

Platform Responsibility and Good Faith Reformulation: Reconstructing Consumer Protection in Food E-Commerce

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's food e-commerce sector has grown rapidly and made purchasing easier, but consumers now face greater legal and transactional risks. Trade no longer involves only sellers and buyers, because digital platforms now stand between the two. This shift raises problems of information asymmetry, food safety, and unclear legal responsibility. This study uses a normative legal method with statutory, conceptual, and comparative approaches to evaluate weaknesses in the current legal framework and to build a more adaptive consumer protection model. The findings identify two major problems. First, the "good-faith buyer" concept in Supreme Court Circular Letter (SEMA) No. 4 of 2016 on the Implementation of the Formulation of the Results of the 2016 Plenary Meeting of the Chambers of the Supreme Court as Guidelines for Court Duties does not suit online food transactions, which are frequent and involve small purchase values. Second, existing regulations do not clearly set out the legal obligations of e-commerce platforms. The study therefore proposes a three-dimensional protection framework: (1) modernizing the government's regulatory function, (2) recognizing platforms as active curators with their own legal responsibility, and (3) strengthening consumers by applying a prudential standard based on "digital transactional vigilance." Besides addressing practical regulatory weaknesses, the framework contributes to theory by redefining the principle of good faith in the digital marketplace.

Keywords: Consumer Protection, Digital Liability, E-commerce, Food, Good Faith, Platform Responsibility.

I. INTRODUCTION

Two major trends are shaping food consumption in Indonesia: food industrialization and the rapid growth of the digital economy. Both trends have major implications for supply chains and consumer behavior. The growth of modern food retail, such as supermarkets, has extended the food supply chain and separated producers from end consumers. This shift benefits smallholders who now take part in modern food marketing channels, since stable prices and demand improve their income stability (Toiba et al., 2020). The increasing popularity of e-commerce has changed the way food is purchased. Online shopping has become a key factor, especially in urban areas, and it harms healthy food consumption because families tend to spend less on healthy food (Tian et al., 2026). However, the combination of mass production and digital transactions fundamentally changes the risk structure (Fan & Bao, 2025).

In the online environment, consumers face the paradox of an ‘information flood’: an abundance of visual product information does not always make up for the lack of physical inspection, while biased advertising and review practices add to information asymmetry (Wang et al., 2023). The digital economy has lowered the barriers to entry into the food market, creating serious problems such as the circulation of expired, damaged, or substandard food and raising questions of accountability and consumer safety when disputes arise (Kashyap et al., 2026). The shift from a bipolar (seller–buyer) to a tripolar (seller–platform–buyer) model also changes how the market works and calls for a re-evaluation of consumer protection frameworks, especially for Multi-Sided Platforms (MSPs). In Indonesia, platforms such as GoFood, GrabFood, ShopeeFood, and Tokopedia have become dominant players, and their presence as intermediaries further complicates the traditional power imbalance between consumers and sellers (Qu et al., 2025).

Legal instruments such as Law No. 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection (UUPK) and Law No. 18 of 2012 concerning Food must be examined to identify why the current legal system fails to address the transition from the bipolar to the tripolar model. Both laws assume a direct relationship between business actors and consumers and do not reflect the complexity created by platforms as intermediaries. Because there are no explicit rules on the role and responsibilities of platforms, a platform is often treated as a neutral infrastructure provider, even though it controls curation, information flow, and transaction mechanisms (Lam & Liu, 2023). At the same time, the objective benchmark for determining a “good-faith buyer” in SEMA No. 4 of 2016 was originally formulated for disputes over relatively high-value transactions. The same benchmark is less appropriate for routine online food purchases, which are usually small in value but occur repeatedly and in very large numbers. This mismatch places a heavier evidentiary burden on ordinary consumers. As a result, the regulatory inconsistency shifts too much legal responsibility and burden of proof from commercial actors to consumers.

Against this background, this study is concerned with three issues: the growing vulnerability of food consumers’ bargaining position in the e-commerce ecosystem, the non-contextual application of the “good-faith buyer” standard, and the ambiguity of platform responsibilities caused by regulatory loopholes (Sánchez Hernández, 2020). This normative legal research aims (1) to examine the concept and practice of “good faith” in civil law and its relevance to online food transactions; (2) to evaluate the effectiveness of the UUPK, the Food Law, and related instruments in responding to the tripolar market; and (3) to formulate a tripartite consumer protection framework by expanding the definition of “Business Actor” to include platforms, affirming platforms’ transparency obligations, and reorganizing consumer prudential standards into

“digital transactional vigilance.”

To address this gap, this paper introduces two conceptual innovations. First, the reformulation of the principle of good faith signals a shift in focus from physical-individual proof to standards of reasonableness in the digital space, in line with the nature of repetitive, small-value, and rapid transactions. It departs from the conventional view of physical due diligence and adopts a perspective suited to the particular features of digital food commerce. Second, the proposed framework redefines the legal status of digital platforms by rejecting the view that a platform is merely a neutral technological intermediary. Instead, a platform is treated as a business actor with independent legal duties because it curates products, moderates content, and orchestrates transactions (Kapoor et al., 2025). This approach draws on the European Union Digital Services Act and other international regulations and adapts their principles to the Indonesian legal setting. Reconstructing the consumer protection regime for food e-commerce would therefore address existing regulatory weaknesses and strengthen fairness for good-faith consumers in the digital economy.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a type of normative legal research with a prescriptive-analytical nature (Khoir, 2022). The research does not merely describe favorable legal conditions; it also carries out normative assessments and constructs solutions. In legal research, a prescriptive-analytical approach analyzes existing legal norms and also offers recommendations for legal reform based on that analysis. The approach is prescriptive because it proposes improvements or changes to the legal system to address the problems identified (Mannontaratana et al., 2025). Because the study also concerns how norms are applied, it uses a limited case approach to relevant decisions and/or jurisprudence, with reference to SEMA as a guide for judicial practice.

