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PRESS RELEASE

Consumer Council Calls for Vigilance Amid Festival Festivities

With thousands of visitors expected to attend ongoing festivals, enjoying stalls, rides, and marketplaces, these events promise exciting experiences for families and tourists alike. However, consumers are reminded to remain alert to safeguard their safety and protect their rights.

The Consumer Council of Fiji has observed that while most vendors operate responsibly, some consumers have reported issues related to food quality, pricing, and refunds. The Council also noted several complaints shared on social media, including a viral post where a consumer claimed to have received stale, foul-smelling chicken. To address these concerns, the Consumer Council, together with the Suva City Council, conducted a joint surveillance at the Hibiscus Festival and rectified the issues to ensure compliance with food safety standards and fair-trading practices.

Council CEO, Seema Shandil, emphasized the importance of strict adherence to food safety standards. “We acknowledge that vendors face challenges such as managing large crowds, meeting high demand, and operating without fully equipped kitchens. However, food safety cannot be compromised. All food, especially meat products, must be stored at the correct temperatures to prevent spoilage and cooked thoroughly before being served. Vendors also have a responsibility to maintain clean stalls, keep pests and rodents away, and ensure staff wear proper protective equipment, such as gloves,” she said.

Furthermore, consumers are encouraged to plan their spending carefully, compare prices, and always request receipts, as these serve as proof if a complaint needs to be lodged. Vendors selling electronics or clothing products should practice transparency in their pricing, and ensure they are selling quality products. “Festivals should not be used as an opportunity to clear old stock under the guise of a ‘sale.’ If vendors claim that items are discounted, they should also disclose the normal retail price to allow consumers to make informed choices,” added Shandil.

The Council urges all festival-goers to remain vigilant, assert their rights responsibly, and report any concerns immediately. Consumers with concerns or complaints are encouraged to contact the Council via the toll-free National Consumer Helpline on 155 or email complaints@consumersfiji.org.

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