

# CONSUMER WATCH



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- **E-Waste: Growing threat to Zambia’s environment, public health**
- **Hiked MultiChoice fees to burden struggling consumers**
- **CUTS, CCPC experts discuss sustainable lifestyles**
- **Inflation eases to 18.9% in March as trade surges by 28.4%**

### BoZ launches new Banknotes, Coins



#### Nancy Mwape

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, the Bank of Zambia launched a new series of banknotes and coins.

The redesigned currency feature six banknotes—K500, K200, K100, K50, K20, and K10—as well as six coins, including K5, K2, K1, 50 ngwee, 10 ngwee, and 5 ngwee.

*story continue on page 2*



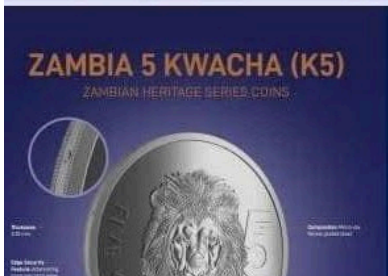
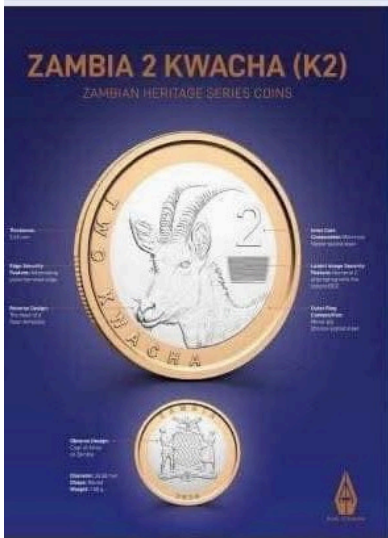
### Government clears air on TAZAMA deal

The TAZAMA Open Access policy is an independent initiative contrary to claims that the legislation is imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) says Government.

The policy allows all eligible oil marketing companies to procure, transport and competition in the fuel sector.

Ministry of Energy Permanent Secretary Peter Mumba has also allayed concerns that the policy discriminates against some OMCs. The Open Access framework backed by statutory (SI) 41 of the 2023 guarantees fair participation for qualified OMCs.- **Zambia Daily Mail.**

## BoZ launches new Banknotes, Coins



### Continued from Page 1

One major change is the transition of the K5 denomination from a banknote to a coin. The K500 and K200 notes will become the new high-value denominations, replacing the K100 and K50 as the primary store of value.

Meanwhile, the K100 and K50 will now be categorized as medium-value transaction notes, replacing the current K20 and K10. The K20 and K10 will serve as small-value transaction notes, taking the place of the K5 and K2. Coins will continue to be used for small transactions and change.

The new currency series embraces Zambia's heritage, featuring various waterfalls, animals, and native flora. The African fish eagle, a national symbol, will appear on all banknotes in flight.

The last major change to Zambia's currency occurred in 2013 when the government rebased the Kwacha to address the effects of prolonged inflation.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, inflation peaked at 188% in 1993, significantly reducing the currency's value. The rebasing aimed to restore the Kwacha's role as a reliable store of value, medium of exchange, and measure of worth.

BoZ Governor Dr. Denny Kalyalya emphasized the importance of maintaining inflation control to preserve the purchasing power of the currency. "If inflation is not tamed, we risk losing the value of our money even the highest denomination cannot buy a bag of mealie meal," he warned.

The central bank has also emphasized that the new notes have enhanced durability, with the K20 and K10 featuring a blend of polymer and paper for longer life. High-value notes will incorporate advanced security features, which BoZ will explain to the public.

Additionally, the K5 and K2 coins have been introduced because they are widely used, and the currency will include features to assist visually impaired individuals.

## E-Waste: Growing threat to Zambia's environment, public health



**By Victor Sikombe**

Electronic waste (e-waste) is an escalating environmental and health concern in Zambia, driven by rapid technological advancements and the increasing use of electronic devices.

However, inadequate disposal methods and the absence of a strong e-waste management framework pose serious risks to public health and the environment.

Despite these growing concerns, many individuals and businesses remain unaware of the dangers of improper e-waste disposal.

Electronic devices contain toxic substances such as lead, mercury, and cadmium, which can contaminate soil and water, leading to severe health complications, including respiratory diseases and neurological disorders.

To address this issue, Zambia has introduced the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework, which holds manufacturers accountable for managing the entire lifecycle of their products. However, its implementation remains weak due to poor enforcement mechanisms, allowing improper disposal practices to persist.