The legal materials used are as follows. (i) Primary legal materials, consisting of binding legal norms such as the Civil Code (Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Perdata), Law No. 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection (UUPK), Law No. 18 of 2012 concerning Food, Government Regulation No. 80 of 2019 concerning Trade Through Electronic Systems, Supreme Court Circular Letter (SEMA) No. 4 of 2016 on the Implementation of the Formulation of the Results of the 2016 Plenary Meeting of the Chambers of the Supreme Court as Guidelines for Court Duties. The study also examines relevant Supreme Court decisions, such as Decision No. 1816 K/Pdt/1989, and the jurisprudence that has shaped the understanding of good faith in Indonesian contract law. (ii) Secondary legal materials, consisting of doctrines, scientific articles, monographs, and jurisprudence that provide theoretical and practical context. The selection of materials is guided by the relevance of the content (good faith, consumer protection, platform liability and food safety), the authority of the source and the timeliness of the argument. The literature is searched through commonly used legal and scientific databases and the official publications of state institutions (Harašić, 2022).

Data analysis is carried out qualitatively in two layers. The first layer is legal interpretation, including grammatical, systematic, historical and teleological interpretation, to test the internal (intralegal) coherence between norms, as well as the coherence of the regulatory objectives with the reality of the digital market (Strunskiy, 2021). Grammatical interpretation looks at the literal meaning of legal texts, systematic interpretation reads a provision within the legal system as a whole, historical interpretation traces how a norm developed and why, and teleological interpretation asks what the law is meant to achieve. The second layer is content analysis of regulatory materials, doctrine, and rulings to identify gaps, overlaps, and conceptual biases, for example, when

the objective standard of “good-faith buyers” is applied disproportionately to small but high-frequency food transactions (Karjoko et al., 2024). This involves systematic coding and categorization of textual materials to identify patterns and inconsistencies.

The findings of both layers of analysis are then synthesized into a prescriptive reconstruction framework that formulates a tripartite protection model: expanding the subject of “business actors” to include platforms, affirming platforms’ curatorial and transparency obligations, and redefining consumer prudential standards as operational “digital transactional vigilance.”

To maintain the traceability of arguments, this study keeps a chain of evidence by recording sources and lines of reasoning and runs an external coherence test by comparing findings across primary and secondary sources. The final output consists of normative recommendations that can be tested dogmatically (conformity with legal principles and systems) as well as functionally (conformity with the character of the tripolar food e-commerce market) (Valentin, 2025).

III. RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A. Inconsistency of the "Good Faith Buyer" Standard (SEMA No. 4 of 2016) in Low-Value Online Food Transactions

Based on Article 1338 paragraph (3) of the Civil Code, jurisprudence has strengthened the meaning of good faith, from Supreme Court Decision No. 1816 K/Pdt/1989 to SEMA No. 4 of 2016, with the basic aim of making contractual behavior more appropriate and fair. The principle of good faith in Indonesian contract law as stated in Article 1338 paragraph (3) of the Civil Code requires that contracts be executed in good faith, both subjective good faith (the honest belief of parties) and objective good faith (fairness in contractual performance).

Judicial decisions have elaborated this principle by setting criteria to determine whether a buyer has acted in good faith, especially in disputes concerning the acquisition of rights from non-owners or defective titles.

However, if the precautionary criteria in SEMA are applied uniformly to small, repetitive, and fast-paced food transactions in e-commerce, a mismatch arises between the ethical-dogmatic foundation and the reality of the digital market (Kurniawan et al., 2021). A verification burden that is reasonable in disputes over high-value assets (which have a registry and a document trail) becomes disproportionate when it is placed on food retail consumers who decide within minutes on the basis of visual information. From the perspective of the UUPK's goal of strengthening the weak parties, the strict application of SEMA actually increases transaction costs, reduces trust, and allows the risk of information asymmetry to remain high because the curation obligation is left mainly to consumers (Pangestu & Muramuzi, 2025). In this way, physical due diligence, which is impossible in the digital space, is replaced with realistic “digital transactional vigilance” on the consumer side, such as checking verification badges, mandatory information summaries, validated reviews, and the availability of return guarantees, while counter-duties are placed on platforms and sellers to reduce information asymmetry (Herzallah & Al-Sharafi, 2025).

The Doctrinal Foundation of Good Faith in Indonesian Civil Law

To strengthen the legal analysis, the theoretical framework of good faith in civil law must first be examined as the main normative basis. The concept of good faith (*goede trouw*) in Indonesian civil law is derived from Article 1338 paragraph (3) of the Civil Code which states that agreements must be carried out in good faith. This provision covers two dimensions, namely the subjective dimension (the honest belief of the contracting parties at the time of entering into

the agreement) and the objective dimension (the behavior of the parties in carrying out their obligations, including fairness and reasonableness).

