



NATIONAL CONSUMER COMMISSION

a member of **the dti** group

Message of support by Commissioner Ebrahim Mohamed,
at the occasion of the commemoration of World Environmental Health Day 2018,
Bloemfontein, Free State Province,
26 September 2018

Programme director,

The Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi;

The MEC of Health in the Free State Province, Ms Montseng Tsiu;

His Worship, the Executive Mayor of Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, Councillor Mr Olly Mlameli;

The Speaker of Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, Mr Mxolisi Siyonzana

Members of the Mayoral Committee present;

The Director-General of the National Department of Health, Ms Malebona Precious Matsoso;

Representatives of the South African Local Government Association;

Representatives of the World Health Organisation;

Government Officials;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good morning.

On behalf of the National Consumer Commission, allow me to please wish everyone present a happy World Environmental Health Day. We commemorate this very important day at a time when the state of environmental health protection in the country has come under immense public scrutiny.

You would know that most recently communities took to the streets to express their dissatisfaction with expired and 'fake food,' and in some instances they even carried out

unlawful raids on foreign-owned spaza shops, whom they alleged were selling such unto unsuspecting and vulnerable consumers.

Prior to that, the country was seized with a first-of-its-kind foodborne disease outbreak, known as *Listeria Monocytogenes*. By the end of February 2018, it was reported that this disease claimed the lives of nearly 183 people in the country.

The NCC previously conducted inspections and investigations, specifically into food products in the North West, Mpumalanga, Gauteng and the Free State provinces which revealed that occurrences of substitution of meat species, particularly in processed and unprocessed food products, defacing of labels, supply of expired products, salvaging and repackaging of expired foodstuff, unsafe handling of food, as well as foodstuffs with unknown origins among others.

The Consumer Protection Act, mandates the NCC to monitor the consumer market by amongst others, conducting regular investigations to ensure that products sold unto consumers are safe to use and or, consume. In carrying out this mandate, the NCC gives effect to consumer's statutory rights bequeathed by the CPA, including their right to choose, their right to information, their right to responsible marketing, their right to receive a fair and honest dealing in the market place, and their right fair value, good quality and safety.

The NCC is empowered through the CPA to institute remedial steps where hazardous or unsafe products are found in the market place. The remedies in this regard includes, among others, carrying out product recalls. This is the measure that was applied earlier this year, to remove, contain and dispose, of contaminated food products from the domestic and export markets.

Working together with the National Departments of Health, Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, local municipalities and many other authorities of government to coordinate activities, and share resources such as officials with special expertise, especially under these tough economic conditions, the NCC has been able to make significant strides in its battle to rid the

market place of ills that seek to threaten the health of consumers in the country. We are encouraged that Section 97 of the CPA enables us to have relations with other regulatory authorities on issues of common interest and that the good relations that we have established are gaining positive momentum

I believe that if we continue on this trajectory, then we as a country can make a meaningful contribution to Global Food safety and help entrench credibility in our food export market.

Following its investigation into substitution of meat species, some will remember the donkey meat saga, the NCC recommended that there was a need for a dedicated food regulator similar to ones found in certain other countries. On this commemoration of World Environmental Health Day I call on all government stakeholders to seriously consider the establishment of a dedicated food regulator in South Africa.

In closing, the NCC is committed and dedicated to promoting environmental health and consumer safety, and we pledge our unwavering support toward efforts by government and civil society to protect our consumers' national food supply.

I thank you.