

Christine Tacon Appointed as Groceries Code Adjudicator

Consumer and Competition Minister Jo Swinson today announced that Christine Tacon has been appointed to the newly created role as the independent Groceries Code Adjudicator.

In her new role Ms Tacon will be responsible for enforcing the Groceries Supply Code of Practice, which regulates interactions between the ten largest supermarkets with an annual turnover of £1bn and their direct suppliers.

In addition, the Adjudicator will have the power to launch investigations into suspected breaches of the Code, including those arising from confidential complaints from any source. If she finds evidence of a breach, the Adjudicator will be able to make recommendations against a supermarket, require them to publish details of their breach, or, in the most extreme cases, to impose fines. She will also have the power to arbitrate disputes between large supermarkets and their direct suppliers.

Welcoming the appointment, Jo Swinson said:

"I congratulate Christine Tacon on her appointment as Groceries Code Adjudicator. This is an incredibly important position in the retail groceries sector making sure that large supermarkets treat their suppliers fairly and lawfully. Ms Tacon has a wide range of experience in the food, retail and farming industry and her appointment is a real milestone. Her knowledge of the sector will be of huge benefit, and I'm sure will be crucial in making the Groceries Code Adjudicator a positive and powerful contributor to the groceries industry."

Christine Tacon said:

"Being the Groceries Code Adjudicator is a significant responsibility, and I am honoured to have been given the chance to make a permanent and enduring difference to the groceries sector. 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."

The Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill, which will formally create the office of the Adjudicator, is currently before Parliament. Christine Tacon will act as Adjudicator-Designate until the office of the Adjudicator is established by law, when she will formally take up the four year appointment.

Ministers have also agreed that she will appear before the BIS Select Committee for a pre-appointment hearing.

Adrian Bailey MP, Chair of the Committee said,

"This is a welcome change of policy from the Government, which was called for by the Select Committee and Opposition team in the debate on the Bill. It is also perfectly consistent with the approach taken by the Government in securing as much pre-legislative scrutiny as possible.

“The Select Committee spent many hours taking evidence on this issue and will examine the suitability of the proposed candidate against this evidence and the recommendations it made.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The Adjudicator’s appointment will be subject to the Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill receiving Royal Assent and Christine Tacon’s appropriate security clearance.
2. The Adjudicator’s remuneration will be £115,000 pro-rata for a 3-day week, which will equate to £69,000 per annum. During the shadow period, she will work one day a week (equating to £23,000 per annum) on establishing her office, meeting stakeholders and developing guidance for retailers and suppliers. The shadow period will start in January 2013, and will end when the Bill comes into force, expected to be in the spring.
3. The appointment was made on merit in an open competition and was overseen by an independent Public Appointments Assessor from the Office of the Commission for Public Appointments.
4. Ms Tacon has no current conflicts of interest.
5. The Government laid legislation for the creation of the Adjudicator in May 2012. It will:
 - arbitrate disputes between retailers and suppliers;
 - investigate confidential complaints from direct and indirect suppliers, whether in the UK or overseas, and from third parties, to end the ‘climate of fear’; and
 - hold to account retailers who break the rules by ‘naming and shaming’ or fining supermarkets.
6. If a retailer is found to have breached the Groceries Code then the Adjudicator would have wide ranging powers to effect remedies such as:
 - issuing recommendations to solve the dispute;
 - naming and shaming the offenders by publishing information; and
 - impose fines if the Adjudicator considers the breach serious enough.

Biography

Christine Tacon has a portfolio career combining her commercial expertise with her understanding of the food chain and the public sector. She is a Chartered Engineer with 12 years’ experience in sales and marketing of fast moving consumer goods (Mars, Anchor and Vodafone) and ran the Co-operative Group’s farming business, the largest in the UK, for 11 years until 2012. She was awarded a CBE for services to agriculture in 2004.

Christine is a Non-Executive Director of Anglia Farmers and Farmway Ltd, both farm supply businesses, Chair of UK Farming plc, an investment business, a member of DEFRA’s Strategic Regulatory Scrutiny Panel, looking at future regulation, is a Governor

of Harper Adams University (which specialises in agribusiness) and is on the Business Advisory Board of Living with Environmental Change, a partnership of the Research Councils. She chairs the BBC Rural Affairs Advisory Committee and has joined the UKTI Environment and Water Sector Advisory Group. Christine is also a Public Member of Network Rail.