Traditionally, the subjective element requires the buyer to believe honestly that the seller is entitled to transfer title to the goods. In high-value transactions involving registry-based assets (e.g., land or vehicles), this belief is usually established through document verification and formal procedures. The objective element, however, requires contractual performance to be fair, taking into account the legitimate expectations of the parties and the broader context of the transaction.

Supreme Court Decision No. 1816 K/Pdt/1989 and subsequent decisions have built a body of jurisprudence that sets out certain standards to assess good faith, such as: the formal procedures and verification of documents, due diligence over the object of the transaction (status and validity), verification of the authority of the seller, physical inspection of the goods prior to the transaction, and attention to abnormal price indicators as signals of possible fraud.

These criteria were developed within the framework of traditional, face-to-face transactions of high-value registrable assets. The underlying rationale is that buyers in such transactions have both the opportunity and the responsibility to conduct thorough verification before completing the transaction. However, as will be demonstrated, these criteria are not easily transferable to the digital food e-commerce context.

Table 1. Conformity of the Criteria in SEMA No. 4/2016 with Online Food Transactions

No	SEMA criteria (core)	Relevance in Food E-Commerce	Impact if Applied Literally	Liability Allocation Alternatives (Brief)
1	Formal procedures & documents	Medium (microtransactions, rarely detailed documents)	Friction & transaction fees rise	Low (unregistered food per unit)
2	<i>Object due diligence</i> (status/validity)	Low (unregistered food per unit)	Overload on consumers	Platforms: curation & <i>pre-screening</i> ; Seller: original info/BPOM/expired
3	Verify the seller's authority	Medium (sellers are often anonymous)	The risk of fraud remains high when the burden is placed on consumers	Platform: KYC/ <i>verified seller</i> badge
4	Ex-ante physical examination	Low (impossible in the digital space)	Unrealistic standards	Platform/seller: photo/label mandatory; Platform: refund/return guarantee

5	Unnatural price indicators	High (universal signal)	Useful yet crude	Platform: <i>price-anomaly flag</i> ; Consumer: avoid extreme prices without reputation
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Source: Author's Review, 2025

Based on Article 1338 paragraph (3) of the Civil Code, the objectification of good faith, traced from Supreme Court Decision No. 1816 K/Pdt/1989 to SEMA No. 4/2016, aims in principle to make contractual behavior more appropriate and fair by requiring due diligence from the buyer (Nugrahenti & Hernawan, 2024). However, as Table 1 shows, this objective design, which grew out of high-value, registry-based assets, does not automatically fit the small, repetitive, and fast-moving online food ecosystem. This is where the doctrinal foundations and the reality of the digital market diverge.

First, formal procedures and documents are of medium relevance, since microtransactions rarely come with detailed files. The application of this standard can actually increase friction and costs. A reasonable correction would be to centralize documentation obligations on the platform/seller (e.g., automated invoices and standardized terms). Consumers, meanwhile, only need to keep proof of the transaction and a summary of pre-contractual information, so that the spirit of objective good faith is maintained without burdening the weaker party.

Second, due diligence on the object suits land and vehicles, which have a public registry, but not food, which is not registered per unit. Shifting the responsibility for verifying the validity of the object to consumers overburdens them. The burden should instead rest on the platform (curation and pre-screening of risk categories, allowlist/blocklist) and on sellers (disclosure of

origin, distribution permits or BPOM registration where relevant, and expiration dates) (Kumar & Gupta, 2021). For consumers, realistic due diligence becomes “digital transactional vigilance”: checking the signals available on product pages, such as origin, distribution permits, and expiration dates.

Third, verification of seller authority is essential, but it is not effective when charged to consumers in a largely anonymous space. This function is more appropriately carried out by the platform through KYC and verified seller badges, which are dogmatically in line with Article 7 of the UUPK regarding the good faith of business actors and, at the same time, reduce information asymmetry without shifting the burden to the weakest parties (Dong et al., 2024).

Fourth, physical inspections before payment are practically impossible to implement in food e-commerce; imposing them only creates a standard that is impossible to meet. Substitutes that offer equivalent protection are mandatory photo and description standards, quality labels including expiration dates, and a refund or return guarantee from the platform as *ex post* compensation; this approach maintains contractual fairness without sacrificing efficiency (Szenderák et al., 2025a). Finally, price indicators are not inherently strong signals in every context; to become operational, they need to be integrated into the platform interface as a price-anomaly flag. Consumers are advised to avoid purchasing from sellers without a reputation or verification (Szenderák et al., 2025b).

Given the UUPK’s aim of empowering the weaker party, Table 1 shows that the strict application of SEMA puts a burden of prudence on consumers, generates excessive transaction costs, and does not generate deterrent effects on platforms/sellers. Under a proportionality test, SEMA standards may be effective in deterring fraud but are inefficient because technology-based approaches such as curation, verification, and transparency may be more effective. At the stricto

sensu level, the social costs in the form of market friction, digital exclusion, and declining trust are even greater than the benefits obtained. Therefore, standards need to be calibrated: from physical due diligence to digital transactional vigilance. Operationally, the platform should provide objective KYC, verification badges, curation of risk categories, traceability of lots and expiration dates, risk and price flagging, disclosure of key information before the buyer clicks “buy,” and a conclusive refund or return mechanism (Dhakar et al., 2025).

