



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



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

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

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



BBC NEWS
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Business | Economy | Technology of Business | All Business

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

© 7 December 2022

USA Today Campaigns Announces

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



GREENWASH RIFE ACROSS UK
Selling loads of meat. Driving climate breakdown.
TESCO Every little helps

A BrewDog ad has been banned for suggesting its fruit-flavored beers counted as "one of your five-a-day".

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



Kraft Heinz Faces Shareholder Vote On Its 'Deceptive' Recycling Labels

Chemical engineer Jan Dell sees her shareholder proposal as a way to fight greenwashing by the U.S.-based multinational food manufacturer.

By James Bruggers X
April 1, 2024



Activists accuse drinks firm Innocent of 'greenwashing' with ad

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



nic milk advert banned for b
ng'

1, 2017, 12:05 am



Greenwashing: Many companies are repeat offenders, study finds

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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



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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THE SACRED PACT BETWEEN
CAPITALIST AND CONSUMER

