



Groceries Code Adjudicator

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Dr Luke Evans MP
Member of Parliament for Hinckley and Bosworth
House of Commons
London
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By email only: luke.evans.mp@parliament.uk

17 December 2024

Dear Dr Evans,

Thank you for your letter dated 13 December 2024 about the relationship between farmers and supermarkets.

As Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA) I am responsible for enforcing the Groceries Code, ensuring that the 14 large retailers designated by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) treat their direct suppliers fairly and lawfully. My priorities are informed by the information I receive from suppliers, including through my annual survey. In 2024 those priorities included ensuring that suppliers were paid on time and that the large retailers treated suppliers fairly when they stopped ordering suppliers' products.

Mindful of the particular challenges that producers face, I have discussed with them and with the large retailers matters including the late setting of fruit and vegetable supply programmes, the use of intermediary businesses in produce supply chains and the level of knowledge and stability in large retailers' buying teams. I am keen to hear of any other matters of concern, particularly from direct suppliers to the large retailers, through my 2025 survey, which will be open from 13 January to 23 February.

I have considered the Farmers against Farmwashing campaign in relation to my role and have responded below regarding each objective of the campaign.

Joined-up action

I have met the Agricultural Supply Chain Adjudicator periodically since his appointment. We have discussed matters including the regulatory regimes that each of us oversees, how we will work together to ensure clear communication to affected businesses and how we will share information about issues in order to collaborate appropriately and effectively. I intend to continue to work closely with Richard Thompson and relevant officials at Defra to that end.

Remit of the GCA

I am determined to effectively fulfil my role as set out in the Groceries Code Adjudicator Act 2013 ("the Act"): enforcing the Groceries Code and encouraging compliance with it. The scope of the Groceries Code is a matter for the CMA but the Act provides that I must recommend any changes to the Groceries Code that I believe would be appropriate. I have not recommended any changes since my appointment because I believe the Groceries Code remains suitable for its intended purpose of ensuring fair treatment of direct suppliers to the large retailers.

The GCA's annual survey shows that supplier perceptions of compliance with the Groceries Code have improved since the GCA's establishment and I do not believe that the GCA needs any further powers to continue effectively regulating the large retailers.

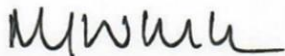
The fear factor

The Act requires that the GCA handle information confidentially so that suppliers can come forward without concern that they will be identified as having complained about a large retailer. Mindful though of some suppliers' reluctance to provide information, I established shortly after my appointment an anonymous reporting platform, TelltheGCA.co.uk, so suppliers can tell me about issues that they are experiencing without identifying themselves. I do not believe that randomised visits to suppliers would be an effective way of gathering information or would build trust in the GCA among suppliers.

I am aware also of similar reluctance by suppliers to contact the large retailers themselves. To address those concerns, I facilitated commitments by the large retailers to ensure that there are no negative consequences for suppliers raising issues and by the retailers' Code Compliance Officers to handling information confidentially. I am proactively monitoring adherence to these commitments.

I hope you will find this letter useful in responding to your constituents and informing your work. I would be happy to provide any further information that you need.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M White', written on a light-colored background.

Mark White
Groceries Code Adjudicator