Sellers are required to be transparent about origin, distribution permits or BPOM registration (if any), expiration dates, and the truthfulness of visual and informational material (Ospital et al., 2023). Consumers, for their part, exercise realistic and measurable digital vigilance: checking verification badges, reading mandatory information summaries, and assessing validated reviews, instead of being required to carry out physical due diligence, which is impossible. By differentiating legal standards according to transaction characteristics and adopting a tripolar regulatory framework that imposes objective obligations on both sellers and digital platforms, the teleological objective of the Consumer Protection Law (UUPK) can still protect good-faith consumers without unnecessarily reducing the efficiency and innovation of digital commerce.

B. Critical Inventory and Evaluation of Food Consumer Protection Legal Tools

The legal framework governing consumer protection in digital food transactions rests on three main foundations: the Consumer Protection Law of 1999, the Food Law of 2012, and doctrinal perspectives developed in legal scholarship. Together, these sources provide the normative basis for regulating consumer rights and business obligations in Indonesia’s digital marketplace. The norm inventory shows that the UUPK provides baseline rights as well as baseline duties: the right to security, safety, and correct information (Article 4), the

obligation of business actors to act in good faith, be honest, and guarantee quality (Article 7), as well as a strict prohibition on the circulation of damaged/contaminated food, food without expiration dates, and misleading advertisements (Articles 8–9). Textually, this design is comprehensive for the bipolar seller–buyer relationship. The Food Law, meanwhile, addresses product and process aspects, such as the responsibility of the state and business actors for the availability and safety/quality of food, sanitation requirements across the supply chain, distribution permits for processed food, and strict labeling and advertising rules. The UUPK thus protects the consumer side (rights and protective practices), while the Food Law secures the product side (safety and fitness) (van der Meulen, 2025).

A distinction must be drawn between legal gaps (*rechtsleemte*) and implementation gaps. A legal gap is a situation in which the current legal framework does not cover a certain issue or phenomenon. An implementation gap is a situation in which the legal framework addresses an issue properly but is not effectively enforced or applied in practice. The distinction matters for identifying appropriate reform strategies.

Legal gaps in food e-commerce are: (1) lack of explicit provisions on the role and responsibilities of e-commerce platforms as intermediaries in food transactions; (2) lack of specific regulations on digital information obligations of food products (e.g., structured data fields for expiration dates, allergen information, and certification status); (3) lack of standards for digital due diligence that would replace physical inspection requirements in e-commerce; and (4) lack of provisions on the cross-border nature of e-commerce and its implications for food safety enforcement. Implementation gaps are: (1) limited capacity of regulatory authorities (e.g., BPOM) to monitor and enforce regulations across millions of product listings; (2) challenges in tracking and

verifying product information in the digital environment; (3) difficulties in establishing liability when multiple actors (sellers, platforms, couriers) are involved in the transaction chain; and (4) limited effectiveness of manual inspection and verification processes in the face of rapidly changing product listings. The difference between legal gaps and implementation gaps has important implications for regulatory reform. Legal gaps require legislative or regulatory amendments that create new normative provisions for issues not previously regulated. Implementation gaps, on the other hand, require improvements in institutional capacity, enforcement mechanisms, and technological infrastructure so that compliance becomes more effective. The current regulatory framework shows weaknesses in both respects.

The same distinction also points to future reform priorities. Regulatory deficiencies call for statutory amendments or subordinate regulations that introduce new legal norms to close the existing legal vacuum. Implementation weaknesses, by contrast, call for stronger institutional coordination, better enforcement systems, and technological innovation that can facilitate regulatory compliance. Both categories of problems coexist in Indonesia's current legal framework governing digital food commerce.

The main issue concerns how the Consumer Protection Law (UUPK) and the Food Law operate in a tripolar e-commerce environment. First, neither statute explicitly regulates the responsibility of digital platforms for product curation and transaction management, so legal accountability is scattered among several actors. Second, the speed, scale, and cross-border nature of electronic commerce make conventional supervision less effective, because traditional regulatory approaches cannot monitor millions of constantly changing online products. Third, the information obligations under the UUPK and the Food Law remain oriented toward conventional business practices and have not been fully

adapted to the digital environment. As a result, consumers still face serious information asymmetry and often rely on online reviews that may be incomplete, manipulated, or unreliable.

Existing legal doctrine supports the view that these structural weaknesses are real. Dealing with the complexity of electronic commerce requires an integrated regulatory strategy that combines legal reform, technological innovation, and international cooperation to achieve effective consumer protection in the digital marketplace. Gupta and Bhattacharjee (2020) explain that consumers' inability to inspect products physically before purchase significantly increases the likelihood of dissatisfaction and disputes over product quality. From this perspective, digital consumer protection cannot rely on a single legislative instrument; it requires harmonization across several legal regimes and coordinated action among the authorities responsible for consumer protection, food regulation, public health, trade, and law enforcement.

The regulatory weaknesses described above create significant legal risks in practice. The most visible problem stems from the absence of explicit rules on platform responsibility, which creates a liability vacuum because it remains unclear whether losses from food products sold through e-commerce should be borne by the seller, the platform, or both. Courts therefore often have difficulty determining whether a digital platform is merely an intermediary or should be treated as a business actor with direct legal obligations. This uncertainty seriously affects consumers seeking legal remedies and complicates the risk management strategies of platform operators.

