Reading: C1

# Sustainable supermarkets

Read an article about how some supermarkets have become more environmentally friendly to practise and improve your reading skills.

## Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the text and do the exercises.

### Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

**Vocabulary**

1. ..... a backlash
2. ..... a pact
3. ..... to come under fire
4. ..... an unethical act
5. ..... to take matters into your own hands
6. ..... the lion's share
7. ..... surplus
8. ..... to operate under a veil of secrecy

**Definitions**

a. to be criticised strongly
b. an action that is morally wrong
c. a strong negative reaction by a large number of people
d. a formal agreement between parties
e. excess; extra; oversupply
f. to work in a way that hides embarrassing information
g. to deal with a problem yourself after others have failed to do so
h. the largest part of something

## Reading text: Sustainable supermarkets

Many of the major supermarket chains have come under fire with accusations of various unethical acts over the past decade. They've wasted tonnes of food, they've underpaid their suppliers and they've contributed to excessive plastic waste in their packaging, which has had its impact on our environment.

But supermarkets and grocers are starting to sit up and take notice. In response to growing consumer backlash against the huge amounts of plastic waste generated by plastic packaging, some of the largest UK supermarkets have signed up to a pact promising to transform packaging and cut plastic wastage. In a pledge to reuse, recycle or compost all plastic wastage by 2025, supermarkets are now beginning to take some responsibility for the part they play in contributing to the damage to our environment, with one major supermarket announcing their plan to eliminate all plastic packaging in their own-brand products by 2023.

In response to criticisms over food waste, some supermarkets are donating some of their food surplus. However, charities estimate that they are only accessing two per cent of supermarkets' total food surplus, so this hardly seems to be solving the problem. Some say that supermarkets are simply not doing enough. Most supermarkets operate under a veil of

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secrecy when asked for exact figures of food wastage, and without more transparency it is hard to come up with a systematic approach to avoiding waste and to redistributing surplus food.

Some smaller companies are now taking matters into their own hands and offering consumers a greener, more environmentally friendly option. Shops like Berlin's Original Unverpakt and London's Bulk Market are plastic-free shops that have opened in recent years, encouraging customers to use their own containers or compostable bags. Online grocer Farmdrop eliminates the need for large warehouses and the risk of huge food surplus by delivering fresh produce from local farmers to its customers on a daily basis via electric cars, offering farmers the lion's share of the retail price.

There is no doubt that we still have a long way to go in reducing food waste and plastic waste. But perhaps the major supermarkets might take inspiration from these smaller grocers and gradually move towards a more sustainable future for us all.

## Tasks

### Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

| | Answer | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. More and more people want supermarkets to reduce the amount of plastic waste they produce. | True | False |
| 2. By 2025, many of the major supermarkets will have stopped using plastic in their in-house products. | True | False |
| 3. Supermarkets are still denying that plastic packaging can cause damage to our environment. | True | False |
| 4. Supermarkets are not telling people how much food they are actually wasting. | True | False |
| 5. There is a grocer in Berlin that doesn't allow customers to use their own containers. | True | False |
| 6. Farmdrop doesn't store large amounts of food and so doesn't produce unnecessary waste. | True | False |
| 7. Farmers supplying food to Farmdrop get a small fraction of the price that customers pay. | True | False |
| 8. The author believes that small shops like Bulk Market and Farmdrop will eventually take over the major supermarkets. | True | False |

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## Task 2

Complete the text with words from the box.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| transparent | promised | criticised | excess |
| reduce | produce | rid | packaging |

Two of the things that major supermarkets have been (1).....for are the waste of large amounts of (2).....food and unnecessary plastic usage in a lot of product (3)..... . Some supermarkets have (4).....to try and (5).....plastic wastage, and one supermarket has said that it would get (6).....of all plastic packaging from its own in-house brands. Meanwhile, many supermarkets are not very (7).....about the exact amount of food that is going to waste and so it's hard for charities to know how to redistribute this surplus (8) ..... .

## Discussion

What other environmentally friendly measures should supermarkets and other shops take?

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# Answers

## Preparation task

1. c
2. d
3. a
4. b
5. g
6. h
7. e
8. f

## Task 1

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. False
6. True
7. False
8. False

## Task 2

1. criticised
2. excess
3. packaging
4. promised
5. reduce
6. rid
7. transparent
8. produce

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