You register rather than licence, provided turnover is within the ceiling	Settles a question that used to be answered differently in different states
Deemed registration via the Street Vendors Act	A vending certificate carries your FSSAI registration with it	Your food registration now depends on a town-level document, so it stops at the town boundary
Perpetual validity	No expiry date, no renewal application	An annual fee and an annual return replace it, enforced by automatic suspension. Chapter 5

Source: FSS (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Amendment Regulations 2026, notified 10 March 2026, and FSSAI's FAQs on that amendment dated 27 March 2026.

02 Two Routes To Being Legal

One is free. Most food truck businesses cannot use it.

Since March there are two ways for a food truck to hold a valid FSSAI position. They are not equivalent, and the cheaper one carries conditions that have nothing to do with food. Work out which route you are on before you spend anything on the truck, because the answer changes who may drive it, who may cook in it and where it may trade.

Route A and Route B, side by side

	Route A: deemed registration	Route B: ordinary registration
What you hold	A certificate of vending from a Town Vending Committee	An FSSAI registration as a Petty Food Business Operator
FSSAI fee	None. The vending certificate carries the registration	₹0 as a hawker, or ₹100 a year as a food vending establishment
Who may run the business	You, or a member of your family. Nobody else	Anyone you employ
Other income allowed	No. You must undertake you have no other means of livelihood	Yes
Where you may trade	The vending zone named in the certificate, on the days and at the times it states	Wherever you have the local permissions to stand
Transferable	No, and you may not rent it out either	It is a registration of the business, not of a person
Schedule 4 hygiene	Applies in full	Applies in full

Route A conditions are from sections 5 and 6 of the Street Vendors Act 2014. Route B fees are from the FoSCoS Kind of Business Criteria table updated 1 April 2026.

The free route is written for a person, not a business

A certificate of vending is a livelihood protection. Before it is issued you must give an undertaking that you will carry on the vending yourself or through a family member, that you have no other means of livelihood, and that you will not transfer or rent the certificate or the place named in it. If you have staff, a salary, a second truck or a partner, you are outside those undertakings. Take Route B.

Decide your route in ten minutes

- ✓ **Will anyone outside your family cook or sell from the truck**
  If yes, Route B. The undertaking at section 5(1)(a) limits vending to you or a family member.
- ✓ **Do you have another job, another business or rental income**
  If yes, Route B. Section 5(1)(b) requires an undertaking that you have no other means of livelihood.
- ✓ **Do you intend to trade in more than one town**
  If yes, Route B, and read Chapter 4. A certificate names one vending zone under one local authority.
- ✓ **Do you intend to run more than one truck**
  If yes, Route B. You cannot transfer or rent a certificate, so a second truck cannot run on the first one's paperwork.
- ✓ **If every answer above is no, apply to your Town Vending Committee**
  Route A is genuinely free and genuinely simpler. It is written for an owner-operator who works the truck personally, which is a real and common way to start.

Where each route is actually applied for

Route A goes to the Town Vending Committee for the area you intend to trade in. Ask your municipal corporation or council who sits on it and what the state scheme requires, because the form, the fee and the validity are all set by that scheme rather than by the Act. Route B goes to FSSAI through the FoSCoS portal at foscos.fssai.gov.in, which is where a Petty Food Business Operator registration is applied for and where the annual fee in Chapter 5 is later paid. If you are unsure which kind of business you will be registered under, settle that with the registering authority before you apply rather than after.

If the committee refuses you, or you have a dispute

A certificate of vending between surveys is discretionary, not a right, so a refusal is possible. The Act provides its own route: the appropriate Government may constitute one or more committees chaired by a person who has been a civil judge or a judicial magistrate, and every street vendor who has a grievance or dispute may apply to that committee in writing. Ask your local authority which committee has been constituted for your area and in what form the application must be made.

Deemed registration is not an exemption from hygiene

The provision carries a proviso: "Provided that the food business operators, including those exempted shall comply with hygiene and sanitary requirements specified in Schedule 4." Whichever route you take, Schedule 4 binds you in full. The paperwork changed. The kitchen did not.

