

Ministry of Infrastructure
and Water Management

> Return address Postbus 20901 2500 EX Den Haag

To: Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans

Bestuurskern
Dir Duurzame Leefomg & Circ
Economie
Circulaire Economie
's-Gravenhage



Ons kenmerk
IENW/BSK-2021/335304

Date 20 december 2021
Subject Misleading Green Claims

Dear Executive Vice-President,

As you will be aware, the Netherlands has stated the intention to have a fully circular economy in 2050. To achieve this, we depend to a large extent on EU policies that support that transition. For example, it is an important prerequisite for end consumers to be able to make sustainable choices based on reliable and verifiable information. The Netherlands therefore welcomes the initiative announced in the Circular Economy Action Plan, as part of the European Green Deal, on substantiating green claims. In this letter I would like to emphasize the importance of having correct and verifiable sustainability information labelled on products, like textile clothing.

The Netherlands Authority for Consumers and Markets (ACM), an independent regulator that champions the rights of consumers and businesses, has identified three sectors where numerous misleading claims have been found: clothing, energy and dairy.¹ For the clothing sector this is especially unwanted as a significant number of consumers take the sustainability of a textile product in consideration before purchasing, thus correct information is crucial. The ACM has, for example, noted that some retailers label their items "organic cotton" while it contains just 50% organic cotton, or that online shops identify certain products as a "sustainable choice" without disclosing what makes it a sustainable choice. The ACM has requested over 70 clothing companies to critically review their claims. The ACM investigation reconfirms the need to improve the reliability of sustainability information on products, in particular textiles. This issue also has the special attention of the House of Representatives of the Netherlands.²

As noted in the Dutch feedback on the roadmap for the EU textiles strategy, a mandatory product passport could provide a system through which the information on sustainability and material composition of products is recorded and communicated along the value chain. The Commission has a vital role to play in ensuring that data is available to support such a product passport, as well as assessments in other contexts, such as the Sustainable Product Initiative. This could be based on the results of the Product Environmental Footprint pilot and

¹ [ACM launches investigations into misleading sustainability claims in three sectors | ACM.nl](#)

² Recently, a motion was passed that calls for stricter regulation on misleading claims on clothing products. For full motion, see (in Dutch): [Detail 2021D41886 | Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal](#)

transition phases. It should provide a strong basis for making the information available to all actors along the value chain, including end customers, allowing them to make an informed decision based on reliable information. This will also require that such data is passed on reliably along value chains, and as such also concerns business-to-business interactions.

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In conclusion, I call upon the Commission to address the issue of preventing greenwashing and unsubstantiated green claims with urgency, through the beforementioned Green Claims initiative and where appropriate, through other measures such as the EU Textiles Strategy, the initiative to Strengthen Consumers in the Green Transition and the Sustainable Products Initiative.

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Yours sincerely,

the State Secretary for Infrastructure and Water Management,

S.P.R.A. van Weyenberg

