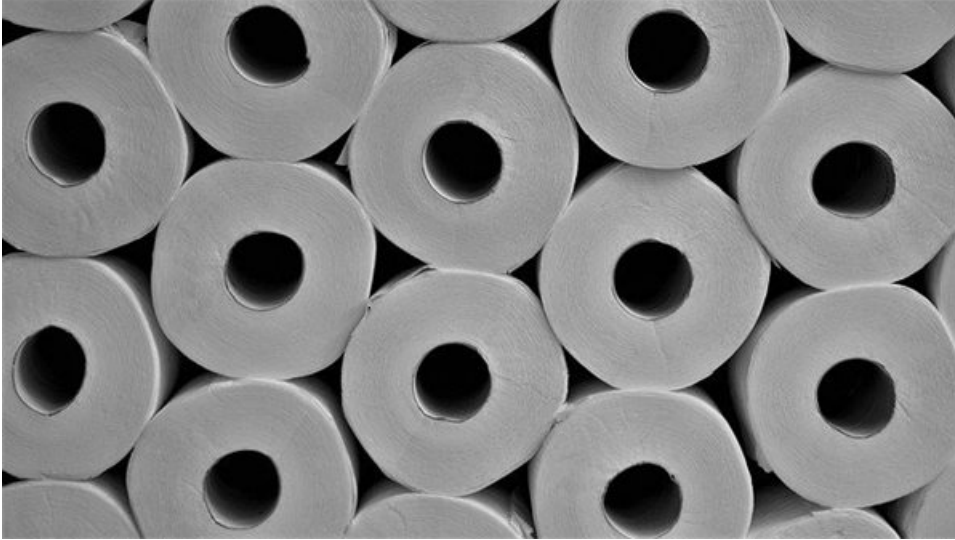


30 companies investigated for excessive price hikes

The National Consumer Commission (NCC), working jointly with the Competition Commission, has launched an investigation into allegations of excessive price hikes by 30 retailers from various provinces in the country since the outbreak of coronavirus (Covid-19).



Credit: Mylene2401 via Pxabay

The NCC is currently investigating 19 retailers, while the Competition Commission investigates 11 retailers.

Acting Consumer Commissioner Thezi Mabuza said that the NCC, through its call centre, has received a number of complaints from consumers on excessive price hikes on items, including hand sanitizers, facial masks, Dettol and toilet paper, amongst others.

Last week, Trade and Industry Minister Ebrahim Patel published a list of 22 critical products and categories which he instructed both the NCC and the Competition Commission to monitor and ensure had no unjustified price increases.

Mabuza said the Commission has a critical role to play during this time of need. “I like to remind suppliers of goods and services to be mindful of the provisions of Section 3 of the Consumer Protection Act of 2008. The Act sets out its purpose which is, amongst others, to reduce and ameliorate any disadvantages experienced in accessing any supply of goods or services by consumers,” Mabuza said.

To this end, Mabuza said, both regulators have assembled a team of investigators to investigate these cases, noting that

South Africa is in a state of disaster. “We are therefore prioritising these cases.”



New regulations to curb stockpiling, price hikes released

20 Mar 2020



With regard to investigations, Mabuza said the regulators have notified 11 companies of the intention to investigate the allegations of excessive price hikes, and the companies have acknowledged the regulators' communication.

Investigations into the following 11 companies have commenced:

Silver Oaks SuperSpar - Silverlakes, Pretoria East (Gauteng);
Spar in Platterkloof - Platterkloof (Western Cape);
North Safety - Paarden Eiland, Western Cape;
Checkers Hyper - Kempton Park (Gauteng);
National Overalls - Villeria Pretoria (Gauteng);
Makro - Springfield, Durban (KZN);
Clicks - Westgate Mall (Gauteng);
Free State Pharmacy - Bloemfontein (Free State);
Mopane Pharmacy - Nelspruit (Mpumalanga);
Sea Side Pharmacy - Table View (Western Cape); and
Pick n Pay in Milnerton - Milnerton (Western Cape).

In addition, the NCC will be issuing eight additional investigation certificates into four retailers in Gauteng, one in KwaZulu-Natal, two in the North West and one in Limpopo.



Covid-19: Commission to deal with suppliers who inflate prices

23 Mar 2020



Up to R1m fine to be imposed

Mabuza said these allegations are also against excessive price of items or goods like face masks and hand sanitisers. “A fine of up to R1 million or up to 10% of a firm's annual turnover or even imprisonment for a period not exceeding 12 months will be imposed to a company/retailer found guilty of price gouging,” Mabuza warned.

Mabuza added that the Commission has also noted with concern panic buying that [was happening] in light of the lockdown. “This leads to shortages of basic consumer commodities and overpricing, or price gouging.”

She urged all South Africans to continue monitoring the market and lodge complaints should they notice a sharp price increase.

The NCC's toll-free number is 0800 014 880 or 012 428 700 during office hours.