03 What The Certificate Actually Permits

Read the four corners of it before you plan a week.

Owners tend to treat a vending certificate as permission to trade. It is narrower than that. The Act specifies exactly what the document must contain, and every one of those particulars is a limit on your operating plan.

s.6(2)
What It Must State
Zone, days, timings, conditions

s.6(1)
Your Category
Stationary, mobile, or as the scheme provides

s.5(1)(c)
Non-Transferable
Including by rent

> **Section 6(2), verbatim**
>
> "The certificate of vending issued for the categories specified in sub-section (1) shall be in such form, and issued in such manner, as may be specified in the scheme and specify the vending zone where the street vendor shall carry on his vending activities, the days and timings for carrying on such vending activities and the conditions and restrictions subject to which he shall carry on such vending activities."

The four particulars, and the operating question each one settles

The vending zone	Where you may stand. Not the ward, not the city. The zone designated by the local authority on the recommendation of the Town Vending Committee.
The days	Which days you may trade. A weekend-only pitch and a seven-day pitch are different permissions.
The timings	The hours you may trade. This is the particular that most often collides with a late-night dinner plan.
The conditions and restrictions	Anything else the scheme or the plan for street vending imposes. Read them, because they vary by state and by town.

> **Mobile does not mean roaming**
>
> A certificate may be issued as a stationary vendor, a mobile vendor, or any other category the scheme provides. "Mobile vendors" is defined as street vendors who carry out vending activities in a designated area by moving from one place to another. The mobility is within a designated area. It is not a licence to trade wherever the truck can reach.

And you cannot lend it, rent it or sell it

The undertaking at section 5(1)(c) is that you will not transfer in any manner whatsoever, including rent, the certificate of vending or the place specified in it to any other person.

That closes the arrangement people reach for when a pitch is good and the truck is idle midweek. The pitch is not an asset you can sublet.

If the certificate holder dies, suffers permanent disability or is ill, the Act allows a spouse and then a dependent child to vend in their place for the remaining validity. That is the only substitution it contemplates.

How much does a certificate cost, and how long does it last

The Act does not say. Section 8 provides that a street vendor shall pay such vending fees "as may be specified in the scheme", and section 9 provides that a certificate is valid, and renewable, for such period and on payment of such fees "as may be specified in the scheme". The scheme is made by your state government. Any article quoting a single national vending fee or a single national validity period is describing one state and calling it India. Ask your Town Vending Committee for the scheme that applies to you.

04 Crossing A Boundary

The chapter the rest of the internet skips.

This is the situation a food truck runs into and a restaurant never does. You have traded successfully in one city for a season. A promoter offers you a pitch at a ground forty kilometres away, over a municipal boundary, for three weekends. Nothing you hold automatically follows you there.

A Town Vending Committee's writ ends at its own jurisdiction

The Act requires each Town Vending Committee to survey "all existing street vendors, within the area under its jurisdiction", and a certificate names a vending zone designated by that local authority. A "local authority" is defined as the body entitled to function as such "in any city or town". A certificate from one town's committee says nothing about another town's zones, and cannot.

Which means the deemed registration stops there too

If you are on Route A, your FSSAI position is derived from that certificate. Outside the area the certificate covers, the document that carries your food registration is not operative.

This is a new consequence. Before March 2026 an FSSAI registration stood on its own feet and a vending problem was only a vending problem. Now the two are coupled.

The practical answer is that a truck which intends to move should hold its own FSSAI registration under Route B, and treat vending permissions as a separate, local, repeatable task.

Before you trade in a new local authority area

1. **Identify the local authority, not the city**
   Municipal corporations, municipal councils, nagar panchayats and cantonment boards are each a separate local authority. A metro's outskirts often sit under a different body from its centre, and a cantonment is its own world.

2. **Ask that authority's Town Vending Committee what a visiting vendor does**
   Some schemes provide for temporary or event vending. Some do not, and the honest answer is that you cannot trade on a street there. Get the answer before you commit to dates.

3. **Check whether the site is public or private land**
   A private ground, a mall forecourt or a corporate campus is not a street. Street vending rules address public places, and a private site is a matter of the owner's permission plus whatever the local body requires of an event.

4. **Confirm your FSSAI position travels**
   If you hold your own registration under Route B, it is a registration of your business. If you are relying on deemed registration under Route A, it is not travelling with you.

5. **Ask the event organiser what they are actually providing**
   Organisers routinely say permissions are handled. Ask which permission, issued by whom, in whose name. A permission in the organiser's name for the ground is not a vending certificate in yours.

The vehicle itself is a separate question, and we are not going to guess at it

Converting a van into a kitchen changes the particulars recorded in the vehicle's certificate of registration, and that alteration needs the registering authority's approval. The specifications and conditions for approval are set by central rules. We are deliberately not citing a section number here, because we could not open the consolidated text of the Motor Vehicles Act at source on the day this guide was written, and a wrong section number is worse than none. Take this to your RTO, and see the blog post on food truck licences for the walkthrough.

05 Perpetual Validity Is Not Nothing To Do

The renewal date went away. The obligation did not.

The headline from March was that FSSAI registrations and licences no longer expire. That is true and it is a genuine simplification. It is also the half of the change that gets reported, and the other half is the one that will catch a truck with no office and no admin staff.

What perpetual validity means

The substituted provision reads: "A license and registration certificate granted under these regulations shall be valid and subsisting, unless otherwise suspended, cancelled or surrendered." The old machinery is gone: the term of one to five years chosen by the operator, the renewal application thirty days before expiry, the late fee per day, and expiry itself. FSSAI's FAQ puts it plainly: operators are not required to renew.

And what replaced it

The next sub-regulation provides that where an operator "fails to pay the annual license fee or registration fee as specified by the Food Authority or fails to submit the return on or before the due date, wherever applicable, the license or registration shall be deemed suspended." It revives only on payment of the fee due, or submission of the return, with penalty. During suspension the operator "shall not involve in any food business activity".

Why this is a harder regime for a truck, not a looser one

A renewal date is a date. It sits on a certificate, a reminder can be set against it, and missing it produces a document that has visibly expired.

Deemed suspension has no date and produces no document. Nobody serves an order. The registration simply stops being effective, and you find out when an inspector asks.

For a business whose entire administrative apparatus is one person and a phone, that is the quieter failure mode. Diarise the annual fee and the return yourself, because nothing else will.

The annual routine that has replaced renewal

- ✓ **Pay the annual registration fee**
  ₹0 as a hawker, since the hawker fee was waived with effect from 28 September 2024. ₹100 a year as a food vending establishment. You may pay for several years at once if you prefer, and the fee can be paid at any time of the year.
- ✓ **File the return where one applies to you**
  The provision says "wherever applicable". Confirm with your registering authority whether a return applies at your category, and note the due date.
- ✓ **Keep the certificate and the photo identity card on the truck**
  The registration certificate and photo identity card must be displayed prominently at all times within the premises or vehicle or cart or any other place where food is sold. On a truck that means on the truck, not at home in a folder.
- ✓ **If you close down, surrender within thirty days**
  On closure you must inform the authority in writing and surrender the certificate within thirty days. There is no refund of fee on surrender.

Trading with no valid registration

The penalty under the Food Safety and Standards Act for carrying on a food business without a licence or registration is a penalty which may extend to ten lakh rupees. Imprisonment was removed from that provision by the Jan Vishwas amendment of 2023. Older articles still quoting six months' imprisonment and five lakh rupees are describing the position before that amendment.

06 The Moment You Become A Caterer

One profitable booking can change your licence category.

Food trucks drift into events. A wedding wants you on the lawn, a company wants you at an offsite, a society wants you for a festival evening. The money is better than a street pitch and the work is easier to plan. It is also the point at which the definition you sit under may stop applying to you.

