

9

Consumer protection

Contracts, fixed assets, and food attract the greatest number of complaints.

Prepared by Dr. Vithaya Kulsomboon and Wanna Sriwityanuparb,
Health Consumer Protection Project

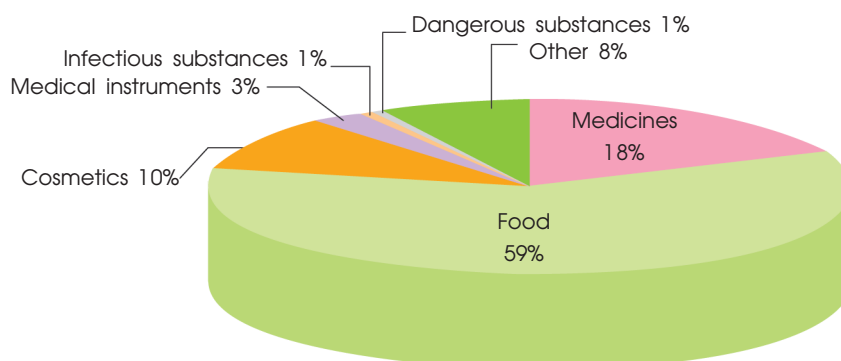
A system to protect consumers from exploitation needs to be established as quickly as possible.

Data on complaints illustrate the problems faced by consumers. The government organizations dealing with consumer protection, Office of the Consumer Protection Board, and the Food and Drug Administration, received a total of 8,371 complaints in 2006, an increase of 1,000 on the previous year. The offices now receive an average of 22.9 complaints per day. The most common type of complaint received at the Office of the Committee for Consumer Protection is concerns contracts and fixed assets. It also receives complaints about other goods, and about misleading advertising. The main issues dealt with by the Office of the Food and Drug Committee are unbranded drinks, unhygienic food, misleading advertising, expired products, and unsanitary premises.

Complaints to the Foundation for Consumers are also increasing. During 2006, it received an average of 1.8 complaints a day. A total of 61.2% of these complaints concerned debts to formal and informal lenders. The increase in the number of complaints demonstrates the need for measures to protect consumers.

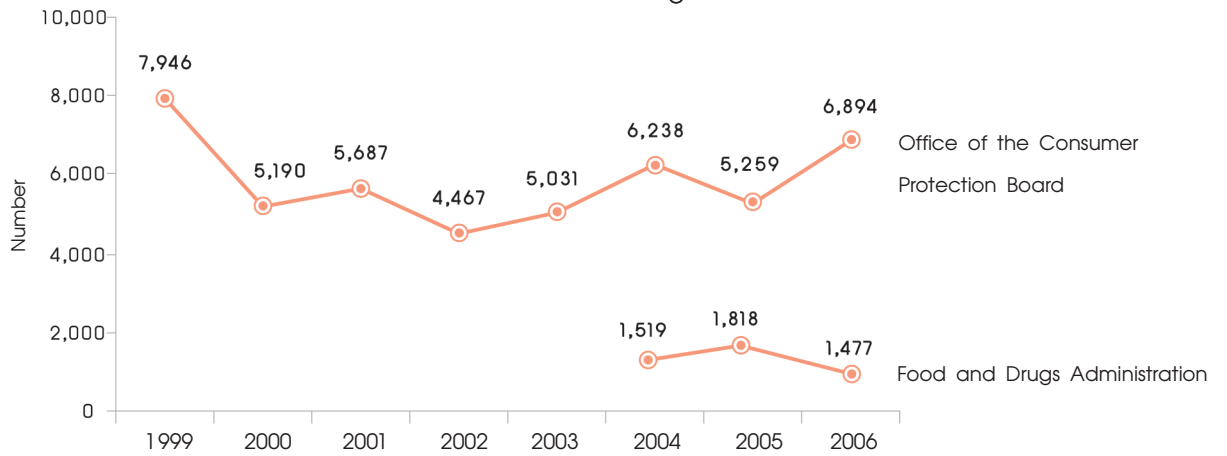
Consumers' bodies and experts recommend that, to address the problems faced by consumers, an independent organization is needed. This organization would collect information on problems facing consumers and lobby for policy reforms. Reforms could include mechanisms and regulations to create standards protecting consumers. However, the suspension of the 1996 People's Constitution following the coup in 2006 led to the loss of the clause in Section 57 dealing with independent organizations. It is therefore necessary to apply pressure to ensure that the independent consumers' organization envisioned in the 1996 Constitution is in fact established, to deal with the problems faced by consumers.

Complaints received by Food and Drugs Administration



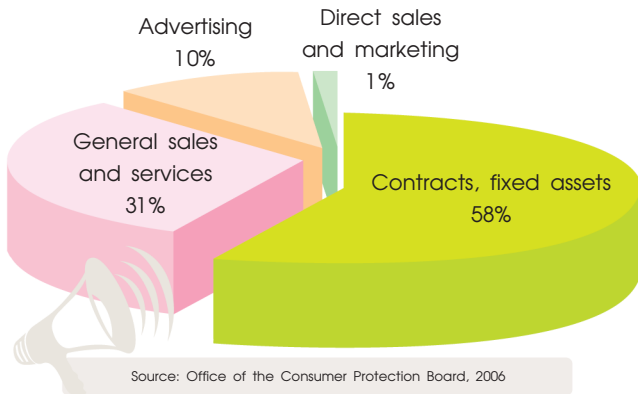
Source: Food and Drugs Administration, 2006

The number of complaints received by Office of the Consumer Protection Board and Food and Drugs Administration



Source: Office of the Consumer Protection Board and Food and Drugs Administration

Complaints received by Office of the Consumer Protection Board

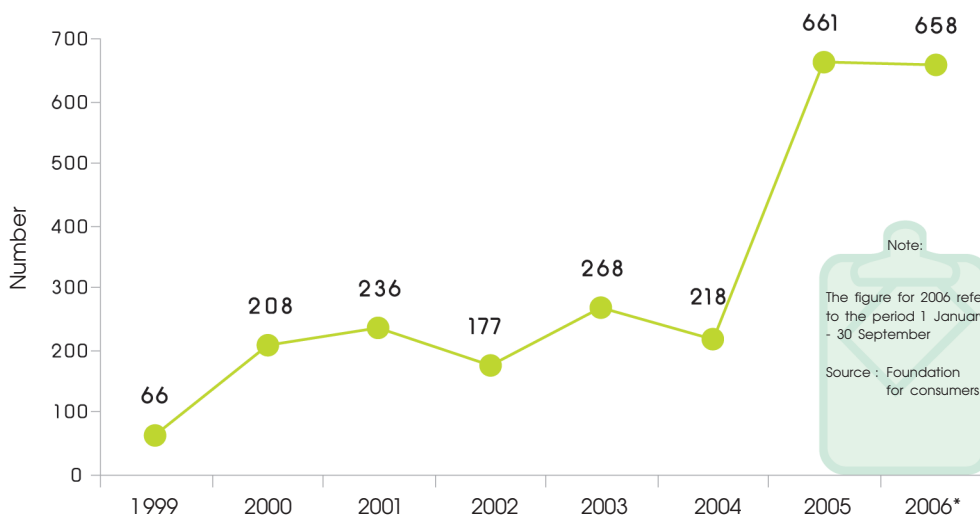


Source: Office of the Consumer Protection Board, 2006

Issues Receiving Complaints

Contracts and fixed assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not conforming to advertisements - Construction not completed - Faulty construction 	General goods and services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faulty goods - Prices of goods and services - Cars, including violation of hire purchase agreements, change in interest rates, faulty repairs
Direct sales and marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sales representatives do not fulfil terms of agreement - Company refuses to refund goods - Change in terms of agreement 	Advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Misleading or excessive claims - Potentially misleading claims
Health products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selling medicines without license Medicines past expiry date Drug mixtures - Selling food additives without license Food additives past expiry date Unhygienic or low quality food additives 	Health services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complications due to medical error - Low quality health services
	Debts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fraud or deception

Number of complaints to Foundation for consumers



Note:
The figure for 2006 refer to the period 1 January - 30 September
Source : Foundation for consumers