Volume 1, Issue 1 August 2006

Consumer Council Of Zimbabwe

# Consumer Action

**Reaching out to Consumers**

**Official magazine of the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe**

## CCZ handles 432 consumer complaints

**… and recovers $1 million (re-valued) for consumers**

The Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ) has handled more than 432 complaints in the six months from January 2006 to June 2006. This compares to the 266 complaints filed during the same period last year, reflecting a 62.4% increase in the number of consumers coming to complain at CCZ Offices.

Of the complaints resolved, 190 complaints were Walk-In Complaints valued at more than $1,3billion (old value). CCZ has managed to recover $795 436 914.00 (old value) from the $1 394 072 520 (old value), reflecting a recovery rate of 57.1%. The figure could be higher as some of the cases are still pending. The complaints recovery rates remain above average, a clear indication of the effectiveness of the CCZ Complaints Resolution mechanisms.


**2006 World Consumer Rights Day Celebrations**

The highest number of complaints were recorded in the Contracts Category a category which includes items such as unfulfilled agreements, unfair contracts, lay-byes, selling contracts, loans among others. In that category problems with Selling Contracts recorded the highest complaints, followed by Lay-Byes and Disclaimer Clauses respectively. The second highest category with complaints was recorded in the Shoddy Goods and Services Category, where problems with electrical goods were the highest mainly in Harare, followed by Local Authorities, Clothing and Utilities. Of great concern was the high number of complaints on Conditional Selling and this was mostly in Mutare. Consumers are urged to be cautious and to critically assess contracts before committing themselves to them. They can alternatively seek advice from our offices or contact us to be referred to experts who can assist them.

Consumers should check for the following

Turn to page 2

- Visit our website for all your consumer information needs: www.ccz.org.zw

**Consumer Hotline**

- Do you want advice, are you getting a shoddy deal, do you want to know your rights as a consumer, do you want to report any unfair business practices, do you have a complaints just dial
**0801 2222 280**
Help is just a free phone call away and its for free

## CCZ embarks on visibility campaign

Consumer Education is a vital component of any consumer movement in any part of the world.

It is therefore important for any consumer watchdog to put in place mechanisms, which are the vehicle to disseminate consumer issues.

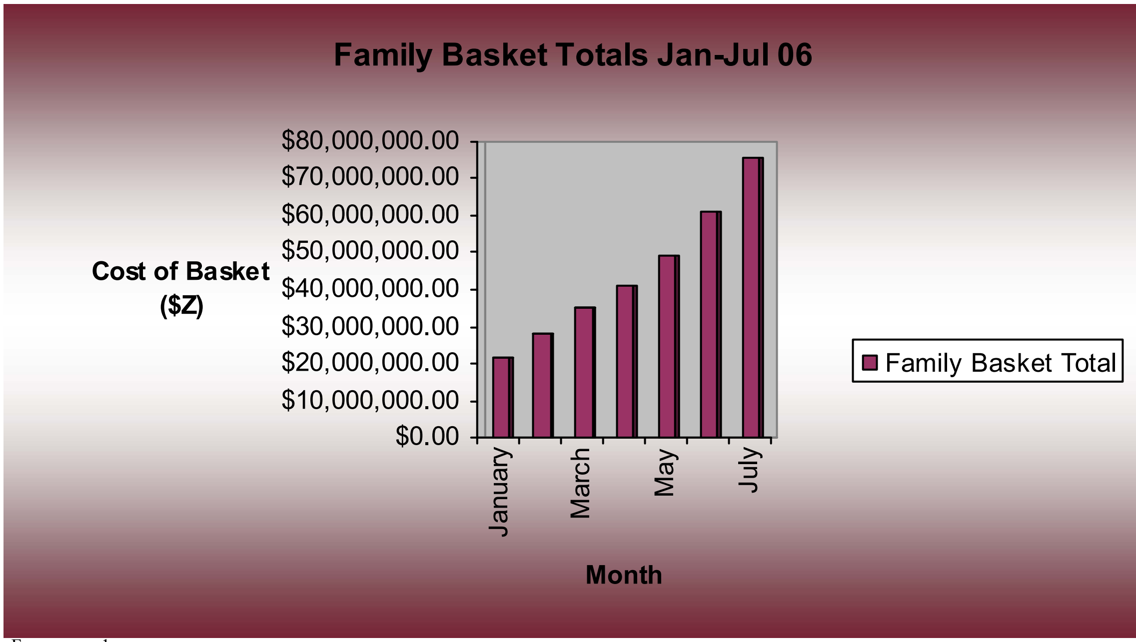
CCZ is committed to ensuring that consumers have access to information. The commitment is spelt out in the organisation's Consumer Visibility Desks Campaign recently embarked on. The campaign seeks to enhance the visibility of CCZ through establishing interactive desks in public areas, accessible to consumers. Consumers will be afforded the opportunity to interact with the organisation and give feedback on issues affecting them in the economy. It is our belief at CCZ that an educated consumer is an empowered consumer.

