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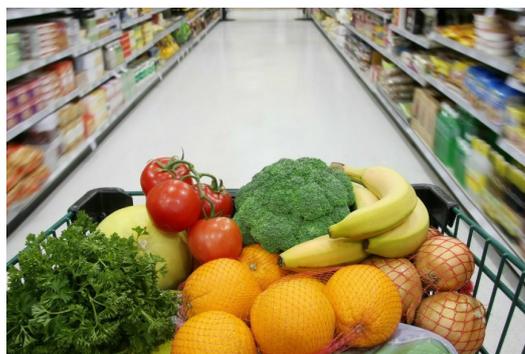


By Fred Searle

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'Open fridges should be banned'

Environmental experts call for supermarkets to ditch open fridges due to harmful emissions



Open fridges, seen in supermarkets up and down the country, should be banned due to their environmental impact, environmental experts have said.

There are thousands of these open fridges in supermarkets in the UK and millions worldwide, but waste collection firm BusinessWaste.co.uk has urged for them to be done away with.

A common sight for shoppers, these fridges are used to display cold products such as meat, dairy, ready meals and certain fruit and vegetables, and can line dozens of aisles in bigger supermarkets.

They became popular with retailers as their open fronts allowed shoppers to see what was on offer more easily, leading to more impulse purchases and bigger profits for the businesses. However, this open-fronted design is precisely what makes them so damaging for the environment.

The refrigerant used in many of the

leading retailers' stores consists of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) – a group of so-called 'super greenhouse gases' which are much more harmful even than carbon dioxide. This means the 7,000+ supermarket locations in the UK are collectively making a hefty contribution to harmful emission levels.

While some retailers have made moves to improve the environmental impact of their refrigeration systems – with some of the household names, such as Aldi and Tesco, committing to reducing their HFC use – this fails to address the energy wastage, which is a factor of all open fridge designs, regardless of the coolant used.

Mark Hall, spokesperson for BusinessWaste.co.uk, urged retailers to reconsider: "Committing to reducing harmful emissions is all well and good, but retailers have been slow to do so in practice – and by continuing to use open fridges, they are simply paying lip service to improving their environmental credentials.

"Shoppers adapt quickly to new initiatives; the 5p plastic carrier bag levy is an excellent example of the general public quickly adopting new ways of shopping. And, with environmental concerns higher than ever on the public consciousness, we are finding that consumers are increasingly willing to accept that changes must be made to prevent further damage to our planet."

It has been calculated that if all UK supermarkets put doors on their open fridges, the electricity saved would be approximately double that generated by Yorkshire's coal-fired Drax powerstation – Europe's second largest.

This suggests closed fridges could result in cost savings for supermarkets, as well as improving their emissions, however Hall said retailers may be worried their sales would be affected "without the pull of products catching shoppers' eyes".

"They rely heavily on impulse purchasing, hence more expensive products being stocked at eye level and

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those tempting treats placed by the tills,” he said.

“But, as with many issues which are huge contributors to environmental damage,

it’s now the responsibility of industries to innovate and find new ways to operate in this new, concerning landscape we find ourselves in.”