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By Michael Barker

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## Retail supplier complaints hit new low

### Aldi again named most Code-compliant supermarket in annual report by Groceries Code Adjudicator



Adjudicator Christine Tacon

**T**he number of supplier complaints against supermarkets has fallen to a new low, the Groceries Code Adjudicator's new annual report indicates.

The report, presented today by Adjudicator Christine Tacon, revealed a reduction in complaints from all nine of the most-reported areas of concern in the past year. Issues around forensic reporting are at a low of just seven per cent (2014: 45 per cent), margin maintenance is at eight per cent (2014: 36 per cent), 'pay to stay' has fallen to five per cent (2014: 25 per cent) and payment delays has dropped to 19 per cent (2014: 35 per cent).

In a further sign of progress, only two retailers were rated by suppliers as being below the level of the best-performing retailer.

The four most-improved retailers – who Tacon said had been subjected to

increased scrutiny or enhanced engagement – were Tesco, Morrisons, Asda and the Co-op.

Tacon said she no longer had any single top issue of concern, but that she would continue to monitor the performance of all retailers in relation to delay in payments, forecasting and promotions.

Delayed payments was listed as the number-one most complained about issue by suppliers in 2018, followed by issues around forecasting, de-listing and variation of supply chain procedures without reasonable notice.

#### Aldi top on compliance

Aldi was rated the supermarket which was best complying with the Groceries Supply Code of Practice, followed in order by Tesco, Waitrose and Sainsbury's. Iceland finished bottom of the list, behind the Co-op.

In terms of supplier perceptions of which stores conducted relationships

fairly and in good faith, Aldi was again voted the best, ahead of Waitrose and M&S. Iceland and the Co-op again occupied the bottom two positions.

The Adjudicator also concluded its investigation into the Co-op this year, stating that the retailer needed to take a "very different approach to Code compliance". "I have made robust recommendations for urgent action and I will be helping Co-op to change its approach by monitoring closely how it implements those recommendations," Tacon said.

Of the results, Julie Ashfield, managing director of buying at Aldi, said: "We are incredibly proud to have topped the GCAs annual survey every year since its inception six years ago. This reflects the close relationship we have with suppliers, which is built on mutual trust and understanding.

"The partnerships we have established with our suppliers over many years allow us to source the very best products for our

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customers.

“As we move towards our long-term target of 1,200 stores by 2025, this presents an opportunity for our suppliers to grow with us too. We currently source from more than 1,000 British businesses and look forward to working with many more in the coming years.”

For the year ahead, Tacon

said: “There will be no letting up. As well as assessing the response on the monitored top issues I will be working closely with Co-op to ensure it fully implements my recommendations and I will be sharing the learnings with retailers and suppliers.

“During the year the government will also conduct a second

statutory review of the GCA’s performance to cover the period April 2016 to March 2019 and I encourage all those with an interest in the work of the GCA to give their views.”

Tacon also confirmed that she will be stepping down as Adjudicator next year after seven years in the role.