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department of
economic, small business development,
tourism and environmental affairs
FREE STATE PROVINCE

MEDIA STATEMENT

DESTEA CONSUMER PROTECTION TEAM TACKLES

NON COMPLIANCE TO COVID-19 DISASTER MANGMENT REGULATIONS

Immediately after the announcement made on 15th March 2020 by President Cyril Ramaphosa on measures to be implemented to contain the spread of Covid-19, Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Economic Affairs (DESTEA) also took measures to contain the spread of Covid-19, specifically on travel restrictions on foreigners from countries that might have a significant impact on the planned activities for the 2020/21 game season.

The lock down has had a devastating impact on businesses across the country. In the Free State, the clothing and textile sector provides employment to a significant number of people in Botshabelo and QwaQwa and it has been hard hit; there are signs that some of these factories may find it difficult to re-start their operations post the lock down period.

This will inevitably lead to an increase in unemployment in the Province. Other SMEs have also been negatively impacted by the pandemic and measures instituted to curb its spread; the following sectors are hard hit: food, tourism and hospitality, manufacturing, logistics, and retail. The informal sector (street vendors, motor mechanics, etc) has also been severely affected as most of operators in this sector rely solely on their business to put bread on the table. Furthermore, businesses that contribute to the township economy such chesanyamas, car washes, construction, carpentry, are also negatively affected. This means there will be a generalized increase in poverty levels during this period and in the immediate period after the lock down.



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Unfortunately during this difficult times, some unscrupulous businesses take advantage of vulnerable consumers. To mitigate against this problem, MEC, Makalo Mohale together with his entourage of senior departmental officials went throughout the province to ensure that other business people do not take the advantage of the situation through overpricing of essentials goods during this period, covid-19.

Some of the towns visited it were Bulfontein, Ventertsburg, Reddesburg, Smithfield, Memel, Bothaville and Bloemfontein for noncompliance to Covid-19 Disaster Management Regulations. During the Blitz several businesses were found non-compliant for not being in possession of valid, municipal permits, overpricing of food, health and safety issues including home affairs laws governing asylum seekers.

With the help of SAPS, Home Affairs and National Regulator For Compulsory Specification (NRCS) and municipalities, seventeen (17) people including five illegal immigrants were arrested and nine shops were closed.

It was discovered that there is lot of foreign nationals who are not properly documented who are running spaza shops in many towns and townships. Most businesses are not registered in terms of the Business Act 71 of 1991. The municipalities have been alerted to this and the department will be working with local authorities to ensure that there is compliance.

END

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