



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- CUTS joins in celebrating the World Competition Day 2024
- Dry spell to affect food security, electricity supply
- Celebrate festive season responsively – Zambia Police
- Stay safe while shopping this holiday season!
- Impact of Black Friday on Consumers
- Guardians of food safety in the value chain
- Caterpillar population declining due to overharvesting

Dry spell to affect food security, electricity supply



Nancy Mwape

The Zambian government's declaration of a national disaster due to the dry spell in experienced much of December underscores the urgent need to address its far-reaching implications on consumers and the economy.

The dry spell's adverse effects on maize production threaten household food security, particularly for low-income consumers who rely heavily on maize as a staple food. Reduced maize harvests are likely to lead to price hikes for mealie meal and other essential food items, straining household budgets already burdened by inflation.

story continue on page 2



Vice-President W.K Mutale-Nalumango

India donates 2,500 tonnes of white maize to Zambia

The Indian government has donated 2,500 tonnes of non-genetically modified white maize to Zambia in response to the drought faced by the country in December.

Vice-President W.K Mutale-Nalumango has since directed the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) to ensure that the maize reaches the vulnerable people affected by the drought without delay.

"In line with the provisions of the disaster management operations manual, let the distribution process adhere to the principles of inclusivity, transparency, fairness and equity," Ms Mutale-Nalumango said.

Source Zambia Daily Mail.

CUTS joins in celebrating the World Competition Day 2024

Nancy Mwape

On 5th December, 2024, CUTS joined the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) in commemorating the World Competition Day 2024 under the theme: "Competition Policy and Inequality." Competition policy promotes fair market practices, prevents monopolies, and protects consumers by enforcing laws against price fixing, market sharing, and abuse of dominance. It also regulates mergers to maintain healthy competition and ensures businesses prioritize quality and fairness over deceptive practices.

Anti-competitive behavior often worsens economic inequality by concentrating wealth and power. Effective competition policies foster inclusive growth, reduce disparities,



CCPC, CUTS staff celebrate world competition day

and create opportunities for marginalized groups. With notable inequality in income distribution and regional development, robust competition policies can promote equitable growth, improve service access, and empower vulnerable communities. CUTS urges businesses and consumers to embrace fair competition and comply with the law to build a more equitable market.

Dry spell to affect food security, electricity supply

Continue from page 1. It is comforting to hear Government say the Food Reserve Agency (FRA) has contracted 41 commercial farmers to grow early-maturing maize, giving hope for some stabilization in food supply.

However, this short-term measure might not shield consumers from immediate food price volatility or address disparities in food access, especially in rural and vulnerable urban areas.

Further, the dry spell poses more strain on hydropower generation due to reduced water levels exacerbates Zambia's ongoing electricity challenges.

Prolonged power outages are likely to continue disrupting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), many of which serve as the backbone of local economies.

For households, increased reliance on alternative energy sources such as charcoal or generators could result in higher living costs and adverse environmental impacts.

For the Zambian economy, the combined threats to agriculture and energy will hinder industrial productivity, reduce export potential, and heighten inflationary pressures.

This could deter investment and erode consumer confidence in key markets, further exacerbating economic inequalities.

From a consumer advocacy standpoint, CUTS urges the government and stakeholders to implement consumer-centric measures, including ensuring that basic commodities, particularly maize and mealie meal, remain affordable through targeted subsidies and effective market regulation. There is need to educate consumers more on efficient energy use and alternative food options to mitigate household-level impacts.

There is need to invest in climate-resilient agriculture and diversify Zambia's energy mix to reduce reliance on hydropower, ensuring sustainable development for consumers and the economy.

Celebrate festive season responsibly - Zambia Police

The Zambia Police Service says it has heightened patrols, surveillance and other security measures across the country to ensure safety of all citizens during the festive season.

In a statement, Police Public Relations Officer Rae Hamoonga reminded the public of the importance of safety and security noting that criminal activities tend to increase during this period.

"As we approach the festive season, the Zambia Police Service would like extend warm wishes to all citizens and remind the public of the importance of safety and security during this period. This is a time of joy, celebration and family gatherings, but it is also a period when criminals activities such as theft, road traffic accidents and other safety concerns, tend to rise," he said.

Mr. Hamoonga also warned against acts of lawlessness, including public disturbances and illegal activities. Anyone found engaging in such acts will face the full force of the law.

