

## PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

### **Trading Standards find short weight packs that may make Cost of Living crisis worse.**

An investigation by Trading Standards officers in Scotland has found that short weight products may be contributing to the cost of living crisis.

Trading Standards Officers throughout the West of Scotland have been taking part in a retail monitoring project aimed at identifying short weight products and protecting consumers from detriment at a time when finances are stretched, and prices are rising due to inflation.

Officers carried out weight checks on packaged goods at 39 retail outlets, with short weight<sup>4</sup> products identified during 17 of these visits. A total of 296 different product lines were checked with 24 (8%) found to contain short weight packs.

A total of 2496 individual packs were checked within these product lines and 71 (3%) of these were found to be short weight, with deficiencies as high as 23%, leading to detriment of as much as £1.10 per pack.

Although the vast majority of packs did not give cause for concern, 15 packers were found to have placed non-compliant products on the market, each one of these constituting a potential offence by the packer<sup>5</sup> as well as causing financial harm to consumers.

One packer, with a contract to supply half-a-million supermarket ready meals every week, was found to have produced packs with deficiencies of as much as 14%, representing a loss to consumers of 26p per pack. Taken to the extreme, if the same level of deficiency were replicated across the packer's entire production the total collective detriment to consumers could be as high as £130,000 per week, or £6.76m per year.

With food, fuel and energy prices continuing to rise, it is important that consumers receive exactly what they have paid for, including the correct quantity. Trading Standards is ideally placed to not only protect consumers against detriment through short measure products but to also support businesses responsible for placing these products on the market through advice and intervention where necessary.

David MacKenzie, Chair of SCOTSS (Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland) explained:

*"Measurement is at the heart of fair trade in goods and is a core issue for Trading Standards teams across Scotland, making sure that consumers get what they pay for and that businesses are weighing and measuring goods accurately. With the current cost of living crisis it is even more important that the processes and systems that should be in place are working properly and consumers get what they pay for. "*

*He continued:*

*"SCOTSS works very closely with colleagues in Weights & Measures authorities across Scotland, and this is an excellent example of local authority officers working together to ensure the market is working properly and fairly and that consumers are getting what they pay for. Officers are there not only to protect consumers but also to help and support businesses."*

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

For press queries and further details on this project, email Ken Daly, SCOTSS Coordinator at [coordinator@scotss.org.uk](mailto:coordinator@scotss.org.uk) or call 07720538349

1. The Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS) represents the 31 local authority Trading Standards services in Scotland. SCOTSS was established in 1996 and helps support and coordinate the activities of Scotland local authority trading standards teams. It is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC047951 and works closely with other governmental and regulatory organisations, such as the Competition and Markets Authority, the Office of Product Safety and Standards, Trading Standards Scotland, and the Scottish Government.
2. Trading Standards Officers in Scottish councils advise on and enforce laws that govern the way we buy, sell, rent and hire goods and services. Local authorities carry out inspections and monitor or investigate complaints, they work with businesses to help achieve compliance but ultimately, can instigate prosecutions or take civil actions against those who break the law.
3. Weights and Measures is the oldest form of consumer protection and regulates the way that almost all goods are weighed and measured. The metrological system not only ensures that consumers get what they pay for but also that businesses are able to trade on a level market-place, not only within the UK but internationally.
4. Short weight in this context means packages less than twice the allowed error deficient of the marked pack weight. The average system allows packers of goods in predetermined constant quantities to take account of the variations caused by their equipment and pack to a level which is on average not less than the (nominal) quantity marked on the package. With the proviso that any packs that are deficient in quantity can only be light by a specified amount.
5. In all instances where deficiencies were found, follow up visits were made by local authority officers to the companies involved to seek to rectify any issues with packing procedures.