



## Consumer Protection - Metrology - Standards - Supplies Control



### A Closer Look at The Food Based Dietary Guidelines for Belize



Food is one of the many choices we face every day but as we look at the various diseases (Obesity, Diabetes, and Heart Disease) that plagues this region, we should realize that food should become one of the most important decisions we make. Food is a necessity; often we forget that food manage or unmanage can make us healthy or unhealthy. Our bodies thrive on what we eat so why not chose something that can enhance the quality of life. The saying "You are what you eat" can be considered a true reflection of all that we consume. As consumers, why put food into our bodies that we don't need, especially foods that won't help our body to perform optimally.

So we ask the questions... How much food and what kind of foods should we be eating?

The Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDG) for Belize aims to answer this question. The guideline is an educational tool which informs what we should be eating in order to be healthy. There are eight guidelines which speaks to types of food, portion and food choices.

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Foods that we want to keep in our diets daily are fruits and vegetables. We should be eating fruits and vegetables every day; they are relatively found in abundance and packed with various nutrients. Aim for variety and color as this influences the type of nutrients they contain. Choose whole grain foods as much possible. These include whole wheat and rye breads, brown rice, and oat products. The latter provides the body with nutrients needed for energy, stomach health and improved body performance. Ground food (such as yam, cassava, cocoa, potato) are high in carbohydrates (complex sugars) but packed with nutrients. We should try to include these foods as often as possible bearing in mind preparation practices which limit fat, sugar and salt. Belizean culture is to eat rice in particular white rice almost every day. Try to include pieces of ground food at least 2 days a week as is beneficial to the health. Reducing fat, sugar and salt is a typical recommendation found in all health books and notably in our guidelines. Culturally most of our foods are either prepared with too much fat, sugar or salt. Research has proven that consuming too much fat, sugar and salt has been linked to numerous health risks and diseases so tips such as taking off extra skin from meats, baking instead of frying, using less sugar and salt in preparation are excellent practices. Seasonings and taste play a big part of why we like certain foods, but the type of seasoning that we use can have an impact on our health. Let's look at using plain salt for taste in a meal versus using onion, garlic, cilantro. Using plain salt for seasoning our meals has very little nutrients for our health while the dish using the herbal seasonings carry more nutrients beneficial to the body. Use seasoning such as cilantro, onions, garlic, sweet pepper cayenne pepper, cinnamon, for seasoning adds taste in cooking. The guidelines also makes mention of food safety. Food safety issues such as clean environment, good hygiene, safe source of food, expired goods, can also impact health. Food borne diseases negatively affects health and decreases nutrition status and often is positively correlated with the source of preparation.

Lastly, physical activity is vital for health. Envision our body like a machine built to move around. What would happen to a machine if it is not in use? It will shut down sooner or later. This is how we should think of our body's need for exercise. Physical activity has numerous health benefits such as improving heart function, strengthening muscles and bones, weight management, improving concentration, and relieving stress. Bear in mind physical activity does not have to be boring, it can be fun and relaxing for example dancing, cycling, yoga, gardening. So whatever your choice is just keep moving.

Belizeans are encouraged to effectively streamline their diets with the guidelines serving as a major reference for healthy living.

*Written by Robyn Daly  
More information on the Belize Food Guidelines can be found at the Ministry of Health, Belmopan*

## Quality Infrastructure and the value chain

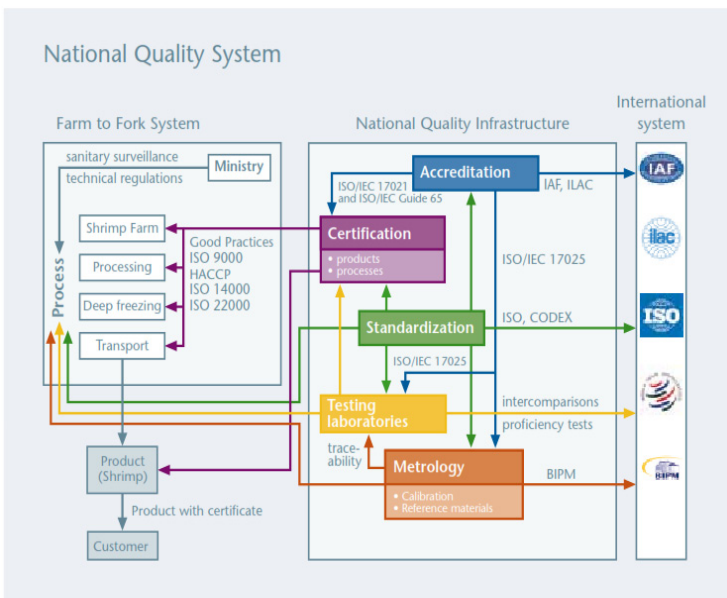
Whether you are a technocrat or not, the possibility of coming across the phrase from “fork to table” is quite likely in any discussion linked to commerce, industry or trade. While it is certainly not a concept fraught with complexities to baffle the mind it is a phrase which in the long stretch that carries weight and depth depending on the moment or circumstance.

