



Event: 2025 World Consumer Rights Day celebrations Business Breakfast

Date: 13 March 2025

Venue: University of Mpumalanga Conference Centre- Thfokomala Hotel

Closing remarks by the Acting Commissioner of the National Consumer Commission, Mr Hardin Ratshisusu

Theme: “Farm-to-Fork”

Thank you, Programme Directors, Dr Maanda Dagada and Ms Cynthia Moshaba, moderator of the sessions, Ms Karabo Motaung-Mohlala,

Honourable MEC for Economic Development and Tourism, Ms Makhosazane Masilela,

HoD, Ms Immy Serakalala,

Distinguished representatives from Mpumalanga Department of Economic Development and Tourism, the National Consumer Commission, and the Competition Commission of South Africa, the Consumer Goods and Services Ombud, Motor Industry Ombudsman of South Africa, our host the prestigious University of Mpumalanga,

Other regulatory authorities present here today, including the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications and South African Bureau of Standards,

Esteemed panelists, stakeholders, colleagues, distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is my pleasure to deliver the closing remarks at today's impactful Business Breakfast held in commemoration of World Consumer Rights Day under the theme, "Farm to Fork", in Mpumalanga, "The place of the rising sun."

Today's discussions have demonstrated how interconnected competition policy, consumer rights, and food safety are. The MEC highlighted this interconnectedness in her opening remarks. The journey from farm to table involves numerous stakeholders, and each plays a vital role in creating an equitable, safe, and sustainable food environment.

The discussions have also highlighted critical themes that speak directly to the core of our joint missions as regulators, businesses, and policymakers. From ensuring fair competition and inclusive economic participation in the food value chain to safeguarding food safety, today's deliberations have been insightful and enriching.

The first panel clearly articulated that fair competition is essential in ensuring a robust, inclusive, and competitive food industry. Fairness in competition is key to consumer welfare. It reduces prices, improves quality, and guarantees that all consumers, regardless of their economic circumstances, can access nutritious food at affordable prices.

It is equally important that small businesses, particularly those led by women and youth, are empowered and financially supported to fully participate in the food value chain. The call for increased and targeted funding of SMEs, particularly those led by women and youth, is both timely and urgent.

Access to markets is crucial. MEC, there are recommendations from the Fresh Produce Market Inquiry that Karabo was referring to, particularly the need to strengthen fresh produce markets as a route to market. The establishment of the Mpumalanga International Food Market is therefore a significant step.

There is also a need to support new entrants in food retail as the market is highly concentrated. It is about sustainability and inclusion.

The second panel on food safety brought critical issues to the fore, highlighting the need to rigorously combat expired, counterfeit, and substandard food products. Ensuring consumer

safety is paramount. Unsafe food has no place in our markets. Therefore, regulators, businesses, and consumers must collaborate to eliminate these harmful practices. Sustainable and responsible disposal practices emerged as a key priority today, emphasising that protecting our environment is not just beneficial but essential to long-term sustainability within the food industry. There are however certain foodstuffs that require much care and strict regulations. The National Department of Health has published draft regulations to this effect.

Moving forward, all stakeholders are implored to ensure that today's insights drive tangible outcomes and foster continued collaboration among regulators, our provincial partners, and the broader business community. Our collective responsibility is clear: we must ensure a competitive, safe, inclusive, and sustainable food supply for every South African.

As I conclude, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the MEC for Mpumalanga Economic Development and Tourism, for the opening remarks and setting the stage for a fruitful discussion. We are very grateful for your time and support.

Equally, I express sincere appreciation to Ms Serakalala, Head of Department for Economic Development and Tourism, for warmly welcoming us all to this important event. I also wish to commend our programme directors for skilfully guiding us through today's proceedings, ensuring each session was engaging and insightful.

Many thanks to all our distinguished panelists, participants, and stakeholders for their valuable contributions and active engagement, which have enriched our discussions and deepened our commitment to consumer rights.

Special recognition must be given to our diligent organisers - the National Consumer Commission, the Competition Commission and the Mpumalanga Economic Development and Tourism department - for their dedication and meticulous planning, ensuring this event's success.

Our sincere appreciation goes to our generous host, the University of Mpumalanga, for providing us with this excellent venue and outstanding support and everyone who has supported this event.

Lastly, to the various service providers, and to the team behind this very successful event, thank you. Let us carry forward today's momentum, committed to championing consumer rights with renewed vigour and collaboration. We look forward to seeing in all the schedule events this week.

I thank you all.