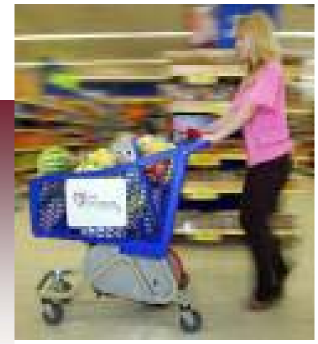
The main item on the agenda of the campaign will be to educate consumers of their rights and responsibilities.

**Inside this issue:**


| | |
|---|---|
| Consumer Rights Day | 2 |
| CCZ represents consumers | 2 |
| Citizen's Report Cards | 3 |
| Removal of Zeros | 4 |
| FAQ Project Sunrise | 5 |
| GMO labelling | 6 |

# Cost of living continues to soar



Since the beginning of the year the cost of living has been rising. As shown by the graph (left) there has been an upward trends maintained since the beginning of the year. An average family now needs at least $70 million to survive above the poverty datum line

From page 1

before making a purchase:

- Faults
- guarantee and warranty periods, when purchasing products like electricals and furniture.
- Sell-by dates.

Some manufacturers and retailers have been selling substandard and shoddy goods and services taking advantage of the current economic conditions.

CCZ will still be happier if more consumers contacted our offices for complaints resolution. An effective consumer is always proactive and does not compromise a **fairdeal** on the marketplace. It is the right of consumers to be heard and to get redress.

"CCZ is putting consumer issues on the agenda."

## CONSUMERS GET REPRESENTATION AT NATIONAL GROUPINGS

Consumer representation is of paramount importance. In the first half of 2006, this consumer right has been exercised fully through having input considered at various national economic groupings.

CCZ has remained focused in demystifying consumer issues through ensuring that consumers are represented at national level.

CCZ has shown its commitment to ensure consumer representation through participating at the Tripartite Negotiation Forum (TNF), National Economic Consultative Forum (NECF), Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Advisory Board, and Medicines Control Authority of Zimbabwe (MCAZ) and Parliamentary Portfolio Committees among others. Consumer representation at such forums is key to the development of consumer friendly policies and decisions.


Teamwork is key to success, *above* CCZ Staff and Board Members join hands at the Strategic Planning Workshop early this year

# An end to service provision problems on the cards

## ...as CCZ works on Citizen's Report Cards

The provision of reliable, quality services in Zimbabwe at present is problematic.

The customer is no longer treated as king. At many service points, consumers have to contend with long queues to get shoddy services at the hands of very impolite workers. Consumers are forced to pay for lip service as some service providers are just bent on increasing prices without offering commensurate services. Huge, erroneous bills for unused services, congestion at till points, poor customer reception, and the sale of poor or expired products without any due regard to a redress policy, are some of the problems consumers encounter daily in the market.

Having noted the problems being experienced by consumers with regards to service provision, CCZ is working on introducing Citizen Report Cards. Citizen Report Cards (CRC) is a concept where consumers use a report card to give a grade to a service provider. The grade which a service provider gets is based on the feedback from the users of its services. Services can be rated on different dimensions and compared across agencies. The dissemination of such ratings can be used as a proxy for competition to stimulate agency leaders to improve their services. Report cards, reinforced by advocacy campaigns to be carried out by CCZ through the media can add to the pressure for reform.

CRCs strengthen public accountability, consumer participation, increase public awareness and push for services to move from being anecdotal to evidential.

Consumer Council Of Zimbabwe

**_CCZ launches website_**

**CCZ has launched a website which is aimed at giving consumers the right information at the click of a button. The website was developed through assistance from the Community Working Group on Health (CWGH). Consumers can log on to the site and give us their feedback on what else they want to be on the site. Make a difference, just log on to:**

**www.ccz.org.zw**

Ms Siyachitema (Executive Director) chats with a consumer at the World Consumer Rights Day celebrations

Don't understand your contract… then don't sign it. Avoid being bound by unfair contracts


Snack time for participants at the World Consumer Rights Day Celebrations

# CCZ hails removal of zeros

CCZ welcomes the recent measures of removing three zeros taken by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) as part of its Currency Reforms.