This concept in essence gives meaning and purpose to the functions of value chain systems across economic sectors. For simplicity, a value chain system is the footprint for production or processes that provides traceability for goods and services whether for domestic or global consumption. It is the means by which fragmented activities within the chain can be coordinated across the flow or stages involved and their associated linkages. Conversely, it is the mapping we need to connect the dots along the way – internally within the firm and externally through relationships between firms involved. This is important for today's market setting since there is now a tight knit between mega supermarkets and suppliers that strive on quality sensitive value chains and as global markets continue to evolve so will the complexity of inter-company linkages. In truth, large commercial chains are the key stakeholders fuelling a number of value chains and they are the ones that increasingly establish the ground rules. For micro, small and medium sized enterprises in developing states this can pose tremendous challenges where sights are set to transcend domestic borders.

As Belize pursues various national development strategies and policies that are geared to propel domestic production to meet local and global demand, it is cognizant that it must advance this agenda by identifying and pursuing current and potential value chains in key economic sectors. In a parallel fashion, it is also ensuring that the throttle is in motion to meet rigorous technical requirements and measures that may be imposed by a strict international trading regime. Any successful attempt to do so however will depend on the readiness of support institutions/services that have an influential role to play in driving economic growth, competitiveness and most importantly a culture for quality.

The Belize Bureau of Standards as the lead agency for the promotion and development of Quality Infrastructure (QI) – refers to the pillars of Metrology, Standards, Testing and Quality Assurance that combine to ensure that technical requirements whether by technical regulations or standards are met – is a key support institution in the strengthening of value chain systems in Belize. It might not be as obvious to one who is not working in the trenches for quality infrastructure but any successful chain will thrive on the pillars of quality infrastructure. To bridge the two, agriculture as a generic value chain provides an opportunity to showcase the mechanics of this interplay. At the start of the value chain a farmer will require quality fertilizer, the use of registered pesticides, water and soil analysis, heavy metals, pesticide residue and aflatoxin testing, proper storage and transportation especially in the case of the preservation of high risk products. As cited these are all elements of the value chain that depend on quality infrastructure for product quality certification. In this instance the pillars of QI are blindly at work considering that metrology ensures that standard measurements and instruments used in testing are traceable and internationally recognize. Furthermore, that the established limits and testing as prescribed in standards are met for water and soil analysis, heavy metals, residues and aflatoxins to ensure overall quality that both buyer and seller agree to.

Extending beyond the value chain, the development of QI can go a long way in enhancing competitiveness, making production processes more environmentally-friendly, improve consumer protection and promoting regional cooperation. However, while a clear link can be drawn between QI and value chains it is important to highlight that the strengthening of this link apart from building the awareness of users –firms/enterprises – will require convergence of efforts between relevant trade and business support agencies, on the premise that quality infrastructure is a shared responsibility of those supporting institutions that play a key role in ensuring quality of goods and services produced for domestic and external markets.



José E. Trejo  
Director, Belize Bureau of Standards

## Sneak Peak at the Bureau's new Newsletter Design. Coming August 2013!



# BUREAU AT WORK

## *World Consumer Rights Day 2013*



The Consumer Protection Unit, in celebration of World Consumer Rights Day visited various municipalities to promote consumer rights and introduce consumers to the Unit and its activities.

This year, World Consumer Rights Day was celebrated under the theme, "Consumer Justice Now!" This theme provided the opportunity for the Unit to encourage consumers to utilize the consumer protection hotline number in the event that they feel their rights are being violated.

