

The Power of Supermarkets and Changing Attitudes

A recent report by War on Want and the British GMB, investigating the case of Wal-Mart (ASDA), shows how the relentless pursuit of supermarkets of the lowest possible prices has a negative impact on the supermarkets local communities as well as their suppliers, often based in the poorest countries of the world.

A few years ago, the supermarket retailer Safeway (now owned by Asda AKA Wal-mart) sent letters to their farmer suppliers asking for a contribution of £20,000 per product line, in order to improve marketing of the products. They went on to invoice their suppliers for these sums. Supermarkets have tended to only do business with the largest scale suppliers at the lowest cost wherever they may be located. Next time you go to the supermarket take a closer look at the food labels, you will see New Zealand lamb and vegetables from Israel. But this is not what most shoppers would choose - when asked, they say they prefer British farm food. Supermarkets are moving towards this as many are now offering vegetable and meat box schemes stocked only with local and often organic food. Many small firms have spent years building organic box schemes and organic delivery into a viable business only for supermarkets to jump in on the act as it becomes more mainstream.

Britains supermarkets are damaging British business, are bad for consumers and bad for the environment. Farmers and consumers are paying the price of its uncontrolled expansion here and overseas. MPs must act now to curb the growing market power of supermarkets and ensure that Britains booming supermarket industry does not kill off farmers, consumer choice and the traditional British high street.

The UK Competition Commission has been called upon to look at the actions of supermarkets which many say are damaging almost everything that they touch.

Tesco controls nearly one third of the UK grocery market, setting the standard across the retail sector. But while the company boasts about its commitment to fair trade and corporate responsibility, a new report from Friends of the Earth shows that Tesco's practices are putting many UK farmers out of business; while on the high street, some 2,000 independent stores went out of businesses in the last year alone, unable to compete with promotions and planning and taxation policies which favour the multiples over smaller shops.

One in five people think that supermarkets are most influential when planning decisions get made, over the council or local people. Often people cannot get obtain planning permission to build an extension yet the supermarkets are often granted permission to build huge stores the size of football stadiums

But, things are changing for the better-

Supermarkets are trialing having tractors deliver goods straight to the supermarket door to save on food miles.

Tesco are installing solar panels and using renewable energy in certain stores to show how green they are becoming.

Waitrose has started its own fair-trade scheme. The cash has been raised as part of the food retailers initiative to return a sizeable proportion of profits it earns on sales of citrus fruits to the farmers who grow them.

Ikea is to become the UK's first major retailer to regularly charge customers for plastic bags, to try and tackle waste and environmental damage.

The success of Marks & Spencers ethical marketing drive that urged shoppers to "look behind the label" has dwarfed all its previous advertising campaigns, according to research from a leading City brokerage.

Supermarket Sainsburys is to sell more than 500 of its own-brand products in compostable packs instead of plastic as it seeks to cut packaging waste. It says the scheme, already trialled on some of its organic range, will save 3,550 tonnes of plastic a year.

Is this a genuine change in attitudes by the supermarkets or merely a change in public relations direction to ensure they get all the green pounds that tend to be spent in local markets and shops? Ill let you decide.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

Davinos Greeno works for the [organic food](#) and [ethical clothes](#) directory that lists 100s of Organic and Ethical Companies and we also have [Health Articles](#) for you to read or publish.