We believe this is a move, which will make it convenient to carry cash, as several consumers had been moving around with large sums, which made them susceptible to theft.

Consumers are urged to maintain vigilance and ensure that prices are not increased in the pretext of removal of zeros.

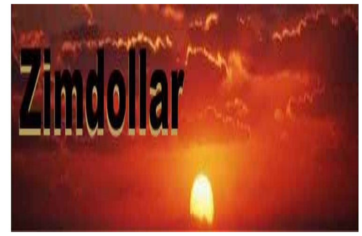
CCZ commends the RBZ for putting in place measures to educate consumers on the new notes and the 21days window period.

It is our view that all stakeholders need to work together and support policies and initiatives introduced for the turnaround of the economy.

Consumers too, have a role to play, and that roles starts with them knowing their rights and exercising them.

CCZ offices are always open to consumers and every stakeholder in the economy for feedback and suggestions so that we are able to respond to their needs speedily, after all our strength lies in our numbers. Call:

**0801 2222 280**




*"The sun is rising on a new day for all of us. One Zimbabwe deserving an easier working environment for business and for life."*

ZERO TO HERO
Zuva Rabuda - Ilanga Seliphumile
Restore Value

"Let the hero rise in all of us."

# Retailers ignore RBZ calls...

CCZ conducted a snap survey of prices in supermarkets in the five regions CCZ is represented in, soon after the removal of zeros whereby results revealed that some retailers had increased prices in the pretext of removing zeros.
The price surveys were conducted within 7 days after the last price survey in July.
It is a cause for concern to say prices can change significantly within that period. Retailers must not take the removal of zeros as an opportunity for them to increase prices.

CCZ notes that manufacturer prices may have justifiably changed leading to a change in the selling price of a commodity, this is not always the case for all products, plus government through the Ministry of Industry and International Trade put a freeze to price increases within the 21 day period.

The following results were discovered:

**Percentage increases of prices effected by some retailers**

| *COMMODITY* | *PRICE ($) 26 July* | *PRICE ($) 2 August* | *PERCENTAGE INCREASE (%)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Washing Powder*** | 527 000 | 555 | 6 |
| ***Tomatoes*** | 306 000 | 320 | 5 |
| ***Cabbage*** | 240 000 | 252 | 5 |
| ***Tea Leaves*** | 410 000 | 435 | 6 |
| ***Tissues*** | 535 000 | 865 | 62 |
| ***Margarine*** | 610 000 | 695 | 14 |
| ***Beef*** | 900 000 | 950 | 5.6 |
| ***Onions*** | 485 000 | 500 | 3 |
| ***Matches*** | 160 000 | 190 | 18.1 |
| ***Bread*** | 130 000 | 200 | 53.9 |
| ***Bath Soap*** | 344 000 | 413 | 20 |
| ***Margarine*** | 1 100 000 | 1315 | 20 |
| ***Tooth Paste*** | 910 000 | 1050 | 15 |
| ***Peanut Butter*** | 365 000 | 385 | 6 |
| ***Light Bulb*** | 200 000 | 230 | 15 |
| ***Coffee*** | 1 230 000 | 1360 | 11 |
| ***Cabbage*** | 403 000 | 471 | 17 |
| ***Salt*** | 72 000 | 75 | 5 |

# Chiziviso Chakakosha/Isazizo Esiqakatheikileyo

***Ngatisimudzire upfumi hwenyika***

***Mabearer Cheques matsva ari nyore***

MaBearer Cheques matsva akaitirwa kuti mushandise mari zviri nyore. Musatye kushandisa, imari yenyu yakabviswa mazero matatu.

***Asithuthukiseni inotho yelizwe***

***Ama"Bearer Cheques amatsha alula***

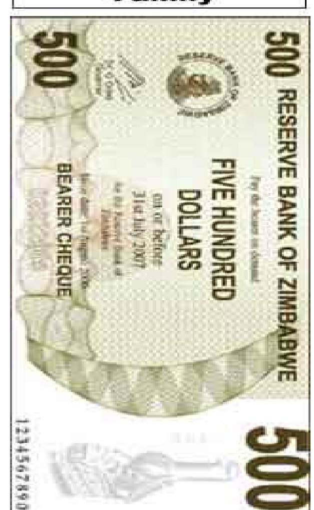
Ama"Bearer Cheques" enzelwa ukululaza ukusetshenziswa kwemali ngabantu. Lingesabi ukuyisebenzisa, yimali yenu esikhutshwe ozero abathathu ekucineni.

