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PRESS RELEASE

Consumer Council of Fiji Exposes Alarming Diwali Market Surveillance Findings

A recent Diwali market surveillance conducted by the Consumer Council of Fiji (CCoF), beginning last week has uncovered a series of alarming violations that breach consumers' rights during this festive season.

An intensive surveillance of 20 supermarkets in the Central Division has revealed that 7 were retailing expired products, a clear breach of consumer rights and consumer protection laws. These supermarkets sought to offload expired items during the Diwali shopping frenzy when consumers are in a rush and stores are bustling with activity. This not only jeopardizes consumer health but also infringes on their right to purchase safe and properly labelled products.

“There is no acceptable excuse for having expired products on supermarket shelves and internal procedures must be put in place by supermarkets to ensure this never eventuates. However, what is even more concerning for the Council is that this is being done deliberately and the only deterrence which can now work is dishing out of the maximum fines by relevant authorities,” said CCoF CEO Seema Shandil.

In a similar vein, during the same round of surveillance, 5 supermarkets were found selling products with broken, open, or distorted packaging, attempting to dispose off such products amid the Diwali shopping frenzy. The sale of such products must be halted immediately, and supermarkets are reminded to adhere to best business practices and not exploit consumers during this joyous celebration.

CCoF CEO, Seema Shandil, expressed her concern, saying, "These findings are deeply troubling, especially during a time of celebration like Diwali. Supermarkets should not exploit the festive atmosphere to get rid of expired or damaged goods that could put consumers' health at risk. While we will continue our surveillance efforts and push for enforcement actions, we also urge consumers to be vigilant and watch out for expired products."

In addition to these issues, misleading sales and prices have also been discovered, with 4 supermarkets advertising products at a 'discounted' price but failing to disclose the original price. This borders on misleading advertising, creating the impression that products are on special, but consumers are unable to discern this as the original prices are missing. Furthermore, 8 supermarkets were found to be retailing products with no price tags, breaching consumers' right to information. Fiji's consumer protection laws require traders to display the prices of all products being retailed.



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Alarmingly, out of the 20 supermarkets surveyed, 7 were found to have hygiene issues such as dirty floors, unhygienic storage facilities, and rubbish in the supermarket. This not only compromises the quality of products but also poses health risks to consumers.

The Council is also conducting surveillance in the Western and Northern Division to unearth any unscrupulous practices.

As part of its commitment to ensuring consumers are protected and informed, the Council will persist in its efforts to hold those who breach consumer rights accountable. The Council urges consumers to exercise caution and check product labels while shopping. If expired products are encountered, consumers are encouraged to report such cases to the Council for swift action.

For more information on consumer rights, reporting violations, and staying informed, please visit our website at consumersfiji.org or contact our helpline at 155.

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Ms Seema Shandil

Chief Executive Officer