A caterer cannot be a Petty Food Business Operator

The Petty FBO definition names the food truck and then carves out the caterer in the same sentence: "except a caterer or such other food business including small scale or cottage or such other industries". The exclusion is not turnover-based. A caterer is outside the petty category however small it is.

What that does to your category and your fee

If you are treated as	Category	Fee per annum
Hawker, itinerant or mobile food vendor, turnover up to ₹1.5 crore	Registration	₹0, hawker fee waived from 28-Sep-2024
Food vending establishment, turnover up to ₹1.5 crore	Registration	₹100
Food vending establishment, turnover above ₹1.5 crore	State Licence	₹5,000
Caterer, turnover up to ₹50 crore	State Licence	₹5,000
Caterer, turnover above ₹50 crore	Central Licence	₹7,500

From the FoSCoS Kind of Business Criteria table updated 1 April 2026. Note that the caterer row has no registration tier at all: the smallest caterer starts at a State Licence.

Where the line probably falls, and who should draw it

The table defines a caterer as a food service establishment involved in preparation, storage, serving or transport of food for consumption of a group at a venue of a ceremony, celebration, ritual or institution.

Selling to whoever walks up at a public pitch is not that. Being booked to feed a defined group at a private venue looks a great deal like it.

This is a judgement your registering authority makes, not one you make alone. If events are going to be a real part of your income rather than an occasional Saturday, put the question to them in writing before you build the business on it.

There is no food truck row in the fee table

Worth knowing so it does not surprise you at the counter. The gazette definition names the food truck. The FoSCoS fee table does not have a food truck row, and a truck reads plausibly onto either the hawker line at ₹0 or the food vending establishment line at ₹100. Which one you are put on is a conversation with your registering authority, and it is worth having deliberately rather than accepting whatever is typed in.

07 Why ₹40 Lakh Is Not Your Number

The most repeated GST error in food truck content.

Almost every article about starting a food truck in India says you need to register for GST once turnover crosses ₹40 lakh. For a food truck that is the wrong figure, and the error is easy to see once you know where ₹40 lakh comes from.

₹20 lakh	₹10 lakh	₹40 lakh
Your Threshold	Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura	Goods Only
Section 22(1), CGST Act	*Section 22(1) and its Explanation*	*Notification 10/2019-Central Tax*

Where the two numbers come from

₹20 lakh is the registration threshold in section 22(1) of the CGST Act. The ₹10 lakh figure applies only in the special category States, and that term is narrower than it sounds: the Explanation to section 22 excepts Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Uttarakhand, which leaves Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.

₹40 lakh is not a bigger threshold. It is a separate exemption from having to register, granted by notification under section 23(2), and it reaches only a person engaged in the exclusive supply of goods.

A food truck supplies restaurant service. That is a supply of services, so the goods-only exemption does not reach you and ₹20 lakh is your number.

The exemption also carves out ten states, and one of them surprises people

Even for a goods-only business the ₹40 lakh exemption does not apply to intra-state supplies in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim, Telangana, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Telangana catches people out. None of this rescues a food truck, which is outside the exemption on the services point alone, but it is worth knowing if you also sell packaged goods.

One more reason the threshold may not be yours to rely on

The threshold is a floor, not a shield. There are situations in which registration is compulsory regardless of turnover, and they are set out separately in the Act. If you plan to supply through an e-commerce operator, or across a state border, check your position rather than assuming the turnover figure decides it. This guide does not attempt a full GST treatment, and a food truck with real event income should take an hour with a chartered accountant.

08 Pitch Economics

Your P&L is not monthly. It is per pitch, per session.

A restaurant's economics are a question about a catchment. A truck's are a question about a parking spot on a Thursday. There are no reliable published benchmarks for Indian food truck revenue, and we are not going to invent any: everything available traces back to vendor content. What follows is a method, and it works on your own numbers from week one.

