



News from the Adjudicator

Edition 4

Welcome from the Groceries Code Adjudicator



Many thanks to all of you who took part in the GCA's annual survey. I was delighted to see responses were 100 per cent up on the 2014 survey with 1,145 in total. And there was a big rise in the number of responses from direct suppliers to the ten regulated retailers. I am grateful for your support; it is so important for me to be able to hear from so many suppliers on a wide range of important topics.

YouGov reported the results at our recent conference and they show that suppliers are more aware of the GCA and its work and more are willing to raise issues with us - up 9 points to 47%. Overall compliance with the Code is

increasing with the number of suppliers reporting that they have experienced at least one Code-related issue in the last 12 months dropping to 70% from 79% in 2014.

Another positive finding was that more suppliers know who are the Code Compliance Officers and how to contact them. I hope our regular 'Meet the CCO' feature is helping to raise awareness. This edition we feature Aldi's Jonathan Ward.

More than 200 suppliers, trade associations, retailers, media and overseas visitors joined me and my team at the GCA conference held on 22 June at Church House, Westminster. Suppliers made up more than one-third of delegates who registered for the event and their feedback was that they found attending the conference very worthwhile and they gained valuable information. I am looking forward to seeing even more of you at next year's conference.

At the conference I presented my annual report, where I reviewed the progress and achievements of the last year, and my plans for the forthcoming year. You can read the full annual report and accounts [here](#).

One of my key conference themes was the need to increase the number of suppliers trained in the Code. The survey echoed my own experience that too few suppliers have received training in this area – overall 29 per cent with just 9 per cent of the smallest companies.

Retailer buyers are well-trained in the Code, so for a supplier to challenge a request or requirement as non-Code compliant, they need to know their rights. I will be encouraging relevant trade associations to play a stronger role in offering training for their members. That will be one of the themes of a seminar in October (see below).



In this edition:

- The Top 5 – Report on Progress
- Meet the CCO – Jonathan Ward, Aldi Stores Limited
- Save the date – Suppliers and Trade Associations

The message on the importance of training was also delivered by John Noble, Director of the British Brands Group. Another speaker was David Sables, CEO of Sentinel Management Consultants, whose presentation was titled 'GCA critique and the savvy use of the Code' also promoted the need for training. This [link](#) will take you to the full survey results and all conference presentations.

A 2015 innovation was the production of sketch minutes. Team member Lizzy Millar captured the day's main points in a lively, graphic style; see her work [here](#).



Christine Tacon

Christine Tacon

Making progress on the Top Five issues

I am delighted to announce that I have now closed consumer complaints as one of my Top 5 issues. Following a review, I concluded from the information provided that charges where applied appear to be reasonable and that from August 2015 retailers' policies would appear to be compliant with the Code. In addition, all 10 retailers have supported my best practice model for future complaint handling.

Consumer complaints best practice principles

Retailers agreed they would aim to:

- Ensure that suppliers understand the basis of any consumer complaint charges applied;
- Provide information to suppliers about what's wrong with the product within five days to allow the suppliers to take swift action; and
- Resolve more complaints in-store to keep costs down.

You can read more about what I found when I reviewed charging for consumer complaints [here](#).

Meet the CCO

Jonathan Ward – Compliance Director for Aldi Stores Limited – has answered News from the Adjudicator's questions about his role at the retailer. Read more [here](#) about his 15 years with Aldi Stores Limited, the challenges of being a CCO, and what he wants to achieve in the next 12 months.

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Suppliers' packaging and design workshop



The GCA continues to hear from suppliers about the impact on their business of retailers' packaging and design requirements. I want to understand more about the different elements of this issue such as the costs of design and photography, how often retailers require changes and the impact of dealing with designated packaging and design providers.

To help me identify which areas may not be consistent with the Code, I am holding a workshop on 29 September and I am hoping to see a broad spectrum of suppliers there to help inform whether I need to take this issue further. This workshop is specifically for users of packaging or design suppliers designated by the retailers. After this workshop, I will consider if I need to hold discussions with packaging suppliers themselves. Please sign up [here](#).

Trade association seminar



As I said at the conference, I believe trade associations have a pivotal role to play in supporting their members to understand the Code. I am keen to build stronger relationships with all those bodies that support suppliers covered by the Code.

Therefore I am extending an open invitation to all trade associations to attend a special seminar on 13 October. The aim is to explore how we can work better together and how trade associations can help their members understand and use the Code more effectively. There will also be an opportunity for feedback and discussion on trade association responses to the GCA survey.

The seminar is aimed at all trade associations, irrespective of their knowledge of the Code and whether they took part in our survey. For further details and to reserve your place click [here](#).
