



CSME MEMBER STATE COMPETITION AND CONSUMER ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS FOR – COVID-19

The table below presents COVID-19 related policies and actions being implemented by the national competition and consumer protection authorities and Ministries of Trade to protect commercial and consumer welfare in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) in accordance with the Regional Action Plan. Given the evolving nature of the pandemic and responses to it, the CCC will update the information in this chart weekly. For official, timely information from a specific jurisdiction, please consult the websites of the agencies listed.

Jurisdiction	Pillar 1 – Monitoring Markets	Pillar 2 – Competition and Consumer Advocacy	Pillar 3 – Competition and Consumer Enforcement
Antigua and Barbuda <i>Prices and Consumer Affairs Division</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disseminated press releases, engaged in news features on radio and TV, and utilized social media platforms to encourage consumers to report excessive pricing. ▪ Report excessive price campaign: focused on radio programs that allowed consumers and business owners the opportunity to share instances of price excessive prices. ▪ Shared aspects of the legislation (Distribution and Prices of Goods Act (CAP138)) and the offences named thereunder. ▪ Social media platforms used to inform consumers of the prices of basic food items. Consumers could easily identify instances of excessive pricing, which helped to strengthen consumer trust in the Division and gave consumers an opportunity to be an active part of the process. <p><i>School-based programs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Big Consumer Club: Has monthly meetings with grade five students and features various aspects on the importance of competition and consumer protection. ▪ Lectures to secondary school students on the importance of competition and consumer protection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪
Barbados <i>Barbados Fair Trading Commission (BFTC)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drafted Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hosted two public webinars, in collaboration with the US Federal Trade Commission, on merger control and abuse of dominance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Issued one (1) cease and desist order regarding misinformation about medical cures for COVID-19 and

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	<p>cooperation agreements with domestic partners to share information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitoring companies using vertical alignments to bring products to consumers, e.g. hardware stores supplying groceries. ▪ Observed products that are passed their expiration and best buy dates on shelves and taking necessary action to prevent this occurrence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planned public announcements of guidance on competition law and consumer protection enforcement to businesses and consumers. ▪ Increased social media and radio presence to combat the spread of misinformation to the public about COVID-19 and to warn them about the scams targeting Barbadians. 	<p>investigating other entities making similar claims.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reviewing a complaint of anti-competitive business conduct.
<p>Belize <i>Belize Bureau of Standards</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Price control mechanisms expanded to include hand sanitizers and other items needed for COVID-19. ▪ Collaborating with other agencies in Belize, such as the police, to ensure equity in the distribution of goods to consumers ▪ The BBS enhanced its toll free number used for consumers to report deceptive and unscrupulous activities within the marketplace. The BBS promoted the use of the toll free line via social media, its own website, and several forms of communication to the public. One popular avenue is the use of morning talk shows on the radio where consumers always call to vent out and make complaints. The radio station would then pursue the matter with the agency responsible for the issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Removal of sales tax and duties on a basket of goods, including general sanitizers and cleaners, germicides, peroxides, liquid soaps, face masks, and others, to make them cheaper for consumers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪
<p>Commonwealth of Dominica <i>Ministry of Trade, Commerce, Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Business and Export</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishment of a standing committee to ensure availability of supplies of key products by such measures as requesting suppliers to have a limited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪

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<i>Development (Consumer Affairs Unit)</i>	<p>number of products sold to consumers during one shopping experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National emergency coordinators to examine the supply of stocks of necessary goods and to monitor consumption patterns. ▪ Checking of shipping routes for pre-orders to see if they are affected as this could impact the supply of products on local markets. 		
<p>Grenada <i>Prices and Consumer Affairs Unit, Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Finance</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Amendment of the Supplies Control (prices) regulations under Supplies Control Act to include alkaline cleaning agents, rubbing alcohol, hand sanitizers and other products used in the prevention of COVID-19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪
<p>Guyana <u>Competition and Consumer Affairs Commission</u> <i>Department of Consumer Affairs</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expanded channels for submitting reports to include Facebook, email, telephone & website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborated with the Department of Consumer Affairs, to educate consumers on COVID-19. ▪ Businesses and consumers were urged to report misleading advertising and excessive pricing through interviews with news agency. ▪ Issued Press release via print media. TV and social media (Facebook). ▪ Interviews with news agencies, press releases, TV, and social media. ▪ CCAC collaborating with the relevant authorities in assisting disseminating information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborating with the Guyana Revenue Authority, which might have legislation to prohibit price gouging, to determine what the relevant sections are for enforcement.
<p>Jamaica <u>Jamaica Fair Trading Commission (JFTC)</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitoring online provision of services now being offered by firms since in the past there were instances where suppliers did not allow customers to “opt-out” of these services. ▪ Monitoring new companies offering delivery services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain communication with sector regulators, especially those with whom the FTC have MOUs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Temporarily allowing cooperation arrangements necessary for the supply and distribution of products to prevent shortage of essential products. ▪ Adapting competition procedures and deadlines to the extraordinary

