



10 December 2025

PRESS RELEASE

Intensified Festive Surveillance Flags Serious Consumer Issues

As consumers fuel marketplace activity in the ongoing festive season, there is a greater need for vigilance and responsible trader practice nationwide. As part of its annual festive-season monitoring, the Consumer Council of Fiji has stepped up market surveillance nationwide. Our officers are also participating in joint operations as a key member of the Price Monitoring and Enforcement Taskforce (PMET). The findings from these efforts to date are a cause for serious concern.

From 1 August 2025 to date, the Council has carried out 1,014 market surveillances, covering supermarkets, retail outlets, open markets, restaurants, eateries, bakeries, service stations, and various service providers across Suva, Lautoka and Labasa. These operations formed part of the Council's proactive approach to ensure fair pricing, regulatory compliance, food safety, and transparent business practices ahead of the festive rush.

Numerous issues were uncovered during these surveillance activities. Serious pricing and regulatory breaches were identified, including price control violations, the absence of price tags, misleading advertisements, omission of VAT on receipts, and the use of exclusionary clauses in sales terms. Several traders were also found operating without mandatory licences such as Business Registration Certificates, Health Licences, Tobacco Licences and Liquor Licences.

Food safety and hygiene concerns were among the most critical findings. The Council officers discovered expired items, rotten or wilted produce, damaged packaging, dusty or dented cans, overcrowded freezers, ice-build-up, and pest presence including flies and cockroaches in both supermarkets and eateries. Some butcher areas and storage spaces required urgent cleaning, and certain pre-packed food items lacked proper labelling.

Additional issues were identified across various service sectors. Restaurants, cafés and eateries displayed poor PPE compliance, uncovered food, pest issues and improper waste management. Bakeries had uncovered bread, flies, and price control violations. Service stations were found with misleading advertisements, dusty shelves, and missing price tags. Some beauty and massage services failed to reflect VAT on receipts, particularly barbershops. While hotels and most financial service providers were generally compliant, isolated cases of misleading advertisements and hidden fees were still recorded.

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Enforcement actions were taken where necessary. Expired and unsafe food items were removed immediately, defective products were taken off shelves, and misleading promotional displays were corrected on the spot. Stern warnings were issued to non-compliant businesses, with many traders committing to rectify issues promptly, while more serious breaches were referred to the relevant authorities for further action.

“The findings of our surveillance operations indicate that while many traders are doing the right thing, there are still some who continue to put consumers at risk through unethical and careless practices,” said Council CEO Ms Seema Shandil. “We remind all traders that customers are not just transactions, they are the backbone of every business. Ethical conduct builds trust, loyalty, and long-term business growth.”

Ms Shandil further emphasised the Council’s commitment to working alongside enforcement agencies, municipal councils and health authorities, during the festive period. “The festive season should be a time of joy for families, not a time for exploitation. Fair pricing, honest advertising and safe, hygienic products are legal obligations. Traders who deliberately disregard these standards risk enforcement action.”

The Council urges consumers to remain alert, especially when confronted with unscrupulous business practices and consumers who encounter these issues are encouraged to immediately contact the National Consumer Helpline 155 or reach out through the Council’s official social media pages.

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