### *Measurement in Daily Life*

As the Bureau continues to stride for betterment for the Belizean people, it also recognizes the importance of measurement and in so doing will celebrate World Metrology Day on 20th May 2013 to commemorate the meter convention in 1875. The theme for this year is "MEASUREMENT IN DAILY LIFE" the theme depicts what we do on a daily basis even when we think it is not measurement. For instance many of us visit the doctor due to illness and watch the time for us to get ourselves prepared and that in itself is metrology. Remember by visiting the doctor he or she will first take you vitals and if the thermometer used is out of calibration, your illness may be classified as detrimental when in fact it is not.

### *Bureau's Regional and International Participation*

1. CATRTA-COPANT Workshops – 22nd – 26th April, 2013 – Saint Lucia
2. 22nd Meeting of the CROSC Council – 26th – 30th April, 2013 – Saint Lucia

### **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**Belize Bureau of Standards Booth  
National Agricultural Trade Show  
4th & 5th May 2013**

**Public Service Information Day  
Belize City - 9th May 2013  
City of Belmopan - 23rd May 2013**

**World Metrology Day  
Metrology in Daily Life  
20th May 2013**

## Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Awareness: Being One Step Ahead

Trade liberalization has opened up markets, leaving them vulnerable to the domination of advanced markets which has caused the introduction of various new measures to protect local SMEs, one of which are Technical Barriers to Trade. As per the WTO TBT Agreement this is acceptable when it fits a particular legitimate objective such as protection of the environment, ensuring health and safety and so on via the introduction of standards and technical regulations<sup>1</sup>. However the introduction of these measures without being legitimately justified can cause obstacles to trade and disrupt trade and relationships between parties. Therefore, there must be a proper mechanism in place in every member state of the WTO allowing the opportunity for its trading partners to be aware of the measures it seeks to introduce to pursue or protect its legitimate objective, as per the WTO TBT Agreement.

In this regard, the Bureau of Standards serves as the TBT Enquiry Point for Belize which is responsible to monitor all notifications to the WTO which may have a potential effect on its current trade relations – this allows for SMEs to be informed and be one step way ahead in preparation even before the measure is being introduced and being allowed the opportunity to comment on the intended measure that could have potential trade impact. This also applies on the measures that Belize introduces to be able to notify its trading partners via the WTO on any technical regulation which may have a potential impact on trade. Given the Enquiry Point's current weaknesses both internally such as limited infrastructure, no recognized TBT committee, limited public awareness and outreach and externally such as poor private stakeholder involvement and participation, poor collaboration linkages with trade promotion organizations, poor and adhoc use of standards in technical regulations, trade agreements are under-utilized – poor implementation, among others, becomes difficult for the Bureau to execute its functions as the enquiry point for TBT related matters. Nevertheless, cognizant of the importance of information exchange as it relates to existing and new TBT measures, increased innovation and being able to expand markets by meeting the technical requirements of clients – the SME needs to have access to this information. Knowledge is power – but being able to obtain this information is sometimes costly for the stakeholder when sourcing it by commercial means and it is one factor that hinders the SME's development.

Therefore, the Bureau is finalizing its TBT Action Plan at an opportune time having been placed under the relevant ministry responsible for trade related matters which is the Ministry of Trade, Investment Promotion, Private Sector Development and Consumer Protection. As the Ministry pursues various policy and development initiatives (which include the National Policy for Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, review of the National Export Strategy, launch of the Aid for Trade Strategy, launch of the Small Business Development Centers and Incentives programmes) the Bureau recognizes that it can become a strategic partner in these efforts through effective integration and coordination by promulgating standards and technical regulations that are relevant to the national economy. This will also align the Bureau with respect to future national needs relating to trade and adjust its development pathway institutionally with respect to technical capability and relevance. This action plan involves strategic planning for the Bureau in the near future as it relates to human resources, endorsement of a proper functioning TBT Committee, development of a national standardization programme, develop a public awareness and education programme, establishing effective and coordinated linkages, and implementation of an effective monitoring mechanism as it relates to technical regulations.

In building its image it hopes to tactfully engage the private sector on its role and function as the technical barriers to trade Enquiry Point. At this present time the Bureau is almost never consulted in matters relating

to trade in external markets. It is important to note that institutionally it must be in the best position to provide this level of support but this will depend largely on enhancing the institutional capacities coupled with a strong public education and awareness.

