

## **The Consumers' Association of Ireland**

<http://www.consumerassociation.ie/>

### **About CAI**

**The Consumers' Association of Ireland Ltd. (CAI) was set up in 1966 to protect and educate consumers. It is the aim of CAI to represent consumers making sure that their needs as consumers of goods and services are given higher priority. CAI is an independent, non-profit and non-government organisation.**

**Registered with charitable status. Charity Number CHY 8559.**

**Read about 40 Years of CAI.**

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### **Aims & Work**

**The aim of the Association is to protect, promote and represent the interests of consumers. The Association furthers this aim by:**

- promoting action to safeguard the interests of consumers, ensuring that those who take decisions which will affect the consumer can have a balanced and authoritative view of the interests of consumers before them,**
- insisting that the interests of all consumers are taken into account,**
- making representations of the views of consumers on all matters of concern to them to Local and Central Government, Government Agencies, Industry and any other quarter where the company sees fit including representation on the existing law and on proposed legislation,**
- making representations on the adequacy and availability to consumers of consumer advice services and upon the needs of such services for supporting facilities,**
- representing the consumer on appropriate Government and other bodies or international organisations including those which exist within the framework of the European Communities, e.g. The European Consumers' Organisation - BEUC and the European Consumer Voice in Standardisation - ANEC.**

### **The means by which the Association achieves its aims include:**

- using research and information from Consumer Choice magazine to form policies which support and safeguard consumer interests,**
- promoting and seeking implementation of those policies, representing the consumer interest on appropriate bodies,**
- being available for consultation by those who seek a consumer view on policies and proposals,**
- keeping in touch with consumers' experiences and concerns,**
- working with other agencies to achieve beneficial change for consumers,**

- promoting the interests, experience and views of consumers through meetings, reports, interviews, exhibitions, letters and publications.

The Association also concentrates on special areas. Through its monthly publication *Consumer Choice* it reports on services and any other area of consumer interest, including:

- food and food safety
- product performance
- finance and financial products
- environment and health issues
- consumer rights and how to safeguard these rights.

#### *Charter of Consumer Rights*

1. The right to basic goods and services which guarantee survival.
2. The right to be protected against the marketing of goods or the provision of services that are hazardous to health and life.
3. The right to be protected against dishonest or misleading advertising or labelling.
4. The right to choose products and services at competitive prices with an assurance of satisfactory quality.
5. The right to express consumer interests in the making and execution of government policy.
6. The right to be compensated for misrepresentation, shoddy goods or unsatisfactory services.
7. The right to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to be an informed consumer.
8. The right to live and work in an environment which is neither threatening nor dangerous and which permits a life of dignity and well-being.

#### *Consumer Responsibilities*

1. The responsibility to be more alert and questioning about the price and quality of goods and services we use.
2. The responsibility to assert ourselves and act to ensure that we get a fair deal.
3. The responsibility to be aware of the impact of our consumption on other citizens.
4. The responsibility to understand the environmental consequences of our consumption.
5. The responsibility to develop the strength and influence to promote and protect our interests.

It is clear from these lists that consumer issues have moved beyond a narrow concentration on consumer protection, to embrace and promote a wider agenda.

Consumer protection remains an essential part of the work of consumer organisations. But consumer protection is essentially defensive and responsive. To be effective the consumer movement must also be dynamic - setting the agenda, defining solutions, shaping opportunities, and interacting with those who provide goods and services in a positive and creative way.

**In a modern and growing economy the consumer must be the driving force that requires innovation, forces change and growth, and accepts nothing less than real quality underpinned by genuine choice.**

**The agenda for the Consumers' Association of Ireland Ltd. is to continue to work for the protection of Irish consumers in the European Union. We will also proceed with our endeavours to improve consumer education. The consumer must become more assertive, sometimes in partnership with the producer, and sometimes taking the lead.**

**How CAI Represents The Irish Consumer At Home & Abroad**

**The Consumers' Association of Ireland Ltd. (CAI) has representatives in various Irish committees as well as international organisations. The CAI representatives are as follows**

### ***How to complain***

**If you return to a shop with a faulty or unsatisfactory product, ask for the manager. In a large store or supermarket, ask for the department manager or customer services desk. Shop assistants are not always authorised to deal with complaints, especially if you want a refund. Also, asking for a person in authority shows you mean business. If the manager is "in a meeting" or "away", insist that someone else must have been left in charge and ask to see that person instead. If this fails, make an appointment to call back and see the manager.**

