



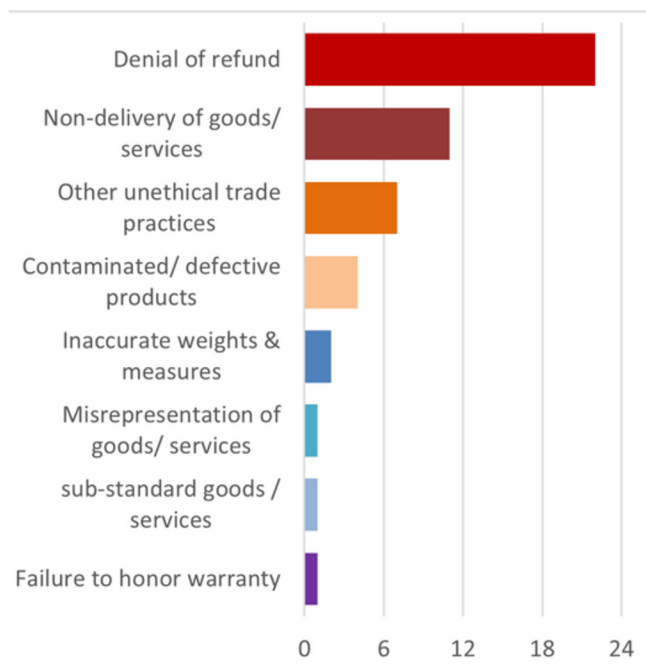
1.KEEPING MARKETS FAIR AND CONSUMERS PROTECTED

Bhutan's marketplace may be small, but it reflects a dynamic tension between rising consumer expectations and evolving business practices. Throughout November, the Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority (CCAA) continued to work towards that objective.

Emerging patterns and persistent challenges

The CCAA received 49 consumer complaints in November, revealing familiar trends.

Fig. 1. Nature of Complaints by Type



22 consumers sought refunds for products or services that failed to meet their promises, while 11 cases involved non-delivered goods - an issue that continues to trouble the growing e-commerce sector. Other complaints centred on defective or contaminated products, businesses disregarding their own terms and conditions, and the use of inaccurate weights, measures, or misleading labels.

Amid these challenges, there were tangible successes. 20 cases were resolved, with, Nu. 20,119 being refunded to six consumers. The remaining 29 cases are progressing through mediation or investigation.



2. STRENGTHENING COMPLIANCE THROUGH PHYSICAL INSPECTION

CCAA's enforcement teams were active across Trongsa and Bumthang Dzongkhag marketplaces, verifying compliance with fair-trade norms and statutory requirements.

The CCAA in collaboration with the Regional Office of Industry, Commerce & Employment (ROICE), Trongsa examined 258 business entities 125 in Trongsa (including two Fuel Retail Outlets) and 133 in Bumthang (which included a cement agent and two FROs).

They checked if prices were clearly and unambiguously displayed, if cash memos were issued upon sale, if product were clearly and correctly labeled and if the weighing devices used are accurate and had valid calibrations - the everyday details that uphold consumer confidence.

The inspection findings were encouraging. Over 95% of businesses met minimum regulatory requirements, a significant improvement from the past attributable to sustained advocacy and frequent surveillance.

Notably, almost all businesses now issue pre-printed cash memos or digital bills, marking a decisive break from past practices and reinforcing accountability at the point of sale.

These inspections underline a simple truth: regulations are only as effective as the consistency with which they are enforced.

3.A CLOSER LOOK AT QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF CHEAPER BRANDS OF ESSENTIAL FOOD BRANDS

In Thimphu, the Authority initiated a targeted technical investigation with the Bhutan Standards Bureau (BSB) to assess popular prepackaged essentials—edible oil, flour, sugar, and pulses. Public frequently raise such concerns on social media, though no formal complaints have been lodged.

Samples are now undergoing laboratory testing to verify whether actual weights and volumes match declared quantities, labels meet regulatory requirements, and whether any systematic underweighting is occurring. At a time of rising living costs, even slight discrepancies can strain household budgets and weaken consumer trust.

Looking ahead, the CCAA plans deeper collaboration with agencies such as the Bhutan Food and Drug Regulatory Authority (BFDA) to examine safety and quality concerns in suspect food products. Such testing is technically challenging and resource-intensive, but it will become increasingly indispensable as Bhutan's food markets diversify.



Image 1. CCAA inspection of weight accuracy of sugar

4. RESEARCH FOR BETTER CONSUMER PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

The Consumer Empowerment & Economics Division (CEED) advanced key research on how cottage and small-scale food producers determine product shelf life. When expiry dates are set without scientific basis, they pose potential risks to consumers. With data collection now complete, the Division has begun drafting the findings, which will help frame more reliable and consumer-safe practices in the industry.

Strengthening the legal framework

Work progressed significantly on two major legislative initiatives: the Competition Bill and amendment of the Consumer Protection Act. Both efforts are on track for major milestones by December, marking substantial steps toward modernizing Bhutan's consumer and competition regulatory regimes.

5. TEAM CCAA REINFORCED

The month concluded on an optimistic note with the appointment of Mr. Chador Tenzin as Assistant Program Officer in the Consumer Empowerment and Education Division.

His addition will bring new vigour to the Authority's efforts to promote fair trading practices and reinforce consumer rights nationwide.

