

UPDATE: UK: Groceries Code Adjudicator Tacon must be "objective" - BRC

By Chris Mercer | 21 January 2013

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) has given a cautious welcome to the UK's first Groceries Code Adjudicator, Christine Tacon, while producers and farmers appeared happier with the appointment.

Tacon, a former head of the Co-operative Group's farming business, was [officially announced in the ombudsman role](#) by the UK Government's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills today (21 January).

Pending the passing of legislation in the UK Parliament, Tacon is expected to have the power to launch investigations into suspected breaches of the Groceries Supply Code of Practice, govern disputes between retailers and suppliers, and issue fines to retailers if necessary.

Major food retailers in the UK have made no secret of their scepticism towards the new position, and the BRC underlined its ongoing caution following today's appointment.

While the BRC said it looks forward to working with Tacon, it warned: "The key thing will be to administer a system that is fair to all parties and does not add unnecessary burdens to retailers and the supply chain more generally.

"It's important that she demonstrates neutrality and objectivity. They will be essential qualities."

There was a warmer welcome for Tacon from the Food and Drink Federation ([FDF](#)), which represents manufacturers and processors.

"FDF congratulates Christine Tacon on her appointment," a spokesperson said. "Her experience and understanding of the whole supply chain means that she is well placed to take on this important role.

"We are looking forward to working with her to raise awareness with suppliers of the Adjudicator's role, developing guidance and ultimately supporting investigations."

Meanwhile, the National Farmers' Union (NFU), welcomed Tacon's appointment as an "important step in the battle to ensure fairness across the supply chain".

NFU head of food and farming, Phil Hudson, said: "We look forward to her taking up post and quickly getting to grips with the issues affecting our members. Once she has formally taken up her role we will look to meet her to discuss our concerns over the way in which the supply chain operates."

Tacon herself said today: "Coming from a commercial background, I am sure that if we can increase trust between retailers and their direct suppliers, it will lead to greater efficiency and can only have a beneficial impact on the rest of the supply chain."

She currently has several roles, including as a non-executive director of Anglia Farmers and Farmway Ltd, as a member DEFRA's Strategic Regulatory Scrutiny Panel and as chair of the BBC Rural Affairs Advisory Committee. She has also held sales marketing roles at Mars and Anchor, in addition to running the Co-op retailer's farming business for 11 years.