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Feature Article

Part III

Know the Measuring Instruments

You all may have used weighing scales in supermarkets or municipal markets but how many of us actually know how these measuring instruments work.

Determining the accurate weight or volume of products you purchase is fundamental to fair trade. As consumers we rely on the measuring equipment and the trader who reads the machine when we buy fruits or meat at the supermarket; spice or grog at a municipal market or simply pre-packed products such as sugar, flour, rice or cooking oil. Consumers need assurance that the goods they are purchasing are of accurate weight or measure.

There are times when we get complacent and forget to double-check whether the sticker placed after being weighed is correct because the weight or volume determine the price. No doubt, such weighing instruments require inspections and review to ensure that consumers receive the correct amount, volume or size of products.

Retailers also need to know that they are dealing with accurate weights or measures as they in turn purchase items based on weights or volumes from manufacturers, wholesalers or importers.

The *National and Trade Measurement Decree 1989* and its associated regulations control the use of measuring instruments through periodic inspections. This is to ensure such instruments furnish fair and just measure readings and the units of measure used comply with the prescribed Fiji legal units of measurement. The decree also looks at licensing of measuring instruments, repairers and sellers.

The inspectors from Department Of Weights and Measures have the powers to examine and test the measuring instruments used by businesses.

Section 27 (1) of the Decree states that every measuring instrument used for trade should be produced to an inspector for inspection at least once in every 12 months or before it is used.

As a consumer how will you know that the measuring instrument has been inspected by the Department Of Weights and Measures?

You can look for two things. First, check for the stamp (in form of a sticker) which carries date (date, month and year) of when the instrument was tested with a coat of arm and a serial number, pasted by the inspectors from the Department. This sticker stamp must be pasted on the face of the scale so that consumers can easily see the stamp. If the sticker stamp is missing or the date stated on the stamp has expired then the consumers should report the matter to the Department of Weights and Measures.

Secondly, the instrument must have a security seal attached to it which also symbolises that measuring instrument has been tested and has no discrepancies. It is highly likely that consumers may not be able to find security seal on the face of the weighing machine as it is placed mostly underneath the instrument.

Consumers have the right to ask the retailer to show them the security seal if they want to know if the instruments have been checked by the inspectors.

Inspectors can also stamp the measuring instruments with a rejection stamp or issue a rejection certificate.

If the inspectors reasonably believe that the trader is not complying with the Decree, they have the powers to seize and retain the measuring instrument.

Next Week, read more on security features of a trade measuring instrument.