The lack of a proper e-waste recycling infrastructure further aggravates the problem, resulting in the loss of valuable materials and increased environmental pollution.

Additionally, unregulated scrap dealers, who dominate the informal recycling sector, often use hazardous methods such as burning circuit boards to extract metals. These unsafe practices expose workers and nearby communities to toxic fumes, posing significant health risks.

The situation is worsened by the high turnover of electronic devices and the continued importation of second-hand electronics, many of which quickly become waste upon arrival. Without effective regulations to manage these imports, Zambia risks becoming a dumping ground for obsolete electronics.

To combat this growing crisis, CUTS is advocating for a collaborative approach involving the government, private sector, and civil society organizations. Key recommendations include strengthening e-waste management policies, establishing proper recycling facilities, and launching public awareness campaigns to educate communities on responsible disposal practices.

Investing in sustainable e-waste management will not only reduce pollution but also create employment opportunities in the recycling sector, contributing to both environmental sustainability and economic growth.

# Hiked MultiChoice fees to burden struggling consumers

By Nancy Mwape

Effective April 1, 2025, MultiChoice will increase its subscription fees, a move that has raised concern among consumers already struggling with economic hardships. The decision comes at a time when many households are grappling with the rising cost of living, frequent load shedding, and declining content quality.

The rising prices of essential goods such as food, fuel, and electricity have already stretched household budgets. Consumers argue that the price hike further adds to their financial burden, especially since power outages limit their ability to fully utilize the service. Many subscribers have also voiced frustration over repetitive and outdated content, questioning whether the increase is justified.

MultiChoice, however, may defend the price adjustment by citing increased operational costs, inflation, and expenses related to content licensing. The company also invests in exclusive live sports coverage and streaming services, which provide added value.

Some consumers believe the company has been impacted by a decline in subscriptions due to prolonged load shedding. This is evident from follow-up calls made by MultiChoice agents, encouraging customers to use alternative devices like tablets and smartphones. However, this option remains impractical since these gadgets still require electricity for charging.

From a consumer rights perspective, the price increase is questionable unless MultiChoice improves content quality and service delivery. A possible alternative could be the introduction of a pay-per-view model, allowing customers to pay only for the content they watch—an approach that has proven successful in countries like South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya.

Additionally, offering discounted packages during load shedding or bundling services with affordable data plans could help retain customers without overburdening them financially.

Rather than relying solely on price hikes, MultiChoice is urged to explore innovative solutions to maintain customer loyalty and ensure affordability for struggling consumers.



# CUTS, CCPC experts discuss sustainable lifestyles



CUTS, consumer welfare officer Mr. Victor Sikombe (Left) with CCPC, provincial investigator Mr. Brian Nkonde (right) during the live business day discussion at Millenium tv.

## By Victor Sikombe

Ahead of World Consumer Rights Day 2025, Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS), Consumer Welfare Officer Mr. Victor Sikombe and Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC), Provincial Investigator Mr. Brian Nkonde appeared on Millennium TV to discuss this year's theme: "A Just Transition to Sustainable Lifestyles."

