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Feature Article

Part V

### **‘Know Your Responsibility’**

Fairness and honesty should be part and parcel of every business deals. This can be achieved if all parties engaged in the deal understand their responsibilities.

Consumers have been reminded to play a more proactive role and check on the weighing and measuring instruments to ensure they get the accurate readings for what they pay for.

At the same time, traders must ensure consumers receive value for their money.

In this article, we look at the responsibilities of consumers and traders in dealing with pre-packed shrinking items and measuring instruments used in the marketplace.

### **Consumers’ Responsibility**

- With the purchasing power in their hands, consumers have the freedom to examine the quality of pre-packed article to ensure its worth buying. Consumers should weigh the articles and crosscheck with the weight stated on the label. They must also ensure that weighing instruments are set to zero before products are weighed.
- When it comes to weighing of the items, consumers can rightfully check the weighing instrument used to ensure that the sticker stamp and tamper proof seal are placed by the Department of National Trade Measurements and Standards (DNTMS). Consumers need to also check the date when the instrument was inspected on the sticker.
- If the sticker stamp is not found (it may peel off over time), you may ask the operator to show the tamper proof seal of the instrument. If you find that the tamper proof seal has the words “VOID” visible on it, then it indicates that the weighing scale has been tampered with. This should be reported to the authorities (DNTMS) immediately.
- If the weighing instrument is not facing the consumer, he/she can ask the trader to place the weighing machine in a position, which is visible to consumers.

- Consumers buying goods sold by weight or measure must be in net weight which means the weight of any packaging is excluded from the weight.
- Same rules will apply if you are buying goods from a municipal market or the roadside stalls where measuring instruments are used. It is worth checking that the scales the trader is using are suitable.

### **Traders' Responsibility**

- When dealing with items which shrink in size, traders should be aware of permissible deficiency allowed for particular product. For example, chicken, potatoes, onions and garlic have a permissible deficiency of 5 per cent. Items such as cotton wool, washing soda and whole hams have 7 per cent permissible deficiency. If consumers raise a question on the weight of an item, then it becomes the trader's responsibility to explain the permissible deficiency.
- Traders should from time to time keep checking the pre-packed items which are known to shrink. If they find the items have surpassed its permissible deficiency, then it should be removed from the shelf, or repacked and labeled again. Then, it should be sold at a new price according to the new weight.
- Traders have to ensure their weighing instruments are, inspected, tested and stamped (certified) by DNTMS once in every 12 months. If due to wear and tear the instrument has been repaired, then it needs to be re-certified by the authorities before it is used in trade.
- Traders should accommodate a consumer's request if he/she wants to check the weight of any pre-packed article or check the weighing instrument for its accuracy or the measuring instrument to face him/her.

Both, consumers and traders can contact the Council, or the Department of National Trade Measurements and Standards for further information on this issue.