The lack of standardized digital information requirements also perpetuates information asymmetry and distorts consumer decision-making. When essential product information is displayed only through low-quality images of labels rather than standardized digital information, consumers find it

difficult to compare products or to identify key information such as expiration dates, ingredients, and allergen warnings. The issue therefore goes beyond transaction convenience and touches on the constitutional guarantee of consumers' right to receive accurate information and the State's obligation to protect them from potential harm under Article 28H of the 1945 Constitution.

The absence of a clear standard for digital due diligence also creates serious evidentiary difficulties in dispute resolution. Consumers cannot inspect a product before completing the purchase, while platforms have no explicit obligation to verify the accuracy of product information. Proving fault and determining legal responsibility therefore become much harder whenever harm occurs. This evidentiary problem is especially significant for food, because unsafe products can quickly cause serious consequences, including food poisoning from contaminated items.

Differences in the level of regulatory enforcement between jurisdictions also make regulatory arbitrage easier. Sellers can set up businesses in countries with weaker consumer protection regimes and then market their products to Indonesian consumers through digital marketplaces. Such cross-border business models create additional consumer protection and food safety risks that the current Indonesian legal framework has not adequately addressed.

Existing laws are strong on consumer rights and food safety but weak on regulating e-commerce platforms, digital information obligations, and cross-border enforcement. The three proposed corrections are as follows. First, updating the role of the platform as a "business actor" with curatorial obligations and digital disclosure. Second, clarifying the platform's responsibilities in pre-screening and returns. Third, empowering consumers with digital prudence standards that are easier to measure. This reform aims to integrate platforms into the e-commerce ecosystem to ensure efficiency and safe access to food.

C. Risk Mapping of Food Transactions in E-Commerce with Legal Protection Instruments

To visualize the gap between risk and protection, Table 2 maps the specific risks in online food transactions against relevant legal instruments, along with an analysis of their weaknesses.

Table 2. Risk Mapping of Food Transactions in E-Commerce with Legal Protection Instruments

No.	Specific Risks in Food E-Commerce	Protection Instruments in UUPK	Protection Instruments in Food Law	Implementation Gaps/Weaknesses Analysis
1.	Receiving products approaching/past the expiration date.	Article 8(1)(g): The prohibition applies without a time limit.	Article 91(1)(e): Requirement to display the date, month and year of expiry on the label.	Clearance sales of items close to expiration are often not transparent, even though this is prohibited. Manually monitoring millions of product SKUs is difficult.
2.	Composition and/or allergen information is incomplete or inaccurate.	Article 4c: The right to accurate, transparent, and honest information. Article 8(1)(i): Obligation to include the composition.	Article 91(1)(b): Obligation to include a list of ingredients used.	Information is often just a photo of a label that is not clearly readable. There is no minimum standard for displaying product information on

				the platform. Consumers with allergies are at high risk.
3.	Fictitious sellers disappear after a transaction (<i>hit and run</i>).	Article 7a: Duty of good faith of business actors.	-	The UUPK does not expressly provide for the liability of the platforms. When sellers disappear, consumers often have difficulty claiming compensation, as the platform usually shelters behind its role as a means of exchange.
4.	Food products are damaged/contaminated due to poor packaging or logistics.	Article 4a: Right to security. Article 19: Duty of business actors to pay compensation.	Article 71(1): Duty to ensure food safety. Article 86(2): Packaging shall protect against damage/contamination.	The responsibility for this lies with the seller (packager) and the carrier. The claims process can be difficult and time-consuming, particularly if the damage is not immediately apparent.
5.	Misleading ads about the health benefits or quality of the product (e.g., “organic” without certification).	Article 9(1): Prohibition of advertising that is not true or as if it has specific	Article 100(2): Prohibition of providing false/misleading information on	Oversight of health claims or extraordinary claims (such as “organic” or “gluten-free”)

		quality standards.	labels/advertisements.	on digital platforms is very weak. BPOM and related institutions are overwhelmed by the need to verify every claim.
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Source: Author's Review, 2025

Table 2 illustrates the risk profile of food e-commerce and reveals a recurring pattern: basic legal obligations already exist but are never fully translated into digital information that consumers can easily use when deciding to buy. For example, the Consumer Protection Law prohibits the sale of products without expiration information, while the Food Law requires expiration dates to be disclosed. The main problem, however, lies not in the legal obligation itself but in the absence of transparent information on a product's remaining shelf life (Hadi & Riqiey, 2025). Promotions such as clearance discounts often conceal products close to expiration, because the information appears only in package photographs rather than as structured digital data that could trigger automatic warnings. A similar issue arises with ingredient and allergen disclosure. Although legislation recognizes consumers' right to accurate information and obliges producers to disclose ingredients, online marketplace interfaces often provide only low-resolution images, without dedicated fields requiring sellers to specify ingredients or allergens. Consumers, especially people with food allergies, therefore face unnecessary health risks because of incomplete digital disclosure (Maganja et al., 2023).

