

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Rampant greenwashing by food industry revealed as new poll shows 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, Arla, and Danish Crown was published by [Changing Markets Foundation](#) today.

New YouGov polling - also released today - reveals almost half (49%) of adults in the UK and Germany regularly buy products with sustainability labels or certification and that almost a third (29%) are willing to pay more for products labelled carbon neutral, climate positive or low methane.

Changing Markets is calling on the European Parliament to ban misleading claims such as 'climate positive' or 'carbon neutral' when it votes on new consumer protection legislation at the end of March. It is also calling for tough new rules to hold companies to account under the Green Claims Directive which is due out on 22nd March.

Researchers used UK Competition and Markets Authority criteria 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:

- Products or companies that make climate claims based largely or completely on unproven offsets rather than emissions cuts: **Lidl Europe's** 'Committed to Tomorrow' range, Germany's **Hipp Bio** baby food, **Arla milk** brands sold in Sweden and Denmark, and **Nespresso** - the single use coffee capsule company owned by **Nestlé**.
- Climate claims that relate 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.
- 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:

"Governments must act now to prevent consumers being duped into buying or paying more for products that don't live up to their green hype. They must ban misleading terms such as

climate positive or carbon neutral, regulate offset schemes, and ensure green claims are backed by robust evidence and cover the full lifecycle of the products.”

The research also revealed widespread use of greenwashing by the meat and dairy industry. **LOME beef** sold by the **Swedish COOP** claims to be low methane because cattle are fed methane-busting seaweed supplements for just 3 months out of their 18 - 21-month lifespan. **Danish Crown** is facing legal action over claims that its pork products are ‘more climate friendly than you think.’ **Marfrig’s Viva beef** claims to be carbon neutral because cattle are raised on farms that combine pasture with eucalyptus forests, yet it provides no data on how much this reduces its emissions. It also claims the trees absorb methane - which is incorrect. Marfrig’s methane footprint is greater than Australia’s entire livestock sector.

“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 biodiversity loss. Instead of peddling greenwash, governments must ensure meat and dairy companies reduce their climate footprint by setting binding targets for emissions cuts - including methane.”

The YouGov poll of 4215 adults in Germany and UK highlights how companies may be profiting from greenwashing. One in 10 adults (11%) put environmental and climate concerns among the top three factors influencing their purchasing decisions, while one in five (22%) put animal welfare concerns in the top three.

Polling also reveals that customers are being misled by climate claims. 43% of adults in Germany expect companies selling carbon neutral products to cut their own emissions or combine offsets as well as emissions reductions. The majority of participants in a [2022 survey by the UK Advertising Standards Authority](#) also assumed climate claims related to direct emissions cuts. However, the majority of climate claims assessed by Changing Markets did not require companies to make significant cuts in their own emissions.

### **Notes to editor**

*‘Feeding Us Greenwash: An Analysis of Misleading Claims in the Food Sector’* - a briefing on the research findings and methodology - and details on the greenwash cases are available on request.

The greenwash cases will be published on [www.greenwash.com](http://www.greenwash.com) from 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are based on data from YouGov plc. The total sample size for the UK was 2,067 adults and for Germany it was 2,148 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken in the UK on 7-10 October 2022 and in Germany on 18-20 January 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures were weighted and are representative of all UK and German adults (aged 18+) respectively. We (Changing Markets) then analysed the country-specific findings to create averages and totals across the UK and Germany.

