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PRESS RELEASE

### Consumers Urged to Stay Vigilant Against Post-Flooding Hazards

Fiji is well within its adverse weather season, and communities have already experienced flooding within the past 2 weeks. With further adverse weather likely, the Consumer Council of Fiji is urging consumers to remain vigilant with their purchases.

In the aftermath of flooding, past years have shown instances of traders attempting to sell flood-damaged goods at discounted prices. Such practices are not only unethical but also illegal under the Food Safety Act of Fiji. Selling contaminated food or goods compromised by floodwaters poses serious health risks to consumers. The Council is calling on all traders to dispose of such goods responsibly instead of selling them to consumers. Buyers are urged to inspect items carefully, especially staples such as flour, rice, daal, and fresh produce, and to avoid any items with damaged or swollen packaging or expired dates.

Prolonged power outages caused by adverse weather further exacerbate these risks, especially in relation to frozen foods. Consumers must remain cautious, inspecting frozen items for signs of spoilage, including discoloration, unusual odors, or excessive ice build-up. Traders are reminded that selling frozen goods compromised by power outages is a direct violation of safety regulations.

“Public safety is non-negotiable, and ethical practices in food handling are mandatory,” says Consumer Council CEO Seema Shandil.

The Council has in previous years, also observed the exploitative practice of price gouging, where traders are seen inflating prices for essential items such as candles, batteries, and non-perishable foods.

“Such practices are explicitly prohibited under the FCCC Act, and traders caught engaging in price gouging can face legal action,” says CEO Seema Shandil. “We strongly encourage consumers to document instances of inflated pricing, including keeping receipts or taking photographs, and to report these to the Council for immediate investigation,” she adds.

Post-flood recovery requires collective effort and accountability. The Consumer Council is advising traders that unethical practices, including the sale of compromised goods or price

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gouging should not take place, as many consumers are already struggling. Traders must act responsibly and in full compliance with legal standards.

Consumers are reminded to inspect goods thoroughly before purchase and to report any suspicious or unethical practices to the Consumer Council's national toll-free helpline at 155, or email [complaints@consumersfiji.org](mailto:complaints@consumersfiji.org).

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