

Government Policy Statement on Essential Goods and Services Such as Grocery Products in Response to COVID-19

Pursuant to section 26 of the Commerce Act 1986, I hereby give to the Commerce Commission the following statement of the economic policy of the Government in relation to maintaining confidence in the market for essential goods and services such as grocery products during the period that COVID-19 is affecting the New Zealand economy.

Introduction and Background

1. New Zealand has a robust and resilient economy that can respond to and recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19.
2. The government has announced a \$12.1 billion package to support New Zealanders and their jobs from the global impact of COVID-19. Any measures that we take must be timely, fiscally sustainable, targeted to those who need it, and proportionate to the level of the economic shock.
3. We are working together – all arms of government, business groups and unions – to protect jobs and businesses by cushioning the impact this global outbreak has on our economy.
4. COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving situation and our first priority is on the health and wellbeing of our people.
5. As we go through this crisis towards economic recovery the Government will be constantly monitoring the situation and adjusting its response. As with every action we have taken we will be constantly reviewing every measure to ensure it is getting to those that need it the most.

Government Policy Statement

1. It is Government policy that over the period that COVID-19 is affecting the New Zealand economy, the Commerce Commission should have regard to the Government's objective of maintaining confidence in the market for essential goods and services such as grocery products, by ensuring that there is broad and fair access to them by as wide a range of consumers as possible.
2. The Commission should work with stakeholders including consumers, market participants and Government agencies to contribute to achieving the Government's objective.
3. The purpose of this policy statement is to facilitate the sale and supply of grocery products and other essential goods and services in an equitable manner. The Government does not endorse behaviours such as price gouging or hoarding.
4. As always, I expect the Commission to have regard to the public interest in these exceptional times when exercising its powers.

Issued at Wellington this 22nd day of March 2020.

HON KRIS FAAFOI, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs.