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PRESS RELEASE

www.consumersfiji.org

Morris Hedstrom continues to defy food laws

MORRIS HEDSTROM has defied Fiji's food safety laws by continuing to sell its cooking oil product – PERFECT CHOICE SOYABEAN OIL – which was removed from one of its outlet in January for violating the Food Safety Act 2003/Food Safety Regulations 2009.

Yesterday morning (8 February, 2010) the Council found the product still being sold to consumers at MH Nabua. The Council bought two 250ml bottle samples of the PERFECT CHOICE product and found the labelling and ingredients list the same as those removed last month. This clearly showed that MH has no regard for the country's food safety laws.

Last month the Ministry of Health's Food Unit removed the product from the shelves of MH Superfresh in Tamavua and disposed of these at Naboro Landfill. This is because the 250ml bottles of PERFECT CHOICE SOYABEAN OIL were misleading. The product was labelled as "SOYABEAN OIL" when its ingredient list had "Soya Bean & Palm Oil". Under Part V, Section 21, sub-section 4(a) "**The name of the food – shall indicate the true nature of the food**". In this case, consumers are being misled about the contents of the product. While the front labelling says "SOYABEAN OIL", the ingredients list on the back states "Soya Bean & Palm Oil".

Palm oil is high in saturated fats which are one of the main contributing factors to high levels of cholesterol in the blood, heart disease and related illnesses. The availability of palm oil in the Fiji market has increased over the years and consumers here are not fully aware of the saturated fat issue. The Council is also concerned that other food retailers and distributors may be selling cooking oil products that contain palm oil, but this is not made known to consumers.

Consumers have the right to accurate information on food items and ingredients they are purchasing.

The Council finds it mischievous that MH has kept the product at its Nabua outlet which is not widely patronised, but frequented mainly by low-income consumers in the area. Despite action by the Ministry of Health's Food Unit, MH has continued to disregard the law and has acted irresponsibly by continuing to sell the product in question.

The Council will recommend to the Ministry of Health that all cooking oils sold in the Fiji market to be labelled according to their specific contents rather than the generic "Vegetable Oil" as is currently the practice.

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Ms PREMILA KUMAR
Chief Executive Officer