Source Diggers News



Mr. Rae Hamoonga

What if more men chose vasectomy?

Vasectomy, a permanent and highly effective male contraceptive method, remains underutilized in Zambia due to myths, misconceptions, and cultural resistance.

Despite its numerous benefits—minimal side effects, a 99 percent success rate, and no impact on sexual performance—many men mistakenly equate it with castration or fear it undermines their manhood and future ability to father children.

Studies indicate widespread ignorance, with men often viewing contraception as solely a woman's responsibility. For instance, a Chipata study revealed 62 percent of men held negative attitudes toward vasectomy, while over 80 percent in Lusaka were unaware of where to access such services.

Medical experts like Dr. Salome Sakala and Dr. Paul Musoba clarify that vasectomy is a safe, quick procedure that does not affect potency or libido and significantly reduces the burden of contraception on women.

They stress the importance of couples discussing irreversible birth control methods and seeking mutual consent before making decisions.

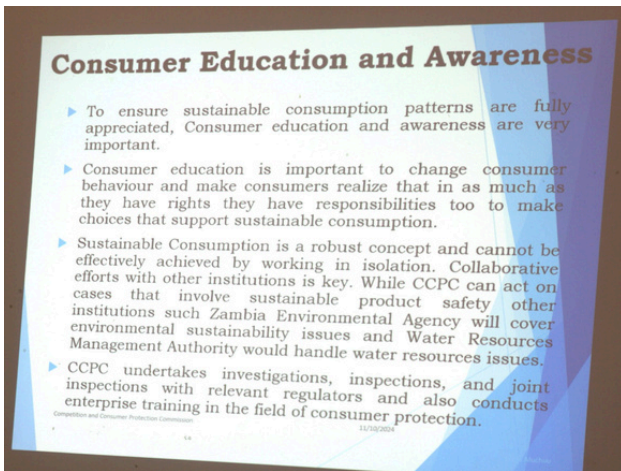
Champions like Marlon Kananda, who underwent the procedure over 15 years ago without side effects, highlight its effectiveness and lack of impact on sexual enjoyment.

Despite Zambia's high contraceptive prevalence rate, male participation in family planning remains low, hindered by cultural norms, misinformation, and fear. Experts and advocates emphasize the need for targeted education and awareness campaigns to dispel myths and promote vasectomy as a viable option for reducing maternal deaths and preventing unintended pregnancies.

Addressing these barriers can help create a more equitable approach to family planning in Zambia. Source *Times of Zambia*.

To keep our discussion going. Post your comment on our consumer portal <https://cuts-consumerwatch.online>

Part of our activities in pictures during the quarter



CUTS, Solidaridad advocate for safer food

Nancy Mwape

On November 15, 2024, CUTS Lusaka, in partnership with Solidaridad, hosted a Food Safety Multi-Stakeholder platform meeting in Lusaka. The event brought together diverse stakeholders to discuss and advance food safety initiatives in Zambia.

Food safety is a critical issue that CUTS has been actively addressing. Ensuring food safety is vital to preventing foodborne illnesses, which can significantly impact workforce productivity and lead to high healthcare costs. Contaminated food not only jeopardizes public health but can also damage the agriculture and food processing sectors, eroding consumer trust and negatively affecting trade and market access.

The meeting focused on developing key advocacy messages aimed at improving food safety in fruits and vegetables. By promoting healthier communities, the initiative seeks to contribute to a safer and more resilient Zambia.

"Let's work together to ensure that every Zambian has access to safe, nutritious, and healthy food," participants emphasized.



CUTS engages Lusaka's Mtendere youths in managing food waste



Nancy Mwape

Food waste is a pressing challenge in Zambia, with nearly a third of all food produced and sold going to waste along the supply chain, especially in markets. Fruits and vegetables, in particular, are highly susceptible to spoilage due to their short shelf life, contributing significantly to this problem.

In response to this issue, CUTS has embarked on a three-month project titled "**Managing food waste in emerging & established markets: A case study of Mtendere market.**" This initiative is supported by the Lusaka City Council and the Youth Climate Action Fund, focusing on sustainable solutions to reduce food waste while fostering green job opportunities for youth.

