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Consumer Council of Fiji



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PRESS RELEASE

Misleading Product Labelling Concerning – Council

Consumers must be provided with any and all information pertaining to the products they are intending to purchase so that they can make informed decisions.

The recent controversy surrounding the ‘Golden Circle’ brand Apple Juice has brought this issue to the forefront, whereby statements from the Fiji Muslim League and the Sanatan Dharm Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji have highlighted the use of clarifying agents derived from beef, and flavour enhancers derived from alcohol in this product.

“While this poses an issue for followers of Hindu and Muslim faiths who adhere to dietary restrictions based on religious beliefs, the Council is also concerned about the broader issue of consumer rights and transparency in product labelling,” says Consumer Council CEO Seema Shandil.

The Council recalls a similar incident in 2014 when a consumer inquiry in Australia revealed the use of such ingredients in the same product, leading to widespread community outrage among Hindu and Muslim communities. In response, Kraft Heinz Australia clarified that ‘beef-derived gelatine was used to remove the ‘cloudiness’ in its apple juice and “very small amounts of alcohol” were combined with concentrated flavours to keep them “stable, clean and crisp.” A spokesperson further said that while these ingredients were used in the manufacturing process, they were filtered out, thus not present in the final product which is why they were not listed as ingredients.’

However, the Council asserts that manufacturers should disclose the use of such items in the manufacturing process, irrespective of their presence in the final product. “Consumers deserve complete information to make informed choices,” adds Shandil.

Furthermore, the Council says this issue raises more questions on the validity of claims such as “no artificial colours, flavours, or preservatives” made by this manufacturer on their products, when such methods are used during the manufacturing process. While the Council advises consumers to scrutinize ingredient listings, it also calls for accountability on the part of manufacturers for making potentially misleading claims and withholding vital information from consumers.

The Council urges both consumers and manufacturers to prioritize transparency and integrity in product labelling, ensuring that consumers can trust the products they purchase.

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