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<sup>1</sup>Document which lays down product characteristics or their related processes and production methods, including the applicable administrative provisions, with which compliance is mandatory. It may also include or deal exclusively with terminology, symbols, packaging, marking or labeling requirements as they apply to a product, process or production method.

## “The Calidena Methodology” Promoting Value Chains

In the Director's corner you have been briefly introduced to the importance of a national quality infrastructure – QI and a means by analyzing the needs of specific sectors – Value Chains to support economic development. Now where do we start with all this? How can we take advantage of the export opportunities? What is the relevance to Belize? The National Export Strategy emphasizes on the need to establish our major value chains and improving them. For this, we introduce the Calidena Methodology (as part of the international technical cooperation to assist SMEs in developing countries by the PTB, Germany – [www.ptb.de](http://www.ptb.de)). This methodology requires us to do our homework (conduct prior diagnostic study, identification of the stakeholders, analysis, etc) so that any problems that has been identified and the solutions or actions taken to solve those problems are executed to foster quality services for a value chain in complying with specific requirements required by selected market or end clients as well as with technical regulations or private standards in that particular market. The idea here is to perform a value chain analysis in a participative manner involving all the relevant links such as the suppliers, consumers, end users, exporters, retailers and wholesalers and providing a diagnostic on the current quality of products and processes in each of these links. It also identifies the provision of lack of quality systems (inspection, testing and certification, regulatory framework, standardization, and metrology for the selected value chain to be improved). The ultimate objective of this process identifies opportunities for improvement in a productive chain in such a way that shared actions and responsibilities can help to find a solution so as to provide services tailored to the requirements of the sector. For more information regarding this article please contact the Bureau's office.

## Technical Committees Established

The Belize Bureau of Standards has the responsibility to engage relevant stakeholders to develop relevant and necessary standards and technical regulations to contribute to Belize's development. It is essential that such standards and technical regulations are created with the full participation and partnership of the relevant stakeholders. To fulfill this responsibility and to serve the expressed needs of its partners, the BBS has recently formed technical committees to develop standards and technical regulations in the following areas; Fuels and Lubricants, Accommodation Services, High Risk Tour Activities and Operations of Archaeological Sites and Medical and Industrial Gasses.

According to the Statistical Institute of Belize, Belize spent \$286.4 million dollars on imports of Mineral Fuels and Lubricants in 2012. This accounts for approximately 16.2% of all imports in 2012. This sector is clearly very important to the consumer population as well as the country's industrial sector. The recently established technical committee is charged with the responsibility of developing standards and technical regulations for Fuels and Lubricants.

(Cont'd on Page 5)

These outputs will address the needs of the sector in the areas of product composition and specifications, safety and transportation and storage. It is anticipated that the committee will always remain active to address the changing needs of the industry and to periodically review and update the standards and technical regulations developed to ensure that they meet the needs of the market and continue to evolve as technology changes.

The Central Bank of Belize Major Economic Indicators table (<https://www.centralbank.org.bz/rates-statistics/balance-of-payments>) shows that in 2011 total inflow to Belize from the tourism industry amounted to some \$292.1 million US Dollars. This sector is also a key source of employment for thousands of Belizeans. Furthermore, this is an industry whose viability and profitability is greatly affected by the industry's reputation and product quality. Recognizing the vital role the tourism industry plays in Belize, a technical committee has been formed to develop standards and technical regulations for the tourism sector in the areas mentioned above. These standards and regulations should enhance and complement the product development programmes of the tourism industry stakeholders. In addition, it should bring some additional assessment tools and structure to selected operations in this industry. The committee will take a comprehensive approach to this process where every aspect of the industry will be assessed. After a proper assessment of the standards and regulatory needs of the industry is completed, priorities will be set and work undertaken to fill those needs.

