UK - CHANGING MARKETS PRESS RELEASE

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Widespread greenwashing by food industry revealed as new poll shows UK shoppers favour brands making climate friendly claims

New analysis detailing over 50 incidents of greenwashing by major food and drinks brands such as Nestlé, Lidl, Aldi, McDonald’s UK, and Heinz was published by Changing Markets Foundation today.

New YouGov polling – also released today – reveals almost half (46%) of UK adults regularly buy products with sustainability labels or certification and over a quarter (27.5%) are willing to pay more for products labelled as carbon neutral or climate positive. Around one in ten UK adults listed environmental or climate concerns among the three most important factors influencing their purchasing decisions.

Changing Markets lodged a complaint about the misleading and unsubstantiated claims with the UK Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) today. The CMA announced plans to scrutinise the green claims of household essentials in January and a Digital Markets, Competition and Consumer Bill - due to be published soon – is expected to give it the power to impose substantial fines on companies which greenwash.

Researchers used CMA guidance to assess the green claims of food and drink companies. They found 51 cases of greenwash over the last 12 months - over 80% of which relate to climate impacts including:

- Products or companies that make climate claims – such as carbon neutral or carbon negative - based largely or completely on unproven offsets rather than emissions cuts: Aldi supermarkets, Lidl’s ‘Committed to Tomorrow’ range, the Collective Yoghurt Company, Nestle’s Kit Kat, and Wagg dog food and the Candy Kitten sweet company founded by Made in Chelsea star, Jamie Laing.
- Climate claims relating to only part of the company’s product or operations: Amazon’s ‘Climate Pledge Friendly’ range includes Jack Link’s beef jerky – one of the most climate intensive foods - because its packaging has been shrunk through the removal of excess air, while Hellofresh meal kit company claims to be carbon neutral because it offsets delivery emissions – ignoring emissions from its products and the single use plastic packaging it delivers them in.
- Marketing images and language which wrongly suggest a product comes from small family farms or is natural or nature friendly: Saputo’s Cathedral City cheese is marketed with images of cows grazing green pastures, yet its cattle are at least partly fed on soy that has been linked to deforestation in the Amazon. Heinz by Nature baby and toddler food also uses the idea of nature to sell its products with no justification.
Nusa Urbancic, Campaigns Director at Changing Markets Foundation said: “Harsher penalties for greenwashers are long overdue and are the only thing that will stop the proliferation of products which don’t live up to their green hype. While the CMA guidance on green claims is a step in the right direction, they should go further by banning the most misleading claims, such as carbon neutral labels.”

The research also revealed widespread use of greenwashing by the meat and dairy industry. **Danish Crown** pulled ‘climate controlled’ labelling and marketing in Denmark after retailers refused to accept products with the misleading labels in their stores but continued to make the claim in Facebook posts in November 2022. **McDonald’s UK** claims its ‘Plan for Change’ will make its entire business and value chain net zero by 2040 yet its plans are unlikely to deliver significant reductions in farm emissions, and appear to rely heavily on offsetting.

“Greenwashing is rampant across the meat and dairy sector,” added Urbancic. “It provides a veneer of sustainability for an industry that is responsible for a third of global methane emissions and is the main driver of deforestation. The UK government must ensure the industry sets binding targets for emissions reductions backed by plans to deliver them which don’t rely on greenwash.”

**Notes to editor**

‘Feeding Us Greenwash: An Analysis of Misleading Claims in the Food Sector’ - a briefing on the research findings and methodology, details on the greenwash cases and the opinion poll results are available on [dropbox here](http://www.dropbox.com). The greenwash cases will also be featured on [www.greenwash.com](http://www.greenwash.com) from 21 March 2023.

YouGov plc conducted an online survey of 2067 UK adults between 7-10 October 2022. The figures were weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

Changing Markets analysis highlights 53 case of greenwash including 29 new cases of consumer facing greenwash – many of which are sold in the UK including:

- **Nestle** claims that **Kit Kat** will be carbon neutral by 2025 through a 50% cut in emissions coupled with offsets, however its plans to cut emissions also rely on offsets such as forest restoration within their supply chains.
- **Unilever’s Magnum ice-cream** claims to be ‘True Pleasure for the Future’ and its packaging includes images promoting sustainability. Its claim relies on offsets plus the use of renewable electricity at some sites.
- **Hellofresh** meal kit company claims to be carbon neutral because it offsets its delivery emissions. It ignores emissions from its product which contains carbon intensive meat and dairy and the single use plastic packaging it delivers them in.
- **The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board ‘Eat Balanced/Enjoy the goodness’ campaign** promotes meat and dairy as a healthy choice despite overconsumption in the UK and uses idyllic rural imagery when 85% of production in
the UK is industrial. It also claims UK red meat is amongst the most sustainable in the world based on emissions intensity rather than absolute emissions.

- **Wagg** carbon negative dog food claim relies on offsets.
- **Candy Kittens** carbon neutral sweets claim relies on offsets.
- **Aldi** claims to be carbon neutral based on offsets plus emissions reductions achieved through a switch to renewable energy and upgraded cooling systems in its stores. It ignores emissions from the products it sells.
- **Saputo’s Cathedral City** cheese is marketed with images of cows grazing green pastures, yet its cattle are at least partly fed on soy that has been linked to deforestation in the Amazon.
- **Heinz by Nature baby and toddler food** uses the idea of nature to sell its products yet provides no justification.
- **MacDonald’s Plan for Change** uses imagery of pastoral scenes and vague language about a sustainable future. It says it is providing environmental grants to farmers and will plant a million trees yet provides little detail beyond this.
- **The Collective Yoghurt Company** claims to have produced the UK’s first carbon neutral yoghurt based on offsetting.
- **Arla’s Lacto Free grated cheddar** packaging states that ‘the actions [they] take today will support a Stronger Planet’ and that they’re ‘Building a sustainable future’ but provides no information to back up these claims.
- **Lidl’s ‘Committed to Tomorrow’ range** of 66 own-brand carbon neutral products (e.g., Deluxe Somerset mature cheddar) relies on offsets.