

EU Commission presents Substantiating Green Claims proposal to tackle green washing

The European Commission has published a proposal on Green Claims, asking companies that want to use green claims for their products to substantiate such claims and to communicate to consumers the environmental impact of products.

SAFE welcomes the European Commission's efforts to protect EU consumers from greenwashing and misleading environmental claims and practices, but calls for a stricter stance on food products, and for the establishment of rules that impose to specify whether a product contains ingredients of synthetic origin.

Yesterday, the European Commission has published its long-awaited proposal to Substantiate Green Claims. The new legislation aims to tackle greenwashing by regulating how companies substantiate and communicate their green claims. Moreover, these claims will be comparable and verifiable across the EU, thus helping consumers make more sustainable decisions and increase consumer confidence in green labels and information.

Over half of [EU consumers](#) aim to make sustainable purchasing choices. However, there is a proliferation of methods to measure and assess environmental impacts, as well as a proliferation of labels and claims related to environmental information. This all leads to a proliferation of misleading environmental, including climate-related, claims - only in 2021, the European Commission found that [42% of green](#) claims in Europe were exaggerated, false or deceptive.

This proposal aims to put some order to a confusing market of environmental claims and help protect EU consumers from misleading claims. The legislation applies to all claims and labels displayed in products, services or companies in both physical and online points of sale across the EU market. Companies will have the obligation to make supporting evidence available alongside a green claim.

The European Commission is proposing the integration its Product Environmental Footprint method (PEF) as a reference instrument for companies to substantiate claims and to communicate to consumers the environmental impact of products (e.g. through a graded label from A to G). In view of its limitations, however, the PEF method would not be used in those sectors where it fails to properly reflect all relevant impacts, like food and agricultural products. Companies making claims in the latter sectors will have the option to use alternative methodologies that will need to be verified by national authorities.

The proposal works in tandem with the proposal to Empower Consumers for the Green Transition, as well as the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation proposal - both currently being assessed by the European Parliament and the Council. While the former regulates what companies cannot do (i.e. which claims are considered unfair commercial practices), the latter sets obligations for mandatory product information. The Green Claims proposal completes the picture by establishing how can companies make use of voluntary claims green claims.

SAFE welcomes the European Commission's efforts to protect EU consumers from misleading environmental claims and practices but considers that they are not sufficient for the food sector. Among the most prominent of these misleading practices is the use of the claim "natural" in food products, which

under current rules can be used even when synthetic additives, such as flavourings and preservatives, are present. For years SAFE has been advocating for clear and correct information to consumers. Our [“WeValueTrueNatural”](#) campaign, in particular, strives to protect consumers from the misleading use of “natural” claims on food products. Without information, there is no choice. And we want consumers to make fully-informed choices to lead sustainable and healthy diets.