

To: sustainability@cma.gov.uk

Date: 10 November 2021

Dear Colleague,

**Environmental sustainability and the competition and consumer law regimes
– Advice to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial
Strategy – Call for inputs**

This letter is the response of the United Kingdom Accreditation Service to the above call for inputs from the Competition and Markets Authority.

Accredited conformity assessment is used across multiple sectors to provide confidence in products, processes, services, management systems and people. UKAS accreditation plays an active role in supporting many of the policies and initiatives which will help the UK realise its net zero ambition. These include the monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions, certification of microgeneration schemes and the testing and inspection of solar, wind, wave and nuclear power generators.

To achieve accreditation by UKAS for these initiatives and schemes, organisations must demonstrate that they carry out their conformity assessment activities competently, consistently and impartially. This generates confidence for government and industry, as well as for consumers and end users, in the effectiveness of both market-led schemes and net zero policies. For example, a scheme for the verification and validation of greenhouse gas emissions will provide confidence in monitoring and in the accuracy of emissions data.

Consumer protection law framework

UKAS believes accreditation could be a useful tool to support CMA in a strengthening of the consumer protection law framework. As the consultation outlines, despite the existing framework, consumers often have no reliable way to validate the 'green' claims of many products across the supply chain in order to make an informed choice.

The CMA's recently published Green Claims Code is a major step forward in helping manufacturers and businesses to consider how 'green' their products are. Importantly, it places the onus on the business to demonstrate the validity of green claims through self-declaring compliance with the code. UKAS believes the value and reach of the GCC could be further strengthened if the CMA explored options for



underpinning the GCC with a third-party assurance mechanism such as UKAS accredited certification.

For example, one of the high level GCC principles states that a business should be able to substantiate a green claim with credible and robust evidence but does not explain what would constitute credible evidence. By augmenting the GCC with additional measurable criteria, developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders and including where appropriate the use of other existing standards in this area; an independent accredited certification body could assess the accuracy of the evidence.

UKAS would be happy to explore options for building on the GCC and is ready to support the CMA in any of its initiatives for competition and consumer protection regimes to better support the UK's net zero and sustainability goals.

Background on UKAS

UKAS is the only national body recognised by government for the accreditation, against recognised standards, of organisations providing calibration, testing, certification, inspection and medical diagnostic services. UKAS is a not-for-profit private company limited by guarantee, appointed as the National Accreditation Body by the Accreditation Regulations 2009 (SI No. 3155/2009) and operates under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, on behalf of government. In accordance with UK law and government policy, accreditation must be operated in the public interest by a single not-for-profit national accreditation body as a public authority activity¹.

UKAS is a world-leading innovator in accreditation services. Our accreditation activities and development projects range from physiological diagnostic services, forensics and bio banking to nuclear new build, energy management systems and building information modelling. UKAS also responds to the challenges and opportunities from new data and digitally driven industries, working with government and agency partners, including DCMS, DfT and the Information Commissioner's Office, in areas such as the Internet of Things, drone technology, AI assurance and data protection.

UKAS is an integral part of the UK's National Quality Infrastructure. The assurance and confidence provided by UKAS, BSI, NPL and the Office for Product Safety and Standards as the core components of the UK's NQI have provided a high-quality framework for measurement, standards, testing, certification, and accreditation services. This has been instrumental in underpinning the innovative development, productivity and competitiveness of products and services in the UK and beyond.

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/949132/conformity-assessment-and-accreditation-policy-in-the-uk.pdf



A world of confidence

Internationally, UKAS is a highly active and influential member of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and, within Europe, of the European Cooperation for Accreditation.

If you have any queries about this response or require more information on the work of UKAS more generally please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely