

The campaign

The UK Competition Commission is an independent body which ran a two-year investigation into the UK grocery market. Traidcraft followed this investigation closely and in April 2008 the Commission issued its final report.

It found that supermarkets transfer "excessive risk and unexpected costs" onto suppliers by:

- forcing down the prices they pay to suppliers,
- demanding payments from them for marketing and other costs,
- insisting that suppliers take the hit when consumer demand changes,
- leaving orders to the last minute.

These pressures then get passed on to workers in the form of low wages, poor conditions and long hours.

The Competition Commission also found that the voluntary Code of Practice that used to govern the four biggest supermarkets simply did not work and that instances of abuse had actually increased.

The Commission recommended implementing a tougher new code, expanded to cover the 11 biggest retailers:

- Aldi
- Asda
- The Co-op (including Alldays)
- Iceland
- Lidl
- Marks & Spencer
- Morrisons
- Sainsbury's
- Somerfield
- Tesco (including One Stop)
- Waitrose

It also recommended that an independent watchdog be set up to monitor and enforce this code.

In February 2010 the new updated Groceries Code was put into place. While Traidcraft welcomed this development, the evidence from the Competition Commission made it clear that the code would be futile without a watchdog to enforce it and hold supermarkets to account.

Traidcraft campaigners, along with supporters from a wide range of organisations including Friends of the Earth, ActionAid, Fairtrade Foundation and others, kept up the pressure by emailing, meeting with and even sending Valentine's Cards to their MPs.

[We also took a giant snail to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills](#) to encourage Vince Cable to pick up the pace on the supermarkets watchdog!

And very recently the Government finally announced that it would bring a bill into parliament that would see the establishment of the Groceries Code Adjudicator. This is great news! But it's still vital that our supporters show they care about the people working in supermarket supply chains and want to buy food knowing it has been produced without exploitation.

The supermarkets watchdog must be set up as quickly as possible, and with all the powers it needs, to hold supermarkets to account.

Take action

- [Sign up to be a Traidcraft campaigner. We will keep you updated on the supermarkets campaign and send you the latest, quick and simple actions.](#)