The threat of "fake sellers" exposes a further loophole: the UUPK stipulates that business actors must act in good faith, but it does not explicitly define the

platform as an actor obliged to verify merchants. When sellers vanish, consumers are often stranded as the platform hides behind its role as a facilitator (Prabowo & Sulistianingsih, 2023). As for products damaged or contaminated through packaging and logistics, the right to safety and compensation exists, as do packaging obligations meant to prevent such damage. Without a clear digital handover trail showing who handed the goods to whom, when, and in what condition, the claims process becomes complicated and expensive, especially when the damage is detected only later. Meanwhile, for advertising claims (e.g., “organic,” “gluten-free,” or health benefits), the prohibition on misleading claims becomes illusory when the volume of claims on platforms exceeds the authorities’ capacity for manual verification. Without certification gates and validation by design, normative promises have no coercive power in practice (Lumbanraja & Khasanah, 2022).

D. A Model for Consumer Protection in the Food Sector in the Digital Era with a Comprehensive and Synergistic Tripartite Approach

Addressing the vulnerability of food consumers in the digital era requires an approach that does not rely on a single pillar. What is needed is a tripartite protection system in which governments, business actors (including platforms), and consumers play mutually reinforcing roles. This section sets out the specific roles and responsibilities of each pillar and stresses the need for regulatory clarity on the separation of executive and judicial functions.

1. Revitalizing the Government's Role in Proactive Regulation and Supervision

Digital platforms and technology companies require regulatory reforms. The government ought to broaden the definition of “business actors” to incorporate digital platforms and deploy technology-driven supervision. Regulations should include seller verification, product information standards,

and tiered liability for e-commerce platforms. Supervision should be proactive, using technologies such as AI to monitor products automatically. Cooperation between BPOM and e-commerce associations should be strengthened.

The rise of platform businesses has created tensions between traditional and new economic actors, and governments must respond to these tensions quickly. The evolution of regulatory models since the 1980s shows that governments should steer market mechanisms towards set objectives such as sustainability and justice by imposing detailed obligations on digital platforms (Larouche & de Streel, 2021). The evolution of ICT and digital technologies has greatly affected public service delivery and improved the capacity to monitor and control regulatory compliance digitally (Walker, 2021).

Modern rules should broaden the definition of “business actors” to cover digital platforms, thereby subjecting them to the same regulations as traditional businesses (Larouche & de Streel, 2021). Regulatory compliance tools based on technology such as Regulatory Technology (RegTech) and Supervisory Technology (SupTech) can make regulatory compliance more efficient and effective (Bagherifam et al., 2025).

Digital technology opens up new possibilities for monitoring, optimization and transparency in regulatory practice, especially in the management of natural resources and governance in the public sector. Governments are moving to a paradigm of "smart regulation" by using predictive analytics and Artificial Intelligence to foresee and prevent the negative impacts of technological progress (Ott, 2024).

Modern regulatory regimes are generally characterized by the cooperation of public, private and non-profit organizations, which promotes innovative forms of governance and improves the performance of the public sector (Donadelli & Matus, 2021). The new regulatory model focuses on a flexible,

experimental and participatory approach, which allows different stakeholders' interests to be represented in the regulatory process (Larouche & de Streel, 2021).

To face the challenges of the digital economy, the role of the state needs to be revived and regulation updated. By broadening the definition of "business actors" to include platforms and by using technology for proactive monitoring, governments can implement more effective and fair regulation, encouraging compliance as well as sustainable and innovative economic practices.

2. Legal and Ethical Obligations of Commercial Actors (Sellers and Platforms)

The expansion of digital commerce has considerably changed the legal and ethical obligations of commercial actors (sellers and platforms). E-commerce platforms can be liable for the sale of problematic goods by third-party sellers. Courts are still reluctant to hold platforms responsible under product liability and warranty laws, but there is increasing pressure to treat the platform as a seller in some cases to provide better consumer protection (Elvy, 2025).

The European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA) requires intermediary services to engage in transparency reporting, algorithmic accountability, and user rights protection to strengthen platform accountability (Stringhi, 2025). According to the mandate of the UUPK, business actors are required to provide accurate, transparent, and honest information. For the food sector, this should translate into a concrete obligation to display: a clear photo of the original product, an easy-to-read expiration date, a complete composition list, allergen information, halal certification status, and a distribution authorization number (P-IRT or BPOM MD/ML) explicitly in text format, not just an opaque label image.

Digital platforms should also be responsible for complaint handling and dispute resolution, acting as impartial intermediaries between sellers and

consumers. This role requires a reliable seller identification system and mechanisms that preserve transaction integrity during the purchasing process (Seo, 2025). The Digital Services Act (DSA) also includes due diligence obligations and structured risk assessment requirements intended to reduce systemic risks, including the spread of unlawful content and digital misinformation (Stringhi, 2025).

Consumer trust in the digital marketplace also depends on strong privacy protection, meaningful informed consent, and compliance with both preventive (*ex ante*) and corrective (*ex post*) regulatory obligations. Legislative instruments such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) emphasize transparency and accountability in the processing of personal information. In addition, transparency in content moderation and algorithmic decision-making has become more important for the ethical governance of artificial intelligence and digital platforms, because it lets users understand how their personal data are used and makes fair treatment across digital services easier to achieve (Arifin, Suryana, et al., 2025; Muralidharan & Savulescu, 2026). Ethically designed platforms supported by policy-driven privacy management systems are therefore essential for strengthening consumer confidence and protecting users' fundamental rights (Rahman & Adaji, 2025).

Digital platform ethics concerns fairness, the avoidance of bias, and inclusivity, with the aim of building systems that respect human dignity and support diverse communities (Perdana & Karim, 2025). A human-centered approach should include privacy, accountability, and awareness of the ethical consequences of their actions (Rahman & Adaji, 2025). Because food is perishable, companies and platforms (especially those with integrated logistics solutions) need to invest in and comply with packaging and delivery standards that guarantee the quality and safety of their products, for instance by using

thermal packaging or refrigerated delivery for certain items.

