

Market Monitoring Report

(Thimphu, Haa, Paro, W/phodrang, Punakha & Gasa)

1. Background

The Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) monitored business entities in the six Dzongkhags during the months of August, September & October 2021; to determine compliance to fixed prices (for certain goods) and other regulatory requirements. Specifically, the inspection was to:

- Check compliance to the selling price of Timber (log, pole and sawn) fixed by the Natural Resources Pricing Committee (NRPC),
- Check compliance to prescribed price by Agriculture Sales Service Representatives (ASSR).
- Inspect quality, weights and measures in POL Retail Outlets (PRO).
- Check compliance to selling price of cements by the authorized agents.
- Check compliance to price display, labeling, issuance of receipts and to check if use expired consumable goods are being sold.

2. Major Findings and Intervention

2.1 Wood-Based Industries and Sawmills – Thimphu & Wangduephodrang

The selling prices for timber, sand and stone are fixed by the NRPC. Out of 19 Wood-Based Industries (WBI) and sawmills in the Thimphu and Wangduephodrang Dzongkhags, 13 were inspected, together with DoFPS field staffs.

It was observed that the almost all the WBI and sawmills were selling timber within the approved rates. The WBIs that did not display the NRCP approved rates were issued with written instructions for immediate rectification.

2.2 Agriculture Sales Service Representatives – Thimphu & Punakha

From a total of eight ASSRs in Thimphu and Punakha, five ASSR stores were inspected to check compliance to the prices prescribed by the National Seed Centre (NSC) and National Plant Protection Centre (NPPC) for agricultural inputs.

It was found that all the ASSRs inspected were selling the inputs at the prices prescribed.

2.3 POL Retail Outlets & Cement Agents – Paro, Haa, Gasa, Thimphu

Monitoring of the 14 POL Retail Outlets (PRO) in Paro, Haa, Gasa, Khuruthang, Bajo Town and Thimphu were carried out to ascertain quality, weight and measure of PoL products.

The quality of diesel and petrol was found to be within the acceptable level. The quantity dispensed from the dispensing machines was found accurate. Price were displayed prominently on the price display boards and digital weighing machine to weigh LPG cylinders, sand buckets and fire extinguishers and receipts were also well maintained.

13 Cement Agents in Thimphu, Paro and Haa were randomly inspected as of October 31, 2021; from a total of 75 agents.

During the time of inspection, it was observed that all the agents were found complying to the rates fixed by the cement manufacturers in the country.

2.4 Market Monitoring - Gasa town, Bajo town and Thim-throm

Together with BAFRA official, random inspections of general retail shops in Gasa and Bajo Town and liquor shops in Thim-throm were carried out. In Bajo Town, out of a total of over 200 shops, 10 shops were inspected; while out of approximately 96 shops in Gasa, 28 were inspected.

Two shops in Bajo Town were penalized with fines amounting to Nu. 9,145 and Nu. 5,050 for displaying date-expired products for sale. In Gasa town, all shops had complied to the regulations.

In Thim-throm, out of almost 225 liquor shops, six shops were inspected (inspection is still going) for compliance to regulations. So far, there were no offenses recorded.

3. Conclusion

The general monitoring of business entities to ensure compliance to extant rules and regulations is a continuous process; in addition to investigation if and when specific complaints are received from consumers or general public.

Such regular inspection is only way to ensure compliance to set standards and regulations. The frequency and coverage of monitoring is dependent on the available resources (number of inspectors, vehicles and recurrent budget). While at the moment, available resource is adequate, coverage will be increasingly challenging with the increasing number of business entities along with increase in the variety (type and brand) of new products becoming more available in the market.
