

GCA achieves highest rate of retailer compliance in final survey

According to the seventh GCA annual groceries sector survey, the 13 UK supermarkets regulated by the Groceries Code Adjudicator have demonstrated a very high level of Code-compliant behaviour in their relationships with their groceries suppliers.

From the very first survey in 2014, suppliers have scored their perceptions of retailers' compliance with the Code for the retailers they supply. In 2020 almost 1,500 direct suppliers responded to the survey and the results are extremely tight at the top.

Only three retailers were rated below 90% for complying consistently well or mostly with the Code – which was the best score in 2014; nine are between 92% and 94%; the highest is 96% and the lowest is 81%. In 2014 the percentage reported as complying with the Code consistently well and mostly ranged from 58% to 90%.

In common with every annual survey carried out by YouGov on behalf of the GCA, Aldi is the highest performer – rated with 96% compliance – but the major riser in 2020 is Co-operative Group Limited (Co-op), which is ranked joint second on 94%. This is a massive improvement from its tenth place in 2019 when the GCA found it had breached the Code on two counts. Co-op also takes top place on the “most improved” table.

Bottom-placed retailer on overall compliance was Iceland on 81% followed by B&M on 86% and Marks & Spencer on 89%. TJ Morris – trading as Home Bargains – achieved a 92% rating in its first year as a regulated retailer

Christine Tacon said:

This squeezing of performance into significantly higher levels of compliance is testament to the effectiveness and impact of my collaborative approach.

Aldi should be particularly congratulated for having held the top spot every year for seven consecutive years, but the survey shows the considerable efforts to improve made by all retailers, which are clearly represented in this striking graphic.

Supplier assessment of retailer overall compliance with the Code.

These record compliance ratings are in line with the other headline results of the survey. Early analysis recently reported showed the lowest-ever number of direct suppliers – 36% – had experienced a Code-related issue at any point

in the past 12 months, compared to 79% in 2014, and that suppliers had recognised improvements across every issue covered by the Code.

Ms Tacon added:

I am delighted to see how much progress Co-op has made. Last year I spent eight months working with the retailer as it implemented the recommendations made as a result of my investigation.

It has demonstrated a huge amount of progress in embedding the Code and I have enjoyed working with the Co-op team to ensure that they understood the issues and implemented actions that would prevent the same or similar problems recurring in future.

Each retailer will now receive company-specific analysis of the survey broken down by sector and Code issue to help them identify and understand areas for further improvement.

Ms Tacon said:

This is my final survey as GCA as I will be stepping down later in 2020 after seven years in office. I was encouraged to conduct the survey by the retailers even though I was not going to be in office to prioritise or make progress on areas of concern.

The retailers have recognised the survey's immense value: they want to know that suppliers are experiencing progress on areas where they have focused and to identify areas where they may need to do more.