Maintaining consumer trust requires more than regulatory compliance; it also requires transparent governance, responsible data management, and meaningful consumer control over personal information (Mileros & Forchheimer, 2025). Digital platforms should ensure that vulnerable consumer groups do not become targets of exploitation, while also providing accessible and effective mechanisms for complaints and remedies. In this regard, platform operators and sellers have both legal and ethical obligations to protect consumers, safeguard personal data, and conduct their business responsibly, contributing to a trustworthy, fair, and sustainable digital marketplace. In food e-commerce transactions, the legal relationships involve four main parties: sellers, buyers, platforms, and couriers. These relationships are governed by electronic contracts and by the principle of good faith under Article 1338 of the Civil Code, which needs to be restated to address digital risks such as fraud or system errors (Nugrahenti & Hernawan, 2024). Sellers are responsible for the quality of goods under Law No. 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection; buyers are consumers whose rights are protected; platforms are intermediaries facilitating transactions under Government Regulation No. 80 of 2019 concerning Trade Through Electronic Systems; and couriers provide delivery services subject to logistics laws such as Law No. 22 of 2009 concerning Road Traffic and Transportation (Subagyono et al., 2024).

The courier is an independent contractor who is not directly bound by the sale and purchase contract; it acts as a subcontractor of the platform or seller, with limited liability for the integrity of the goods in transit. Couriers must uphold food safety standards, such as temperature control for fresh produce, and may be protected by insurance or *force majeure* clauses. Where they are integrated with the platform, they are positioned more closely to it but remain

legally separate (Kıdak, 2025).

When problems arise with food items (e.g., damage, loss, or non-compliance), legal responsibility is distributed according to the principle of *causa proxima*, with an emphasis on reformulating good faith to increase platform transparency (D'Alessio, 2021). For example, the seller bears full responsibility for the initial quality of the goods, such as stale food before delivery, and must provide compensation under Article 19 of the UUPK; the courier is liable for damage during delivery, such as improper handling, and can be sued directly or through the platform; and the platform itself is responsible for facilitation and verification, for instance when its system fails, and has a duty to promote mechanisms such as seller and courier ratings to mitigate risks (Lafargue et al., 2022). Reconstructing the consumer protection framework for food e-commerce requires a regulatory strategy that covers stronger legal responsibility for digital platforms, mandatory food safety certification for logistics providers, and fair and accountable algorithmic governance. Together, these measures contribute to a safer, more transparent, and more equitable digital marketplace for consumers.

3. Empowering Consumers as Smart and Careful Buyers

The burden on consumers must be realistic and proportionate to the risk. The concept of “prudence” in SEMA No. 4/2016 needs to be redefined in the digital context. Rather than expecting consumers to examine the physical origins of goods or resolve complex dispute status, digital consumer prudence should be about digital proficiency and prudent transactional vigilance. Education, online resources, and forward-looking policies can empower consumers to develop the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions and protect themselves from risks.

Consumer education programs improve consumer awareness and financial literacy, encourage sustainable consumption, and help prevent exploitation

(Mohamed & Easwaran, 2025). Education that combines theory and practice can give consumers the tools to make well-informed choices. Education that helps consumers recognize their inner strength and social potential can lead to sustainable consumer empowerment. This type of education encourages consumers to question the status quo and bring about systemic change (Robles, 2025). Consumer education is an important part of consumer policy, especially in the UK, where it is used to give consumers the abilities and knowledge to make informed decisions and protect their interests (Mohamed & Easwaran, 2025). Digital resources can strongly influence consumer behavior by providing expert advice and changing how consumers evaluate product features. Such tools can help consumers make better decisions by updating their beliefs about product features and shaping how they assess those features (Bundorf et al., 2024). Consumers often turn to digital devices to reduce the perceived risks of purchasing decisions. These devices can provide clear and accessible information that helps consumers cope with brand confusion and make rational choices (Shiu, 2021). A combined approach of holistic education, proper use of digital devices, and supportive policies is needed to make consumers savvy and cautious shoppers. Attention to these areas will put consumers in a better position to make informed decisions, reduce risks, and protect their interests in the market.

In essence, this three-pronged protection paradigm is a dynamic system of checks and balances that provides a solid basis for protecting the interests involved. The government alone cannot cope with the huge scale of e-commerce (Miao et al., 2025). Relying solely on business actors may create conflicts between profit and safety and may also place an unfair burden on consumers because of unequal information and power. When consumers, platforms, and governments work together, however, they reinforce one another. Alert consumers supply

data and report violations to the platform, and the government regulates the platform so that it follows up on those reports. The government can then use the data to formulate evidence-based policies. Consumer protection thus becomes a living ecosystem in which continuous feedback drives ongoing monitoring and improvement.

Analytically, the role of the executive branch in setting norms (regulatory/executive function) must be distinguished from the role of the Supreme Court in interpreting the law and establishing judicial guidelines (judicial function). The recommendations in this study cover both functions, so the institutional actor responsible for each recommendation must be identified.