| Old value<br>Mutengo wekare<br>Intengo yakudala | | New Value<br>Mutengo mutsva<br>Intengo entsha |
|---|---|---|
| $ 10 000 | = | **$ 10** |
| $ 20 000 | = | **$ 20** |
| $ 50 000 | = | **$ 50** |
| $ 100 000 | = | **$ 100** |
| $ 500 000 | = | **$ 500** |
| $ 1 000 000 | = | **$ 1 000** |
| $ 10 000 000 | = | **$ 10 000** |
| $100 000 000 | = | **$100 000** |

# Frequently Asked Questions about the new Bearer Cheques

Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
Governor,
Dr G. Gono

**New Bearer Cheques Family**




***Here are some of the frequently asked questions and answers on the new family of Bearer Cheques:***

**What are the new denominations ?**

The new denominations are as follows; one cent, five cents, ten cents and fifty cents and one dollar, ten dollars, twenty dollars, fifty dollars, one hundred dollars, five hundred dollars , one thousand dollars, ten thousand dollars, one hundred thousand dollars.

**How do I exchange old Bearer Cheques with new Bearer Cheques?**

**Answer**: Changing old Bearer Cheques for new ones is simple. All one needs to do is to go to any bank or building society and deposit the old Bearer Cheques or visit any of the Reserve Bank Mobile Cash Swap Teams in all the country's districts.
Note: Changing the old currency to the new currency is absolutely free so don't be cheated. You pay nothing. If any financial institution charges you report them immediately to the police and the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe

**What will happen to the bank balances?**

**Answer**: All existing deposit balances at financial institutions will automatically be converted in accordance with the new currency system. Exchange money at your bank or with the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Mobile Cash Swap Teams in all the country's districts.

**Will the new currency model affect the pricing of goods and services?**

**Answer**: There will be dual pricing of goods between the 1 st and 21 st August 2006, meaning both the new price and the old price **must** be displayed. After 21 August all goods and services shall display the new prices only. It is an offence not to do so. You can pay for goods or services using whichever bearer cheques you have, however from 21 August 2006 **only** the new bearer cheques will be legal tender.

***Adopted from www.zimdollar.co.zw***

## Consumer Council of Zimbabwe

***Consumer Action*** magazine is the official mouthpiece of the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ), and is published every quarter. The CCZ is a welfare organisation whose objective is to protect consumers, protect manufacturing standards, improve consumer awareness through education, and to settle disputes between consumer and suppliers and other set objectives.

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Editor: Trust Masarirambi

***ConsumerAction*** magazine offers consumers an opportunity to interact, share information and ideas and to communicate. The Editor therefore welcomes contributions to the magazine, in the form of articles, suggestions on how to improve content, letters to the editor, opinion pieces and or any other issues consumers feel should be discussed and covered by the publication.



**CONTACT US**

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**We're now on the Web!**
**www.ccz.org.zw**

# GMOs must be labeled for the safety of consumers

A **genetically modified organism** (GMO) is an organism whose genetic material has been altered using techniques in genetics generally known as recombinant DNA technology. Recombinant DNA technology is the ability to combine DNA molecules from different sources into the one molecule in a test-tube. Thus, the abilities or the phenotype of the organism, or the proteins it produces, can be altered through the modification of its genes.

Over the past few years, GMO labelling has become one of the biggest issues in the global food. It is a very important key issue to ensuring consumer protection.

In Zimbabwe legislation exists (Foods and Food Standards Act), instructing manufacturers to clearly label their products. Some manufacturers have been found to be deliberately mislabeling their products.

Usually some manufacturers and retailers repackage and relabel products as a result some end up altering sell-by dates and the origin of the product.

The key to food labelling seems to be striking a balance between including all the necessary information demanded by law, with presenting it in an understandable way.

Consumers also need to trust the information, particularly if a member of their family is allergic to one or more ingredients.

CCZ urges consumers to desist from buying any products that are not clearly labeled. Products must be labeled:

- ...if the product is a Genetically Modified Organism (GMO).
- ...if the product contains genetically microorganisms
- …if products were directly made from GMOs-whether or nor they can be found in the final product.
- ...if the product contains additives or flavours that were directly made from GMOs.

Apart from GMOs it is our view at CCZ that all products must clearly indicate the following:

- Name
- Nutritional information
- Sell-by/best before dates
- Ingredients
- Medicinal or nutritional claims
- Storage conditions
- Business name and address