> **Measure contribution per hour, not margin per dish**
>
> Two pitches can produce the same day's sales and be worth completely different amounts, because one took four hours and the other took nine. Contribution per hour is the only figure that ranks pitches against each other, and it is the figure a truck can act on, because unlike a restaurant you can go somewhere else next week.

The five-line worksheet, per session

1. **Sales**
   What you actually took at that pitch, that session. Not an average day. One session, one line.
2. **Less food cost**
   Cost of what you sold, not what you loaded. Count what came back and what was thrown, and take both off the load.
3. **Less pitch cost**
   Ground rent, event fee, commission to an organiser, vending fee apportioned, parking. Anything you paid to be allowed to stand there.
4. **Less running cost**
   Fuel to get there and back, gas, generator, ice, disposables, and the wage of anyone who worked the session.
5. **Divide by hours on site**
   Include set-up and pack-down, because they are hours the truck cannot be anywhere else. What remains is contribution per hour, and it is comparable across every pitch you work.

What the comparison tends to show, and what to do about it

Pattern	What it usually means	The move
High sales, low contribution per hour	A long session with a big organiser cut, or a long drive	Negotiate the cut or the hours before dropping the pitch
Modest sales, high contribution per hour	A short, dense session with no pitch fee	Repeat it, and look for its twin on another day
Good contribution but only on two days	A genuinely weekly pitch, not a daily one	Stop trying to make midweek work at that site
Falling contribution at a steady pitch	Food cost drift, or an organiser fee that rose	Rebuild the load list before you blame the location

Run this for six sessions before you conclude anything. Two sessions is weather.

> **Count the days you cannot trade**
>
> Your certificate states days and timings, and a truck earns nothing on the days it may not stand. When you compare a pitch that permits five days against one that permits two, compare weekly contribution, not per-session contribution. This is the arithmetic that a fixed-site business never has to do, and it is the one most often left out.

09 What This Guide Leaves Out, And Where To Find It

Deliberately, because it is already written.

This guide is narrow on purpose. It covers what a food truck has that no other food business has, which is that it moves. The rest of starting a food truck is covered properly elsewhere, and repeating it here would have made this longer without making it more useful.

Covered on the Petpooja blog

Question	Where
Which permits do I need, step by step	How to Get a Food Truck Licence in India
How do I plan the whole business	Food Truck Business in India: Complete 2026 Startup Guide
Should I do this at all	Should I Open A Food Truck? 8 Tips You Must Read
New truck or pre-owned, and what equipment	Food Truck Business in India: Complete 2026 Startup Guide
How do I lay out the space	Optimize Food Truck Space
What should be on the menu	Create The Perfect Food Truck Menu
Truck or a small restaurant	Food Truck vs Restaurant
How do I market it	Marketing Strategies For Your Food Truck Venture, and Food Truck Marketing

Search any of these titles on blog.petpooja.com.

One thing worth doing this week

Take out whatever permission you currently trade on and read the four particulars in Chapter 3 off it: the zone, the days, the timings, and the conditions. Then look at the last four weeks of your own diary. Most owners find at least one session that sat outside one of those four, and had no idea. That single pass is worth more than any other hour you can spend on compliance in a new truck.

A note on how current this is

The food safety position described here changed on 10 March 2026 and the turnover thresholds took effect on 1 April 2026. The vending fee, the certificate's validity period and the municipal trade licence are set by your state scheme and your local authority, and this guide deliberately quotes no figure for them, because no national figure exists. Check anything you are about to act on against your own state's scheme.

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This guide is provided by Petpooja for informational purposes. Verify all details with official sources and local authorities before acting.

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AUTOMATE THIS

One till that follows the *truck*

Petpooja POSS gives you three-click billing at the hatch, KOT generation and routing to the kitchen behind you, direct Zomato and Swiggy integration into one order screen, and real-time reports that are automated and paper free. Chapter 8 asks you to compare pitches on contribution per hour. That comparison is only worth making if every pitch is billed the same way. Over 1,00,000 restaurants use Petpooja POSS.

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