

Supermarkets: Satisfying Climate Issues

According to the 2008 Cabinet Office report "Food Matters Towards a Strategy for the 21st Century" about 18% of UK greenhouse gas emissions are related to production and consumption. Supermarket retailers are at the forefront of tackling these climate change issues, by reducing their carbon footprint through taking actions to reduce their emissions. The Stern Review "The Economics of Climate Change" highlighted a number of options for change including:

- Promoting cleaner energy and transport technology, with non-fossil fuels accounting for 60% of energy output by 2050.
- Reducing consumer demand for heavily polluting goods and services.

The Carbon Trust, a Government funded organisation, provides guidance to companies in the reduction of their transport, resulting in a number of initiatives being undertaken by the supermarkets including re-siting of distribution centres to make delivery more 'carbon' efficient from warehouse to trading store. So far, however, Wm Morrisons are the only supermarket operator to be awarded the Carbon Trust Standard.

The Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme (CRC) is one of the Government's main initiatives to encourage businesses to reduce their carbon emissions through an incentive and penalty scheme which comes into effect in April 2010. Consequently the main supermarket chains have been specifying energy efficient building methods and materials to new stores and where possible, appropriate alteration to existing stores. The Tesco store in Ramsey, Cambridgeshire which recently opened, is being promoted as a zero carbon store and has incorporated:

- Sustainable timber frame
- Roof lights and sun pipes for natural light
- Rain water collection to provide for urinals and toilets
- Combined Heat and Power (CPH)
- LED lit car parking
- Carbon dioxide (CO₂) cooling for refrigeration and freezing

New food stores are generally being built to the standards of the BRE Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) from which the supermarket chains are aiming for an excellent rating as awarded to Wm Morrisons for their store in Kidderminster and the J Sainsbury in Dartmouth.

Other interesting initiatives undertaken by the foodstore operators include:

- Delivery vehicles run on pure plant oil
- Delivery vehicles run on methane collected from landfill
- The disposal of waste by anaerobic digestion

In terms of planning consents, central government guidance and targets are reflected in Local Authority Development Plans. The majority of Councils now include planning policies requiring a minimum of 10% of energy reductions in new developments generated by on-site renewable sources. Achieving this is a critical issue in securing planning permission for new superstore developments.

The Government has set itself a target to reduce its emissions by 80% by 2050. The supermarket chains are certainly aiming to achieve their reductions far sooner, although obstacles such as landlords consent to alterations on existing stores will create delays. More importantly closing part of the store for these alterations can easily cause disruption to trade, which, for the food sector, can be extremely costly.

For further information, please do not hesitate to call 0870 777 6292 or contact one of our nationwide specialists directly, as below:

Russell Smith
Rachel Saint
Angus Irvine

07990 550460
07768 046616
07767 463884

rhs@rapleys.co.uk
ras@rapleys.co.uk
abi@rapleys.co.uk

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