**Changing Markets research highlights 53 case of greenwash including 29 new cases of consumer facing greenwash – the new examples are listed below:**

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. The 'On the Way to Planet Proof' certification programme is the fastest growing sustainability label for food products in the Netherlands used by dairy companies such as FrieslandCampina - the Dutch dairy corporation that has a climate footprint equivalent to 8 coal power plants. The label does not require emissions reduction but bases its criteria on animal welfare, the use of green electricity, reducing the use of fossil fuel fertiliser, and the use of home-grown feed.
4. Brazil: Marfrig's Viva Carbon Neutral Beef claim is based on raising cattle on farms which combine pasture with eucalyptus trees and makes false claims that trees absorb methane.
5. US: Conagra's carbon neutral pre-prepared meals rely on offsets and provide no information on the offset schemes used.
6. US: Tyson Foods net zero pledge was based on a target to improve environmental practices on 2 million acres of farmland by 2020 however this was pushed back to 2025 because of poor take up by farmers. The target is based on limiting global temperature increase to 2 °C rather than 1.5 °C as agreed under the Paris Agreement.
7. US: Dairy Farmers of America 'Nerd Herd' initiative uses "high tech, high-IQ" solutions to cut GHG emissions by 30% by 2030 and achieve net-zero by 2050. Action is focused on renewable energy and efficiencies in transport and production plants, plus unproven or overhyped 'tech' fixes such as feed additives and biogas production.
8. US: Smithfield Foods, the biggest pork producer and exporter in the US, promises to cut 25% of GHG emissions by 2030 and be carbon negative in all company-owned US operations by 2030. Yet it provides little detail on how it will do this beyond the fact it is using renewable energy including biogas at facilities.
9. US: Cargill's 'Beef up sustainability' strategy to cut North American beef supply chain emissions by 30% by 2030 is based on reducing the emission intensity of products rather than cutting absolute emissions. Its plans rely heavily on unproven and overhyped tech fixes such as animal feed additives.
10. Canada: Maple Leaf Foods – a major meat corporation - claims to be the world's first major carbon neutral food company despite evidence its emissions are increasing. The claim relies on offsets covering a portion of its supply chain emissions and cutting emissions from transport and energy.
11. New Zealand: Silver Fern Farms, the biggest beef producer in New Zealand, claims to be net carbon zero by nature. This claim is based on on-farm carbon sequestration (e.g., tree planting) and efforts to reduce its reliance on coal-based energy supplies.

12. New Zealand: Fonterra Carbon Zero Simply Milk claim is based on offsets plus small emissions reductions from the production of the milk bottle.
13. UK: 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
14. UK: 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.
15. UK: Waggs carbon negative dog food claim relies on offsets
16. UK: Candy Kittens carbon neutral sweets claim relies on offsets
17. UK: 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.
18. UK: 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.
19. UK: Heinz by Nature baby and toddler food uses the idea of nature to sell its products yet provides no justification.
20. UK: 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.
21. UK: The Collective Yoghurt Company claims to have produced the UK's first carbon neutral yoghurt based on offsetting
22. UK: 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
23. Europe: Lidl's 'Committed to Tomorrow' range of 66 own-brand carbon neutral products (e.g., Deluxe Somerset mature cheddar) relies on offsets.
24. Spain: Pascual dairy company claims packaging is sustainable because it comes from 89% renewable sources, however the mix of materials used make it hard to recycle and the company ignores the far greater emissions associated with milk.
25. France: Danone's carbon neutral Actimel range sold in France and Belgium is largely based on offsets plus vague commitments to work with dairy farmers to reduce emissions 'as much as possible'.
26. France: French government backed Low Carbon Label (Label Bas Carbone) for dairy companies relies on offsets and commitments to improve soil fertility to increase soil carbon.
27. Germany: Holle Bio Germany Climate Positive follow-on milk bases its claim on improving soils at its farms to increase soil carbon (which is unreliable and of limited impact) and offsetting 'to tackle unavoidable emissions.'
28. Italy: Parmigiano Reggiano markets its products using images of idyllic rural scenes of cattle grazing pasture yet its dairy cows are kept in barns.

29. China: Yili, the fifth largest dairy company globally, claims to produce China's first carbon neutral yogurt, as a result of cutting emissions across its supply chain however it provides no information on how it is doing this beyond the use of renewable energy at its factories.