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PRESS RELEASE

www.consumersfiji.org

Council commends labelling action in the North

The Consumer Council commends the Macuata Rural Local Authority and Labasa health inspectors for taking a proactive action on those traders in the north who have selling rice with no proper labelling. The Northern Division and other rural areas in Fiji have long been a concern for the Council because of the weak or non-existing monitoring and enforcement of fair trading and consumer protection laws.

The Council supports any initiatives taken by local authorities in areas where enforcement and monitoring of fair trading and consumer protection laws may be weak or non-existent. The Council is always prepared to assist these local agencies especially with information, education and awareness. And we look forward to working in partnership with these authorities in not only monitoring food trade practices, but also educating consumers on their rights and responsibilities.

The Council would like to inform consumers in the north that its Labasa Office on 19 Jaduram Street (Phone: 8812559) is available for those who wish to lodge complaints or raise issues related to labelling, prices, and so forth.

Consumers have right to be informed and right to safety. Traders who do not reveal necessary information such as manufacturer's name, manufacturing date, expiry date, brand name, ingredients, contents etc are breaking the law and exposing consumers to health/safety risks.

While the Council will continue to keep consumers well informed of the steps they need to take when buying food products so that they can make better choices for themselves, **to ensure their own safety, consumers are advised to check the expiry dates and food labels on products they purchase.** Consumers who have inadvertently purchased expired or improperly labeled food products should quickly inform the retailer concerned. This will help prevent the sale of such products to other buyers. They are also advised to report offending retailers to the Central Board of Health and the Department of Fair Trading and Consumer Affairs should they come across the sale of expired food products or improper food labeling problems.

Retailers should bear the following in mind that there are specific requirements on the sale of food products under the Food Safety Regulations and the Fair Trading Decree they need to comply with. Retailers have to ensure that the product sold is not passed its expiry date and that products are properly labeled. In addition, importers and distributors of any pre-packed food product have to provide proper labeling.

The Council urges traders are advised to take responsibility in regularly checking and monitoring the expiry dates of their food products. Retailers should promptly return outdated or improperly labeled stocks of food products to the manufacturers/suppliers/distributors, or dispose of them in an appropriate manner.

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Mrs Premila Kumar
Chief Executive Officer