





# Life Cycle Symposium March 2025

## **Research topic**

Governance and systemic challenges faced by sustainable  
Food and Beverage (F&B) Small and Medium-sized Enterprises  
(SMEs) in the UK

(covering Supply-chain challenges and Greenwashing risks)

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# GREENWASHING

"earth  
friendly"

"nontoxic"

"certified  
green"

"chemical  
free"

"bio"

"natural"

"eco"



## Coca-Cola and Nestle accused of greenwashing over bottle recycling claims

A European consumer group and environmental campaigners have issued a legal complaint.

Rebecca Speare-Cole • Tuesday 07 November 2023 14:15 GMT



### BrewDog fruity beer ad banned over five-a-day claim

19 November 2022



A BrewDog advert has been banned for suggesting its fruit-flavoured beers counted as 'five of your five a day'.

### GREENWASH RIFE ACROSS UK SUPERMARKETS

26th Jul 23

by Christina O'Sullivan

No UK supermarket has adopted a target to reduce sales of industrial meat and dairy – the single biggest slice of supermarkets' emissions.

## Tesco accused of greenwashing over 'biodegradable' teabags

Complaint filed against retail giant after an experiment found that the teabags did not biodegrade after a year buried in soil



### Coca-Cola and Nestle accused of misleading eco claims

13 November 2023



Accused of making misleading '100% recycled' claims, the groups have issued a legal complaint over greenwashing.

## Activists accuse drinks firm Innocent of 'greenwashing' with ad

Plastics Rebellion complains to advertising watchdog about claims made in British TV advert



lost its climate credentials among consumers

1 of "greenwashing" by plastic advert that claims buying their s

USA Today Campaigns Announces

ishning' over sale of

STILLAND



Undated broadcast photo taken by Scottish Natural Heritage of three Linnæa hime on the surface of a flame shell bed. The conservation charity has called for action to protect marine life after a rare flame shell reef was devastated by scallop dredging.

WALTON has been accused of "greenwashing" its continued sales of scallops dredged off Scotland.

## nic milk advert banned for b ng'

2017, 12:05 am



### Greenwashing: Many companies are repeat offenders, study finds

Nearly one-third of companies flagged for greenwashing last year were found engaging in the same practice in 2024, according to a new report from environmental, social and governance (ESG) data firm RepRisk.

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT FINANCE REPORTING AND DISCLOSURE STRATEGY AND DELIVERY



### Calls to ban fake farm names that hoodwink supermarket shoppers leading stores invent fictitious boost sales

- Fictitious farm names suggest that products come from the
- These products usually come from large UK producers or
- Guy Singh-Watson, of Riverford Organic, has pled for a ban

By SEAN POULTER CONSUMER AFFAIRS EDITOR  
PUBLISHED: 23:01, 13 January 2024 | UPDATED: 23:06, 13 January 2024



### Mondelez Accused of Greenwashing in Its Sustainability Labels

Shayna Greene Reporter



## THE WORST MEAT AN Water companies in England 'use greenwashing playbook to hide environmental harm'

3rd Jan 24

by Liam Lysaght

Retailers have repeatedly promised far louder than their results.

Researchers say companies have prolonged injustice and exaggerated cost of solving infrastructure problems



Companies including Thames Water, United Utilities and Severn Trent Water have been accused of using denial and distraction to protect profits. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

Water companies are adopting disinformation tactics similar to those used by the fossil fuel and tobacco industries with the widespread use of greenwashing to downplay the environmental harm they cause, a study says.

f t i n

Now sustainability is a big priority for shoppers, eco-claims are everywhere. Yet so too are accusations of greenwashing. So the crackdown is on, with everyone from watchdogs to financial investors placing the claims of food companies in their crosshairs

Greenwashing (noun/verb) is the act of making a product, policy or activity appear less environmentally damaging than it really is. And there's few areas in which it's more prevalent than food and drink. But increasingly it's being called out, with a legislative crackdown to protect consumers, rival businesses and investors.

## 'Greenwashing' probe into Marmite maker Unilever

Unilever's Marmite came under fire last year for its focus on the Hellman's mayonnaise



UNILEVER HAS SAID IT WOULD ALLOW ITS RUSSIAN WORKERS TO BE CONSCRIPTED TO THE ARMED FORCES (CHRIS RADBURN/PA)

## SEC Charges Keurig with Making Inaccurate Statements Regarding Recyclability of K-Cup Beverage Pod

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | 2024-122



# Governance to tackle Greenwashing

- UK Green Claims Code
- Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)
- EU's Anti-greenwashing Law



# My Research Focus: SMEs

- Leading sustainability movement
- Driving local economy and consumer awareness
- Dealing with resource challenges



# Result 1: Systemic challenges for SME sustainability

- Lack of transparency in supply chains
- Dependency on certifications
- Lack of local cost-effective suppliers (economies of scale)
- Lack of consumer awareness on sustainable goods





# Result 2: Unintentional and “Passive” Greenwashing

## Unintentional greenwashing:

- Misrepresented origins
- Unsubstantiated end-of-life plans
- Supplier non-compliance



## Passive greenwashing

- Selective emphasis on sustainable sourcing
- Conflation of sustainability with quality
- Avoidance of tough and awkward questions to suppliers





# Recommendations targeted at SMEs, Certification bodies and Governance policies

## 1. SMEs Differentiations

- Periodic supplier audits
- Full product lifecycle approach
- Transparency & consumer engagement



Yup! Finally,  
I know more  
than the  
salesman.

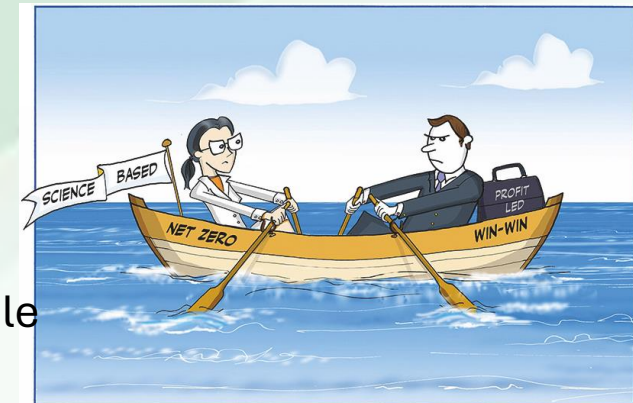


## 2. Certification Bodies & Consumer Awareness

- Certification bodies need stricter regulations to prevent misuse
- Enhance full supply chain accountability
- Consumers must research beyond certifications before making sustainability-based purchase decisions

## 3. Net-Zero Policy Solutions

- Mandate supplier disclosures
- Simplified reporting frameworks to help SMEs comply without excessive burden
- Encouraging domestic businesses to make local sustainable sourcing more viable





# Learnings & Implications for Wider Use

- SMEs are critical to sustainability but lack tailored governance.
- Greenwashing must be tackled through transparency and accountability.
- Collaboration between businesses, policymakers, governments and certification bodies is crucial.
- Without better policies, SMEs will struggle to achieve Net Zero goals.





# References and further reading

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# Questions?

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