One of the key concepts the BBS is attempting to institute in Belize is the idea of demand driven standards development. The medical and industrial gas sector in Belize has expressed keen interest in the development of standards and technical regulation to govern its operations. The BBS is cognizant of the vital need for comprehensive standards and sound regulations in this sector especially as it related to safety. In light of this, a technical committee has been established to develop standards and technical regulations for Medical and Industrial Gases. Proper regulatory impact assessments will be completed by the committee and great emphasis will be placed on those elements essential to ensuring that the sector operates in a manner which ensures safety. This will also assist other sectors of the economy. The tourism sector will benefit since some of the principles and guidelines may be adapted to tour operators using scuba tanks and gasses. In addition, there are currently efforts to develop medical tourism in Belize. Having sound standards and regulations will also make the environment more favorable for the development of this new industry.

## LPG Tanks Safety Tips

The vast majority of Belizean households utilize LPG and related equipment on a daily basis. While LPG and its related equipment are very convenient and safe, it must be noted that improper use may cause injury or death. The following are a few points which may ensure that this product is used in a safe and efficient manner.

- LPG containers are not to be placed in close proximity to the stove or any other sources of flame.
- Tanks and cylinders should be stored in areas where they will not be exposed to high temperatures.
- Store cylinders upright in a well-ventilated and readily accessible location.

- Frequently check hose for loose connections, damage and leaks. Replace the LPG cylinder hose on a regular basis, and replace any damaged or worn hose with a new hose.
- Never check for gas leaks using a lit match. Always use a solution of soapy water and look for bubbles coming from around valves and pipe joints. These bubbles indicate a gas leak.
- After securely connecting a new or refilled cylinder, apply some soapy water to the cylinder connections and turn on the cylinder.
- In the early morning, proper precaution is required to ensure that there no gas buildup in the room, by opening doors and windows prior to turning on the stove.

## Transforming Belize's Licensing Regime

The Supplies Control Unit (SCU) is administratively charged with Belize's import and export licensing regimes as prescribed under Chapter 293 of the Laws of Belize Revised Edition 2003. [Simply put, it discharges its duty by quantitatively restricting both imports and exports of goods that fall under both regimes, a responsibility which it cannot take lightly since it effectively restricts demand and supply] Economically this can impact importers, exporters, producers and more importantly consumers.

Effective and efficient administration therefore becomes all the more important and for the past five (5) years it has remained steadfast to deliver just that. Since 2009 it has focussed its efforts on expediting the administrative process on the basis of equity and transparency.

In September of 2011 the SCU made it's attempt at piloting its electronic licensing system. To date there are currently over 30 active end users that are now utilizing the system on a daily basis. This system has not only sparked the interest of the end user but also incited other regulatory bodies within Belize to follow suit. The SCU is has essentially created a stir for E-Government that will now see other departments such as the Belize Agricultural and Health Authority (BAHA), Ministry of Agriculture (MAF), The Belize Forestry Department among others rolling out their own dedicated Online Web service application.

The SCU is on the precipice of entering a new stage in its development as it is now geared up to interface with the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA). ASYCUDA is a computerized system designed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to administer a country's customs. It is the largest technical cooperation program of the UNCTAD, covering over 80 countries and 4 regional projects. Currently there are three different generations of ASYCUDA in use: ASYCUDA 2.7, ASYCUDA++ and ASYCUDA World. All of them were built using different paradigms and solutions available at the time of conception, ASYCUDA World being the most recent and is also the one currently being used by the Belize Customs and Excise Department. ASYCUDA offers a potent tool to the Belize Customs and Excise Department by helping to control their core processes and obtaining timely, accurate and valuable information to support government projections and planning.

The interfacing and sharing of data between SCUOLS and ASYCUDA will improve on bottlenecks, facilitate trade allow documenting of real time data on actual imports and exports. Benefits of interconnection with Asycuda will include but are not limited to:

1. Better decision by regulatory bodies due to improved interrelated information.
2. Develop a statistical foundation that will influence long term strategies towards improving the industrial and agricultural sectors of Belize
3. A licensing regime based on logic and statistical data and liberalized from subjectivity and estimation.

## Consumer Justice Now

Consumers acquire or use countless goods and services everyday of their lives. They are the driving forces of the success of businesses within their country, yet there is a great need for consumer protection due to the exploitation of consumer's vulnerability. On a daily basis consumers are being provided with sub-standard products, goods that are underweight, false and incomplete information, unsatisfactory after-sale services, etc. One of the reasons consumer exploitation continues to occur is due to limited information in regards to price, quality, conditions of use, terms of purchase, etc; thus, the result is making wrong choices which in turns cost them money.