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			<p>circumstances created by the pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enforcing competition law against companies that take advantage of the crisis by abusing market power or creating cartels.
<p>Jamaica <i>Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased surveillance of markets. Surveys of prices increased to 4 times per month (2 groceries and 2 sanitation) instead of the usual twice per month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicating prices to consumers on CAC website and mobile app so they can know prices in their areas and make informed decisions. ▪ Through advisories/interviews/social media, educate consumers about the ways COVID-19 will affect their spending and well-being. Specifically: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborated with JIS to create a docu-drama about price gouging. 2. Placed PSAs on various radio stations. 3. Conducted several interviews with traditional media outlets. 4. Increased the number of social media posts or re-posted content from parent Ministry and related MDAs. 5. Placed COVID-19 consumer tips on website, mobile application, and other social media platforms. ▪ As Secretariat for MICAF’s Distributive Trade Meetings, CAC assisted in coordinating 2 online meetings of retailers, distributors, and regulators, to procure stock level information to guide policy decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAC empowered through the interim Trade Order 2020 to investigate price gouging and fine persons who contravene the Order. The CAC can examine the books of businesses to validate that prices of goods sold are fair. ▪ Investigating three (3) complaints of price gouging.
<p>Montserrat <i>Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing and Environment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ COVID-19 Business Impact Assessment circulated to businesses on the island to get a sense of the impact the pandemic has caused on their operations. ▪ Concessionary packages for farmers and backyard gardeners to circumvent any potential shortfalls in food items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequent communication with suppliers of essential food and supplies. Weekly reports produced and Cabinet updated Cabinet. ▪ Suppliers encouraged to stay clear of price gouging. 	
<p>Saint Lucia <i>Consumer Affairs Department</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A list of essential products was developed for monitoring that includes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Press releases published urging consumers and businesses to be responsible during the COVID-19 pandemic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To combat fraudulent products – particularly pharmaceuticals - that

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	such items as hand sanitisers, rubbing alcohol, face masks and basic medication (e.g. vitamin C).		pose a threat to public health, Saint Lucia has a Public Health Act that can be invoked, and persons prosecuted, if they breach this legislation.
Saint Kitts and Nevis Consumer Affairs Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A detailed database relating to essential food items currently exists and is used to monitor price fluctuations of these items on a quarterly basis. This list will have to be expanded to include the prices of hand sanitizers, hand wash and alcohol based disinfectants. ▪ The Department of Consumer Affairs is currently a member of the local COVID-19 compliance taskforce. This taskforce is comprised of members from Customs Department, the Ministries of Health, National Security, along with Fire Services and the Immigration Department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consumers in St Kitts and Nevis were encouraged to report instances of price gouging to the Consumer Affairs Department via the Departments' Facebook page or via email in the absence of a dedicated reporting portal 	
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines <i>Ministry of Trade and Industry</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collecting data from Customs on the volume of food being imported and their import prices. This enables the government to monitor national food supplies and the prices of goods retailed to consumers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Weekly radio programmes that address consumer protection issues (contact information is always stated at the end of each programme) ▪ Social media page, radio programmes, and school presentations also advocate for proper business etiquette and consumer prudence in the marketplace. ▪ Businesses were warned via radio and television that unwarranted increases prices could be met with legislated price control for the specific good. ▪ The process on educating consumers and businesses is ongoing. ▪ Plans are afoot to encourage greater participation among the private sector especially as it relates to competition and consumer protection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborating with the private sector and using moral suasion to ensure consumers are not disadvantaged. ▪ Legislation is in place to afford the Minister with responsibility for trade, the right to have price controls on goods deemed so worthy given the extant circumstances.
Suriname	▪	▪	▪

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Consumer Affairs Department, Ministry of Trade and Industry			
Trinidad and Tobago <i>Trinidad and Tobago Fair Trading Commission (TTFTC)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The TTFTC continues to be in close contact with the various business associations in Trinidad and Tobago and have sent correspondence reminding them to inform their members of the provisions of the Fair Trading Act and the need to adhere to these provisions ▪ The TTFTC continues to work closely with the Consumer Affairs Division in the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards to ensure consumers are not forced to pay excessive prices for essential goods and services ▪ The TTFTC has a complaints procedure (including an online complaint form) which businesses and consumers can use if they believe that an enterprise has engaged in anti-competitive practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The TTFTC continues to have teleconference meetings with relevant stakeholders to explain the provisions of the Fair Trading Act. ▪ The TTFTC continues to issue Public Notices and Press Releases on relevant competition issues and how they relate to efforts to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. ▪ The Chairman of the TTFTC, has written to the national newspapers outlining the important role of competition and by implication the TTFTC during this national crisis ▪ The TTFTC is part of advocacy efforts coordinated by the Ministry of Trade and Industry aimed at ensuring that consumer rights are protected, and business integrity is maintained during this period. ▪ Collaborate with Consumer Affairs Division, Ministry of Trade and Industry (consumer regulator) - emphasize the need to adhere to proper consumer protection principles and proper business etiquette. Forward complaints to the Consumer Affairs Division where necessary and appropriate. ▪ Collaborate with the Regulated Industries Commission (utilities regulator) - made short virtual presentations and shared relevant information bearing in mind that the Regulated Industries Commission is responsible for applying and enforcing the Fair Trading Act with respect to the public utilities sector. ▪ Issued public notices and press releases ▪ Direct contact with various business associations reminding them of FTA & need for compliance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The competition law is now fully proclaimed, which will give the agency enforcement powers against anti-competitive business conduct. ▪ The TTFTC recognizes that there may be the need for some collaboration between competitors in order to ensure that supply chains for essential goods and services are not compromised, however enterprises have been advised through various means that anti-competitive conduct including collusion, bid-rigging and abuse of dominance will not be allowed. ▪ Although no applications have been received, the TTFTC has not suspended its ability to receive merger filings (which will need to be done electronically) and continues to advise on merger requests with there being no changes with respect to the merger deadlines as these would require an amendment to the Fair Trading Act. ▪ Merger Guidelines are presently being prepared that will cover issues such as merger reviews, interim decisions, and requests for further information especially because it is expected that there will be increased merger activity post COVID-19.

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Trinidad and Tobago <i>Consumer Affairs Division</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Normal monthly survey of prices curtailed because of lack of personal protective equipment for staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Division is preparing new consumer legislation and has employed the services of a consultant to draft same. The new legislation would empower the agency to issue cease and desist orders to prohibit deceptive sales practices in the country