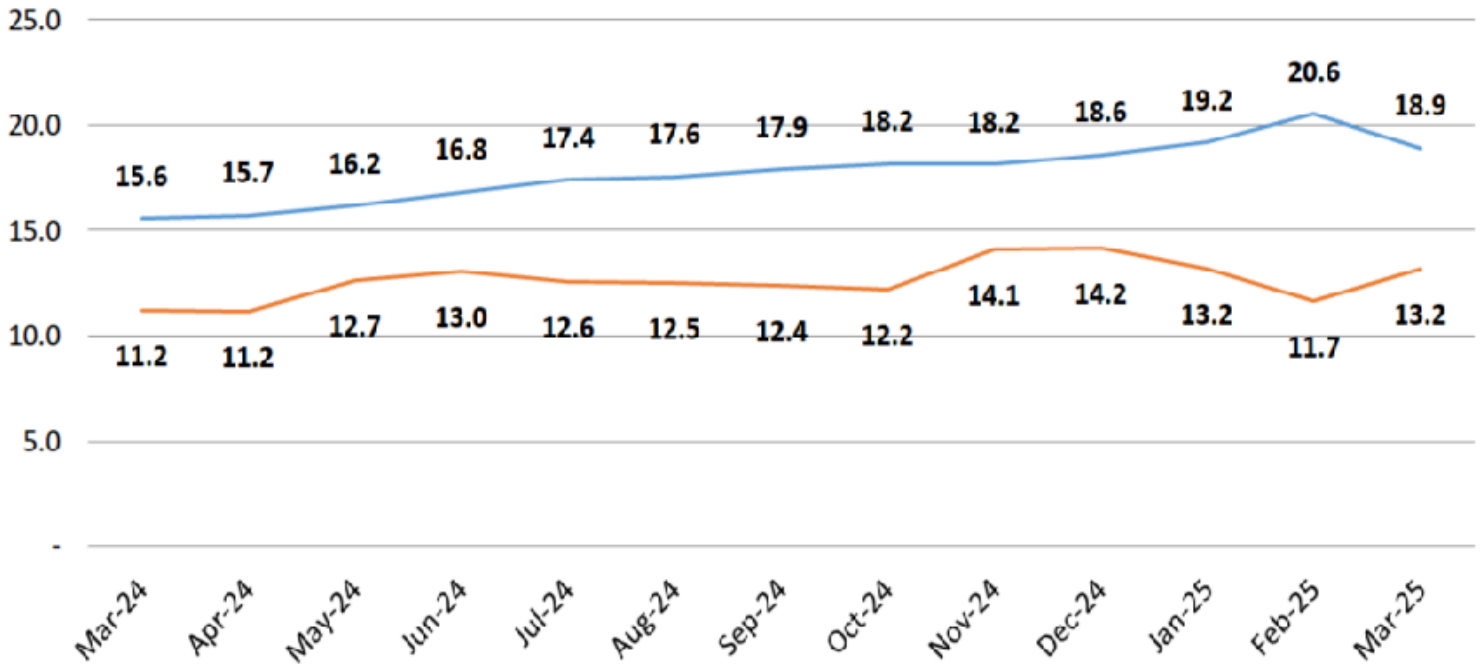
Mr. Sikombe emphasized that consumer rights go beyond purchasing goods and services, highlighting consumers' responsibility to make informed choices that support environmental sustainability. He urged consumers to prioritize businesses that adopt sustainable production methods and ethical sourcing, benefiting not just the economy but also society and the planet.

Mr. Nkonde outlined CCPC's role in promoting fair business practices that protect consumers and the environment. He underscored the need for consumer education, enabling individuals to understand the broader impact of their purchasing decisions.

Both experts agreed that achieving a sustainable lifestyle requires collective action from consumers, businesses, and policymakers. They encouraged the public to embrace eco-friendly choices, such as reducing waste and supporting sustainable products.

The discussion concluded with a call to action, urging consumers to integrate sustainability into their daily habits to foster a more resilient and environmentally conscious future.

# Inflation eases to 18.9% in March as trade surges by 28.4%



**By Nancy Mwape**

Zambia’s annual food inflation for March 2025 eased to 18.9%, down from 20.6% recorded in February 2024. On average, food prices increased by 18.9% between March 2024 and March 2025. The decline was mainly attributed to price movements in key food items such as bread and cereals (including breakfast and roller mealie meal, maize grain, and samp), as well as vegetables (such as lumanda, cassava leaves, impwa, pumpkin, carrots, sweet potatoes, and chikanda tubers).

Meanwhile, annual non-food inflation rose to 13.2% in March 2025, up from 11.7% in February driven by rising costs in motor vehicle purchases, fuel and lubricants (diesel and petrol), passenger transport by road, charcoal, and hammer milling charges.

**Inflation by Province**

A breakdown of annual inflation across provinces showed mixed trends:

- Central Province: 18.8% (from 18.5%)
- Copperbelt Province: 18.1% (from 17.9%)
- Luapula Province: 16.6% (from 15.8%)
- Northern Province: 14.2% (from 13.5%)
- North-Western Province: 17.0% (from 15.3%)
- Eastern Province: 13.4% (from 14.6%)
- Southern Province: 14.2% (from 17.0%)
- Western Province: 15.1% (from 16.9%)

Inflation in Lusaka Province remained unchanged at 17.2%.

Zambia’s total trade for January to February 2025 was recorded at K102.6 billion, a 28.4% increase from K79.9 billion in the same period of 2024.

**OUR MAILING ADDRESS IS PLOT No 406 KUDU RD, KABULONGA, LUSAKA. [lusaka@cuts.org](mailto:lusaka@cuts.org) COPYRIGHT@2024-CUTS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.**