The Mtendere project is structured around key activities aimed at achieving impactful and lasting change:

Research on Food Waste Management by investigating effective strategies for reducing food waste in market settings, particularly for perishable items like fruits and vegetables.

Raising awareness campaigns and workshops by educating vendors, consumers, and the local community on the importance of reducing food waste and adopting sustainable practices.

Further, equipping young people with skills in food preservation techniques and encouraging their active participation in environmental protection efforts.

Through this project, CUTS is not only addressing the issue of food waste but also advocating for policies to close legal gaps and discourage harmful practices in waste management.

Stay safe while shopping this holiday season!

Nancy Mwape

Holiday deals are everywhere, and the excitement to grab bargains is high. But remember, not all deals are as good as they seem. CUTS Lusaka urges you to shop wisely and protect yourself from online scams.

Here are a few tips to keep you safe:

- Verify before you buy: Research online stores thoroughly. Check customer reviews and ensure the store is credible.
- Avoid suspicious links: Don't click on ads or links from unknown sources, especially those that seem too good to be true.
- Look for secure websites: Only shop on websites with "https://" in the URL and a padlock symbol for a secure connection.
- 1. Use safe payment options: Opt for secure payment methods that offer buyer protection. Avoid direct bank transfers to unknown sellers.

This holiday season, don't let scammers ruin your celebrations. Shop smart and stay vigilant!

CUTS Lusaka: Advocating for your rights and safety



Impact of Black Friday on consumers

Victor Sikombe

Black Friday, while offering deep discounts, often leads to consumers overspending, purchasing unnecessary items, or taking on debt through loans or credit. Aggressive marketing and a sense of urgency foster impulse buying, disrupting household finances in an economically challenging environment. Limited-time offers and persuasive advertising push consumers to make unplanned purchases, often leading to buyer's remorse.

Retailers may sell outdated or defective items under the guise of discounts, leaving consumers dissatisfied. Similarly, inflated pre-sale prices make discounts appear more significant than they are, misleading shoppers.

We have also observed a stressful shopping experience during this period due to long queues and crowded stores, while website issues add frustration to the shopping process. Discounts also drive unnecessary purchases, contributing to environmental harm and waste in a country with limited waste management infrastructure.

While Black Friday offers are good to consumers, small businesses struggle to compete with global retailers, losing patronage and revenue. To mitigate these risks, consumers should budget carefully, research deals, avoid unnecessary purchases, and support local businesses to ensure Black Friday benefits do not outweigh its costs to personal finances, communities, and the environment.



Guardians of food safety in the value chain

Victor Sikombe

Farmers and marketeers play key roles in ensuring the safety and quality of fruits and vegetables. Their collaboration in cultivation, handling, transportation, storage, and sales directly impacts the safety of produce consumed by the public.

Farmers form the foundation of the value chain, with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) being central to their efforts. By responsibly using pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides, and ensuring soil and water quality, they minimize risks of contamination. Post-harvest handling practices such as cleaning, sorting, and using hygienic tools further reduce microbial contamination.

Farmers also maintain traceability by keeping records of their practices and participate in training programs to stay updated on food safety standards.

Similarly, marketeers uphold safety once produce reaches the market. Proper storage, hygiene standards, and waste management are crucial to prevent contamination and spoilage. Clean tools, personal hygiene, and sanitized facilities ensure produce remains fresh. Marketeers also educate consumers on safe handling and storage practices, promoting informed behavior to maintain food safety.



Caterpillar population declining due to overharvesting



An entomologist, Keith Mbata is concerned with the declining population of caterpillars in Zambia, attributing the problem to overharvesting for human consumption and trade.

Professor Mbata, who is a lecturer at the University of Zambia has called for the adoption of insect farming in homes and laboratories to address the challenge sustainably.

He said the recent spike in the caterpillar prices is driven by high demand, particularly during the peak harvest season from November to December.

“Through research, we can identify insects that can be reared artificially. For instance, mopane worms are widespread in southern Africa, with countries like Botswana successfully farming them for human consumption,” he said.

He also said there is need for controlled harvesting to prevent the depletion of the caterpillars population.

Professor Mbata indicated that in areas like Chipata, traditional leaders have set rules prohibiting caterpillars harvesting beyond December 15, but these regulations are frequently breached, exacerbating the decline in caterpillar population.

Source Zambia Daily Mail

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