



4th March 2010

The Editor
The Grocer
William Reed Publishing
Broadfield Park
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Dear Sir

The case for an ombudsman

Dr Black is right to question the value of countless competition investigations (Second Opinion, 27th February) but this supports rather than weakens the case for an ombudsman. Had the 2002 Supermarket Code of Practice worked, the last market investigation would never have taken place, with significant costs savings to all involved.

The new remedy – a stronger code of practice properly monitored and enforced – has a much better chance of working if structured as the Competition Commission envisaged, with an ombudsman with proactive powers of investigation. The benefits would be widespread, delivering choice, better products and variety to shoppers, greater certainty for suppliers and an end to these competition investigations.

The cost of this remedy will not fall on the public purse as Dr Black contends but will be borne by retailers covered by the new code, at least in the first instance. They have however already declared their intention to pass these on, though we must wait to see whether this will be to shoppers or suppliers.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Noble".

John Noble