



1C Fosseyway Business Centre, Stratford Road
Moreton-in-Marsh GL56 9NQ, UK
Phone: 44 1608 652 895 Direct: 44 1608 651 864
Fax: 44 1608 652 878 jutta@fern.org
www.sinkswatch.org

To
The UK Advertising Standards Authority
2 Torrington Place
London
WC1E 7HW

Re: Request to investigate misleading Phone-Co-op advert in The Ecologist magazine April 2004 edition, page 34

SinksWatch complaint:

The Phone Co-Op Ltd. advertises "Climate Neutral phone calls" in The Ecologist (April 2004, p. 34): "for every £10 you spend on calls we will offset 100kg of CO2 through our partnership with Climate Care".

The Climate Care website (www.climatecare.org) reveals that this is to be accomplished through tree planting in Uganda, efficient stoves in Bangladesh and efficient light bulbs in Mauritius, and hydropower in Bulgaria.

However, the possibility of verifiably quantifying the extent to which tree planting can compensate for CO2 released in the burning of fossil fuels has never been established, due to uncertainty and scientific ignorance (see, e.g., Nilsson, S. et al., "Full Carbon Account for Russia", Interim Report IR-00-021, IIASA, Laxenburg, Austria, 22 August 2000, p. 115, <http://www.iiasa.ac.at>). The possibility of verifiably quantifying the degree to which energy efficiency or hydropower projects are an improvement over business as usual, and thus entitled to claim they "offset" fossil fuel burning, is also fiercely contested (see, e.g., the current debates over "additionality" in the UN expert and business communities: <http://www.cdmwatch.org> and <http://www.cdm.unfccc.int/methodologies>).

Yet the "Climate Neutral" claim logically entails that such quantification is possible and verifiable: Climate Care states that "you can offset" the "z tonnes of carbon dioxide" you produce "by investing in Climate Care projects" (http://www.climatecare.org/individuals/view.cfm?content_id=47EBOCA5-CBED-4AD8-AE95ADDAB124F9FD). Nor are the current controversies over such claims in the expert literature anywhere communicated by the advertisement. Hence it is misleading according to the terms of CAP Code 7.1 and 49.3.

SinksWatch calls on the UK Advertising Standards Authority to investigate this claim which we consider misleading.

Jutta Kill,
SinksWatch

SinksWatch is an initiative to track and scrutinize carbon sink projects related to the Kyoto Protocol. The focus of *SinksWatch* will be on tree plantation sinks projects, particularly in areas where land tenure and land use rights are in dispute. The initiative, created by the World Rainforest Movement, is hosted by FERN.
