

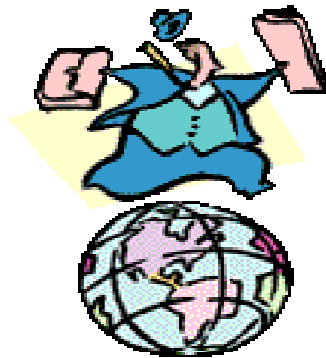
CONSUMER ALERT

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY in the Global Market

Corporate Accountability means that businesses have a legal and moral obligation to act in the best interest of the society.

GLOBAL CONCERNS:

- ◆ Globalisation has led to easier access to markets and a wider range of products and services for consumers
- ◆ Multinational Corporations create an imbalance of power between producers and consumers
- ◆ If unchecked, globalisation can open the door to exploitation of monopoly power by large corporations, cartelisation and price-fixing arrangements and higher prices



- ◆ Consumer rights can be easily trammelled and environmental, labour and other standards ignored

Multinational corporations are often blamed for:

- ◆ Transferring products and substances which are banned and removed from shelves in developed countries to what is perceived to be easily accessible markets in Less Developed Countries
- ◆ Dumping and other unfair practices

- ◆ Selling shoddy goods which are rejected in the advanced world, in other countries such as Jamaica
- ◆ Tax avoidance and evasion
- ◆ Market exploitation

Corporate responsibility means voluntarily efforts by businesses to act in the best interest of society. Businesses have a responsibility to ensure that the goods and services provided meet acceptable standards.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

THERE ARE AT LEAST 27 PIECES OF LEGISLATION IN JAMAICA, WHICH OFFER PROTECTION TO CONSUMERS INCLUDING THE:

- ◆ Sale of Goods Act
- ◆ Hire Purchase Act
- ◆ Trade Act
- ◆ Food & Drugs Act
- ◆ Fair Competition Act
- ◆ Standards Act
- ◆ Public Health Act
- ◆ Natural Resources Conservation Act

BUSINESSES HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH ESTABLISHED LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROVIDERS OF GOODS AND SERVICES:

- ◆ To ensure that products perform the functions for which they are required
- ◆ Reliable and effective after sales service
- ◆ To ensure that products supplied are safe and do not pose hazards to consumers' health and safety
- ◆ To ensure that products do not threaten environmental sustainability

PROVIDERS OF SERVICES INCLUDING MEDICAL, LEGAL, EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER SERVICES SHOULD PLACE THE NEEDS OF CLIENTS AS PRIORITY

RESPONSIBILITIES OF UTILITY SERVICE PROVIDERS:

Water, electricity and telecommunications services should be accessible, affordable, reliable, safe and provided efficiently.

These services must provide: -

- ♦ bills which are accurately computed and itemized
- ♦ written guidelines and fair procedures for complaints and claims
- ♦ contracts which do not contain unfair terms
- ♦ customer service of the highest quality

CAC's EXPECTATIONS OF CORPORATE ENTITIES

- ♦ Knowledge of and compliance with established laws, standards and acceptable codes of conduct
- ♦ Cooperation with public authorities and agencies
- ♦ A sense of urgency in addressing complaints and legitimate claims from consumers
- ♦ Appropriate measures to ensure that products sold perform the required function
- ♦ Display of all information pertinent to users of products, including guidelines on the use and the subsequent disposal of the product
- ♦ Ensure conformity with environmental standards
- ♦ Adequate compensation to consumers for losses sustained

Consumer Affairs Commission

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