As victims of these unfair and fraudulent practices, the need for justice has been recognized as extremely important in order to achieve consumer redress and satisfaction. However, the onus is not always on the businesses. Consumers are responsible for examining the products they wish to purchase as well as understand the guarantee of the products and services. They are encouraged to file a complaint whenever they feel their rights are being violated even if the value of the good is small and form consumer organizations for making representation to government and other bodies. Consumers must know their rights and exercise them in making well informed decisions about the goods and services they consume.

In Belize, there is also the need for a consumer protection legislation. No consumer protection legislation means consumers have little or no rights to protect themselves from unfair business practices, fraud, misrepresentation and any other consumer/business transaction. Without this legislation, consumers have to pursue a complaint against a Business through the courts which is very time-consuming, and in many instances consumers are not given receipts for their purchases leaving them with no evidence in regard to their complaint. A Consumer protection legislation in Belize will regulate the relationships between consumers and businesses. This legislation will ensure that fair competition and honest and truthful practices are maintained. Businesses will be held liable for the supply of goods that are not of satisfactory quality and does not do what it claims to do. The consumer protection agency will be able to address the complaints of the consumers immediately making the legal proceedings easier and cheaper.

Consumers are urged to speak up against any violation to their consumer rights; the assumption is that giving publicity to the unethical and unfair practices will impose pressure on the businesses and will cause them to treat consumers with a sense of responsibility.

## Press Release

### Press Release: NEW LOGO – The Belize Bureau of Standards

The Belize Bureau of Standards is pleased to introduce its new logo to the general public. As the Bureau enters a new stage in its development it wishes to re-emphasize its commitment to serving as a lead institution in establishing a national quality infrastructure for the country. In its resolve to drive a culture for quality in Belize, one which it expects will unflinchingly meet the challenges of a competitive global market and fulfil consumer expectations on quality, health, safety and the environment, the department, through this design, aims to feature the corporate interplay between the key elements of quality infrastructure: METROLOGY, STANDARDS, TESTING and QUALITY (MSTQ). With a positive outlook on its future development, the Bureau believes its new logo will set the stage for this new chapter in its existence, as it charts a new course which it envisions will improve the socio economic well-being and quality of life for all Belizeans.

OLD LOGO

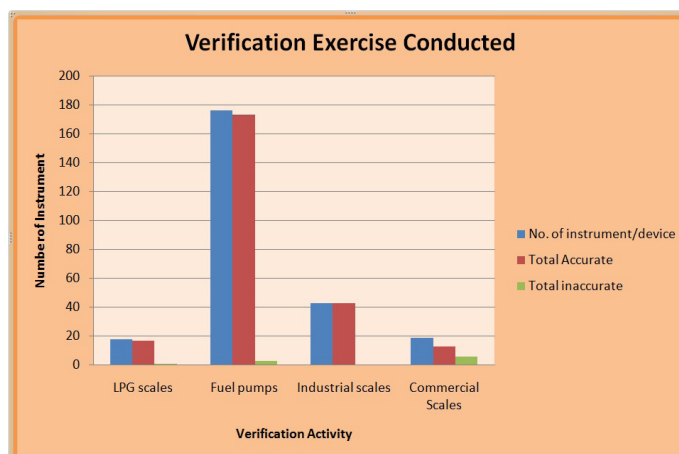


NEW LOGO



The Bureau hereby informs that the old logo will run concurrently for a period of 18 months and until such time will remain in circulation.

