

Fit for 55 – retail and wholesale in the vanguard of promoting sustainability

Retailers and wholesalers across Europe are already working hard to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Speaking today, EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschueren said:

“Our sector has been active for many years in seeking to reduce its impact on the environment, promoting sustainability in its supply chain, its own operations, and with customers. We therefore support the Commission’s Fit for 55 package as a concrete set of measures to meet the Green Deal target of a 55% reduction in EU emissions of greenhouse gases by 2030. We share, however, other sectors’ concerns that the carbon border adjustment mechanism should be designed to be compatible with WTO rules and avoid new areas of dispute with trading partners.”

Retailers and wholesalers have shown that they take sustainability and climate change seriously, setting clear and measurable targets to reduce the impact of their operations and the products they sell. Our companies have also been proactive in setting clear targets for becoming carbon neutral, and in the transition to sustainable transport and increased energy efficiency. They are installing new refrigeration equipment, charging stations in their supermarket car parks, and using more renewable energy. They are continuously improving the environmental performance and driving eco-design of their products.

This engagement is also reflected in our signing the EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices this month, and our support to companies committing to the EU Green pledge. Many other initiatives by retailers and wholesalers are highlighted in our [#sustainablecommerce website](#), showing how our sector has been in forefront of making its operations and its purchasing contribute to a sustainable future for Europe. We see the Fit for 55 package of measures as an important next step in realising that goal.

That being said, Europe’s supply chains are complex and global, and reducing CO2 emissions should be a global effort. The Fit for 55 package is important in reinforcing the EU’s leading role in global cooperation to meet the targets of the Paris Agreement. Such cooperation should be the watchword for Europe, and we and a number of other sectors will be seeking reassurance that the design of the carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM) and its final application can be seen by our trading partners to be proportionate, fair and compatible with WTO commitments. It must also avoid burdens on EU importers not applied to EU manufacturers. We are keen to work with the Commission to seek to achieve this balance and avoid new areas of dispute in global trade, which is only now starting to recover after the pandemic and from protectionist policies adopted by some of the most important global players.

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EuroCommerce is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 28 countries and 5 million companies, both leading global players such as Carrefour, Ikea, Metro and Tesco, and many small businesses. Retail and wholesale provide a link and essential services to producers and 450 million European consumers and business customers over a billion times a day. It generates 1 in 7 jobs, providing a varied career for 26 million Europeans, many of them young people. It also supports millions of further jobs throughout the supply chain, from small local suppliers to international businesses. EuroCommerce is the recognised European social partner for the retail and wholesale sector.