**If you are dissatisfied with the response you receive at a customer services desk, you can ask to speak to the manager. Do not accept the excuse that customer complaints have to be dealt with by specific personnel - remember, the manager is in charge of the whole store.**

**Once you are speaking to someone in authority, be polite but firm. Do not lose your temper, swear, shout or make threats. If you remain reasonable, the chances are the person you are dealing with will too.**

**Explain the problem and say what you want the shop to do to rectify the matter. Decide what you want if you are entitled to a full refund, a replacement or a repair. Are you prepared to accept a credit note or an exchange?**

## **Consumer Choice Magazine**

**Consumer Choice** is the magazine that helps you, the consumer to:

- **get value for money when buying goods and services**
- **know your consumer rights**
- **be informed about matters affecting you as a consumer.**

Published monthly by the Consumers' Association of Ireland, *Consumer Choice* shows you how products compare in value, performance and reliability. It is packed with impartial reports on household goods, personal finance, cars, health, safety and the environment. It also reports on consumer law, gives advice on consumer problems and presents consumer case studies which illustrate your rights.

## What can Consumer Choice & CAI do for you?

Consumer Choice can help you get a fairer deal when buying goods and services, as well as inform you about your rights and about issues affecting you as a consumer. As a member of CAI, in addition to receiving Consumer Choice, you also gain the other benefits of membership of CAI.

These are:

- free access to our Advice/Information Service for basic advice on your consumer problems and queries;
- direct access to our researchers.
- as an ordinary member, you are eligible to go forward for election to the council of the Consumers' Association of Ireland.
- full online access to all research and magazine issues from 2005

## How does Consumer Choice work?

Virtually all of the information available about products and services on the market is supplied by the people who produce and sell the goods. Naturally, they want to create the best impression possible. How reliable is that information?

The aim of all Consumer Choice reports is to give you the facts, so as to save you time, trouble and money. For products and services, this is done by helping you find your own best buy. Other reports inform you about your rights and advise you when these rights are threatened. All of the information in Consumer Choice is based on independent research and testing.

# Who does the research and testing?

Our experienced editorial team produce virtually all the material for the magazine. Some reports are based on surveys of members; views and experiences. Research staff sometimes work with outside specialists to produce comprehensive reports on personal finance, health and other issues.

For all product tests we collaborate with other independent consumer organisations in International Consumer Research and Testing Ltd. (I.C.R.T.). These tests are conducted in laboratories owned by the consumer organisations, or in outside independent laboratories, and are under the supervision of skilled engineers and scientists. Each group of products undergoes identical tests for performance, durability, reliability, convenience in use, and safety. Whether it's fridges for testing, or beefburgers for analysis we purchase all products in the same way that ordinary consumers buy them in the shops.

CAI testing and research is unique for Ireland as it is the only independent testing carried out by a truly independent organisation for the benefit of consumers.

## Praise for Consumer Choice

"Consumer Choice is an excellent magazine, very well researched, covering a wide variety of topics."

"A really enjoyable, down-to-earth, honest magazine."

"Consumer Choice has well presented, balanced and informative reports. Test reports help to make an informed choice when buying products and services."

"I never buy anything important without consulting Consumer Choice for its 'Choice Buys'. It's my bible."

"I look forward to receiving Consumer Choice and reading it from cover to cover."

## Fridge Focus

This food safety information has been designed to increase food safety awareness among students at Junior Certificate level. It concentrates on three important areas:

- Storing food in the fridge
- Preventing cross-contamination
- Improving food hygiene in the kitchen

The leaflets in the pack contain information and advice on food safety when:

- In the home
- At school and work
- Shopping
- Eating out
- Using a microwave
- How to understand your fridge and freezer
- Eating outdoors
- Your consumer rights when buying food and eating out

- **Ten Golden Rules for food safety**

- **F** irstly, always cook food thoroughly
- **O** nly use clean water
- **O** nce thawed, cook food immediately
- **D** on't forget to re-heat cooked food thoroughly
- **S** tore food as directed
- **A** void contact between raw and cooked food
- **F** requently wash your hands when preparing food
- **E** nsure that you keep kitchen surfaces clean
- **T** ake care to serve hot food, very hot and cold food, very cold
- **Y** our food should be protected from insects, rodents and pests.

**Guide To Buying Food And Eating Out**