José E. Trejo  
 Director  
 Belize Bureau of Standards  
 February 1st, 2013



# Consumer Complaints

Chart One: Type of Complaints Received

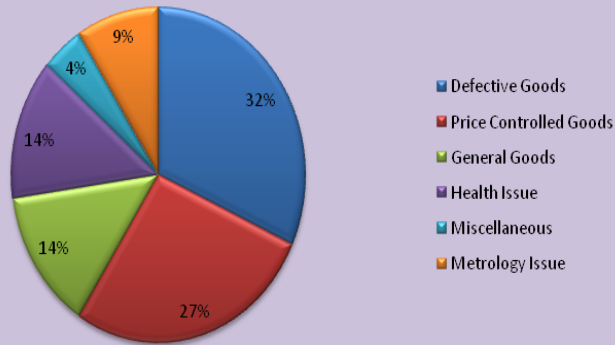
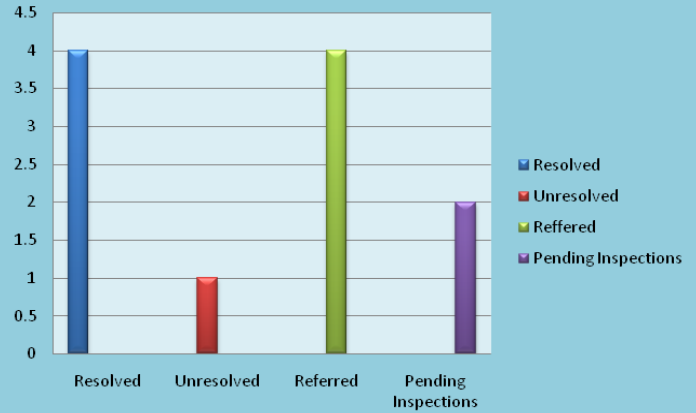
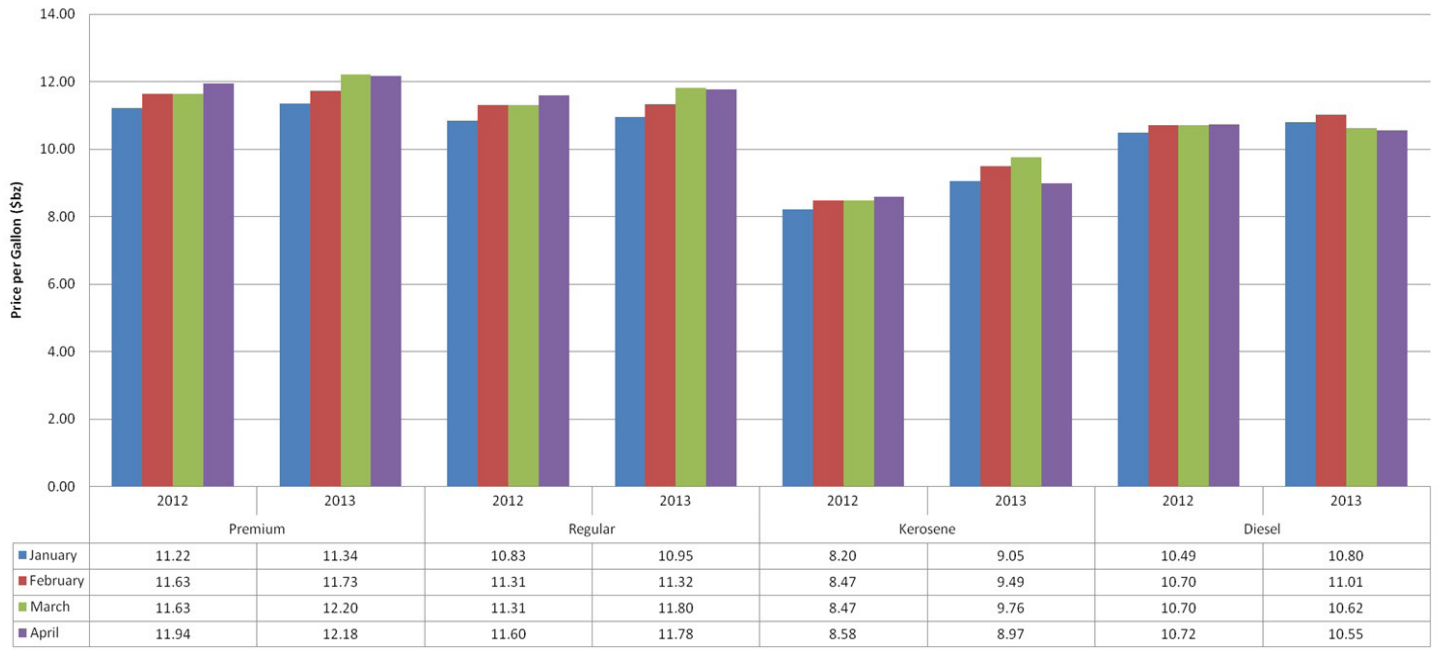


Chart One: Redress



# Fuel Comparison: January to April (2012 - 2013)

Fuel Price Comparison : 2012 - 2013



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