

Probe into excessive prices of garlic and ginger

The National Consumer Commission (NCC) has launched an investigation into allegations of price gouging relating to garlic and ginger.



Credit: Nick Collins via Pexels

“The law defines price gouging as an unfair or unreasonable price increase that does not correspond to or is not equivalent to the increase in the cost of providing that good or service,” the NCC said on Wednesday.

The investigation follows an outcry by consumers carried in the media including social media platforms regarding alleged excessive prices of both products by various suppliers.

Consumer and Customer Protection and National Disaster Management Regulations and Directions, issued in terms of Regulation 350 of Government Notice 43116 contains a list of 22 essential products, which a supplier must not charge unfair or at an unreasonable price.

“This was done to protect consumers against unconscionable, unfair, unreasonable, unjust or improper commercial practises during the national disaster,” the NCC said.

Acting Consumer Commissioner Thezi Mabuza said the commission initiated this investigation, as empowered by Section 71 of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA), following a public outcry.

“The purpose of the CPA is, amongst others, to reduce and ameliorate any disadvantages experienced in accessing any supply of goods or services by consumers,” Mabuza said.

The investigations into the following companies have commenced:

Food Lovers Market;
Spar Group;
Pick n Pay;
Shoprite Group;
Boxer Superstores;
Cambridge Foods and
Woolworths

“Our investigation is not limited to these suppliers. We urge consumers throughout the country to monitor the market and where they suspect excessive price increase, they must file complaints with the commission.

“These allegations, if proven true, would constitute a violation of Regulation 350 and an imposition fine of up to R1million or up to 10% of a supplier’s annual turnover or even imprisonment for a period not exceeding 12 months,” Mabuza said.

Consumers are urged to lodge complaints by contacting the NCC at 0800 014 880 or 012 428 7000 during office hours.

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