Executive/Regulatory Functions (to be undertaken by the government through legislative or regulatory processes):

1. Expanding the definition of “Business Actor”: The government should amend the definition of “Business Actor” through legislative means (revision of Law No. 8 of 1999) or regulatory means (a Government Regulation implementing the UUPK), because e-commerce platforms are not specifically regulated under the UUPK. If explicitly included, platforms would be subject to the obligations and liabilities set out in the UUPK, such as the obligation to provide the correct information, guarantee product quality and offer compensation for damages.
2. Digital Information Standards: The government should issue regulations that require specific, structured information requirements for food products sold through e-commerce platforms. This would include minimum standards for display of expiration dates (in machine-readable format), ingredient and allergen information (in structured data fields), certification status (halal, organic, BPOM registration), and seller identity. Such standards would address the

current practice where critical product information is often presented only as blurry photos of labels.

3. Technology-enabled regulatory oversight should also become an integral part of future enforcement strategy. Government agencies can use artificial intelligence and other digital monitoring technologies to supervise online product listings, automatically detect suspicious claims such as unsupported health benefit statements, and carry out large-scale data analytics to identify sellers and products that present higher regulatory risk. This approach requires expanding the technological capability of institutions such as BPOM and the Ministry of Trade, and formal cooperation mechanisms with e-commerce platforms must also be established to facilitate data sharing and coordinated enforcement.
4. Another regulatory priority concerns an explicit definition of platform responsibility throughout the digital transaction process. Future regulations should clearly specify obligations relating to seller verification through Know Your Customer (KYC) procedures, product moderation covering pre-screening and removal of non-compliant listings, accessible dispute resolution mechanisms, and a tiered liability framework in which platform responsibility corresponds to the degree of involvement in, and knowledge of, unlawful activity in the marketplace.
5. Strengthening enforcement mechanisms: The government should strengthen enforcement mechanisms to include: expedited procedures for removal of non-compliant product listings; administrative sanctions for non-compliant platforms and sellers; and coordination mechanisms between relevant authorities (consumer protection, food

safety, health, trade and law enforcement).

Judicial Functions (to be undertaken by the Supreme Court through judicial guidelines and jurisprudence):

1. Revisiting the standard of good faith: The Supreme Court should issue a new Technical Guideline or amend SEMA No. 4 of 2016 to develop standards for digital transactional vigilance, setting a more equitable standard of “good faith” on the part of buyers based on the principle of proportionality. This would mean replacing the requirement for physical due diligence with a digital due diligence standard, taking into account:
 - a. The availability and accessibility of information on the platform
 - b. The platform's verification mechanisms (e.g., badges for sellers, certification of products)
 - c. The transparency of product information (e.g., expiration dates, ingredients, allergens)
 - d. The availability of consumer protection mechanisms (e.g., return policies, resolution of disputes)
 - e. The reasonable expectations of the consumer in the digital environment
2. Develop guidance on platform liability: The Supreme Court should develop jurisprudence that provides guidance on the circumstances under which e-commerce platforms should be considered “business actors” with direct liability for harms caused by products sold through their platforms. This would involve articulating criteria such as:
 - a. The platform's level of control over the transaction
 - b. The platform's knowledge of the non-compliant product or seller
 - c. The platform's role in product presentation and curation

- d. The platform's receipt of economic benefit from the transaction
3. Develop standards for digital evidence: The Supreme Court should establish guidelines for the evaluation of digital evidence in consumer disputes, including standards for the admissibility and weight of product information displayed on platforms, transaction records, communications between parties, and platform moderation decisions.

This distinction has practical consequences for implementing the proposed reforms, beyond its theoretical value. Recommendations directed at the executive branch require legislative or regulatory action, which involves the political process and coordination among several government agencies. Recommendations directed at the judicial branch require the Supreme Court to exercise its interpretive authority, possibly through the issuance of circular letters or the development of case law. Both sets of recommendations are substantively sound, but they need to be directed to the appropriate institutional actors to be effectively implemented.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study identifies two main problems: (1) the irrelevance of the “good faith buyer” standard under Supreme Court Circular Letter (SEMA) No. 4/2016 for small-scale, repetitive, and fast-paced online food transactions; and (2) regulatory ambiguity regarding the role of platforms. A literal application of that criterion burdens consumers without creating a deterrent effect for platforms or sellers. The Consumer Protection Law (UUPK) and the Food Law contain both a legal gap (absence of rules on platform liability and digital information standards) and an implementation gap, resulting in a liability vacuum, information asymmetry, evidentiary challenges, and regulatory arbitrage.

To overcome these regulatory weaknesses, this study proposes a tripartite

consumer protection framework. First, the government should modernize existing regulations by expanding the legal definition of business actor to include digital platforms and by adopting proactive, technology-based supervisory mechanisms. Second, platforms should be formally recognized as transaction curators with graduated legal responsibility covering seller verification, information transparency, and effective dispute resolution. Third, the Supreme Court should formulate a proportionate standard of “digital transactional vigilance” through judicial guidelines and jurisprudence, replacing the traditional expectation of physical prudence, which is not compatible with online transactions. The main theoretical contribution of this framework lies in redefining good faith as digital reasonableness and in extending platform liability beyond neutral intermediary status toward that of a business actor with independent legal obligations, inspired by comparative regulatory models. Through a proper distribution of legislative, executive, and judicial responsibilities, the proposed framework seeks to achieve consumer protection that is both equitable and responsive to the realities of contemporary food e-commerce.

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