

# CONSUMERS CALL FOR ACTION AT COP26

The 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) offers a unique opportunity to step up global ambition on climate change. Consumers are key to ensuring the commitments made in Glasgow become reality. For the world to reach net zero, consumers everywhere will have to make fundamental changes to how they travel, heat, cool and power their homes, the food they eat and the products they buy. These changes will be impossible without large-scale transformations in the marketplace and regulatory environment which strengthen consumer rights and maintain consumer confidence.

For over 60 years, Consumers International has represented the global voice of consumers to international decision-makers. Together with our 200 consumer advocacy members from across the world, we have put together **three cross-cutting demands**, based on consumer rights principles.

To make a **fast, fair and accountable transition** a reality, we are calling on governments to commit to:

## 1. CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR RAPID CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHANGE.

Mobilising consumer behaviour change at scale and at speed is key to meeting internationally-agreed climate targets. But consumers face various barriers which prevent them from changing their behaviours at the required pace. Policies should seek to unlock transition pathways that empower consumers and combine state, market and civil society-led transformation.

## 2. A 'CONSUMER FAIRNESS TEST' FOR EVERY CLIMATE MITIGATION POLICY, ENSURING A TRANSITION THAT WORKS FOR ALL.

Policies should be tested to ensure that the cost burdens of the transition are distributed equitably. The most vulnerable consumers need to be supported in making changes and protected from unfair financial burdens. Policies should target behavioural 'hotspots' that are most carbon intensive and the actors who contribute most to emissions.

## 3. THE EXPANSION AND DEEPENING OF CONSUMER REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING THROUGH THE TRANSITION.

A net zero future will require consumers to make complex decisions in new and evolving markets. Consumer advocacy representation in policy-making and standards-setting is needed to ensure consumer protections are fit for a sustainable future. Direct consumer consultation and participation in the policy making process will help maintain consumer confidence and support through the transition.

## KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following policy recommendations were developed in collaboration with our members and incorporate the most relevant and up-to-date thinking on consumer protection and empowerment. The recommendations are backed up by our Global Member COP26 Survey, carried out in September 2021, which gathered key insights and experiences from leading consumer advocacy experts around the world. These key policy recommendations outline a roadmap across six major areas of transition for consumers: transport, energy, domestic heating and cooling, consumer goods, diet and finance.

### HOW WE TRAVEL

1. Take action against the most carbon-intensive forms of transport
  - Ensure consumers are informed in a reliable and accessible way about the true emissions levels of each form of transport
  - Prioritise regulation of manufacturers, who have most agency to respond, over measures that affect consumers directly
2. Invest in a functioning public and active transport infrastructure
  - Complement investment in public transport infrastructure with subsidies for low carbon travel
  - Evolve planning laws to reduce the need for personal vehicles, whilst supporting cycling and walking
3. Provide support for consumers to go electric
  - Subsidise electric vehicles and support the development of second-hand markets
  - Rapidly deploy the necessary charging infrastructure to encourage adoption by consumers

### HOW WE PLUG IN

1. Establish improvements in energy efficiency
  - Ensure annual energy intensity improvements of 3% or above, underpinned by mandatory standards and financial incentives
  - Provide reliable consumer information and education and support trusted efficiency-enhancing technologies
2. Ensure renewable electricity is affordable for all consumers
  - Give consumers the information and power to choose their energy supply
  - Design flexible markets which give consumers access to affordable renewable electricity
3. Create a level playing field for self-generated renewable energy
  - Remove subsidies that discriminate against decentralised energy systems
  - Help consumers to self-organise around innovative energy services

### WHAT WE BUY

1. Improve the quality and reliability of product sustainability information
  - Introduce marketing restrictions to tackle greenwashing

- Consult consumer advocacy organisations in the development of green claims and labelling legislation
2. Take action to make production processes cleaner
    - Support international standards which embed robust net-zero goals across all sectors
    - Encourage industry self-regulation, in the form of voluntary targets, supplier agreements and codes of conduct
  3. Promote innovation and investment in a more circular materials economy
    - Introduce robust 'Right to Repair' legislation
    - Strengthen laws against planned obsolescence, and set product standards on durability

## WHAT WE EAT

1. Communicate sustainable dietary guidelines to consumers
  - Introduce and align national dietary guidelines to emissions reductions
  - Communicate guidelines to consumers through labelling and education
2. Support the development of sustainable food production
  - Align agricultural policies and subsidies to 1.5 degrees Celsius trajectory
  - Create and promote frameworks to connect consumers directly with producers
3. Ensure traceability and transparency along the food value chain
  - Support the provision of accurate consumer information on food provenance
  - Promote digital tools which enhance traceability at all stages of the value chain

## HOW WE LIVE

1. Provide low-carbon homes for all consumers
  - Introduce building regulations and codes that minimise emissions in new construction
  - Establish energy efficiency standards for new homes and support retrofits for old ones
2. Help consumers adopt low carbon home heating technologies
  - Ensure all consumers, including the poorest, can switch to low carbon heating technologies
  - Put in place robust consumer protections on new technologies
3. Help consumers adopt efficient home cooling technologies
  - Encourage urban areas to be designed with natural cooling
  - Introduce stricter efficiency standards and consumer protections for cooling technologies

## HOW WE SPEND AND SAVE

1. Promote net zero aligned financial services as the default option for consumers
  - Align financial services to robust international net zero standards, backed up by regulation
  - Support employers to ensure employee pensions are net zero aligned as default

2. Communicate the sustainability impact of financial services to consumers
  - All financial services providers to provide, clear, credible, and comparable information on the climate impact of their services
  - Environmental reporting definitions to be internationally standardised to enable more consistent monitoring
  
3. Ensure considerations of climate impact are part of all financial decisions
  - Implement climate due diligence requirements for financial providers
  - Support consumers with financial advice and education aligned to net zero

Read our accompanying report to find out more about the view of global consumer advocacy at COP26. Examples of the work of consumer advocacy organisations offer insight into what consumer-centred solutions can and should look like.