

CONSUMER BOYCOTTS

YOUR RIGHT
TO CHOOSE



LAMBETH'S
AGAINST
RACISM
- of course!

LOCAL AUTHORITY
ACTION
AGAINST
APARTHEID

YOUR RIGHT TO CHOOSE

When you buy goods, you look for price, quality, safety and whether they meet your needs.

But there are other things to think about.

You may want to know where they come from.

Consumers can choose to support or show disapproval of companies and countries. Sometimes industries or trade unions call for boycotts for goods made or sold by companies which are damaging British industries or acting against the interests of their employees.

The biggest of these boycott campaigns is the one which calls on consumers not to buy goods from South Africa.

SOUTH AFRICAN FOOD

Goods from South Africa are sold to many people who would not want to offer any support to the apartheid system. Many consumers who want to support the calls by black leaders in that country for a boycott of the products of apartheid still buy these goods without knowing they are doing so. 60,000 metric tonnes of South African oranges are sold in Britain every year, over 50,000 tonnes of apples and over 50,000 tonnes of other fresh fruit. These are sold under names like Cape and Outspan, which are only used for South African produce. But what are your rights to know where goods come from ?

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN MARKING

Most foods must be marked with their country of origin. It can be a criminal offence to sell goods without clearly showing where they come from. The best advice is to **look at the label**. This leaflet tells you what you have a legal right to know.

FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Under EEC regulations packaged fruit and vegetables must be labelled with their origin as well as their name, and quality or class. Goods sold loose should have the same information shown clearly on a card near the display. If they do not, consumers should complain to the retailer or to the nearest Consumer Advice Centre.

CANNED OR PACKAGED FOOD

Most canned or packaged foods are marked with their origin and all must be marked if the buyer is likely to be misled if they are not.

Familiar names like "Del Monte" and "Glenryck" canned goods are often from South Africa. "Armour Star" and "Union" canned meats too are often South African. Some other companies like John West and Sharwoods sell foods which are South African as well as many which are not.

Shops like Tesco and Sainsbury sell some South African goods under their "own brand" names and Boots ("Shapers") slimming foods include South African foods.



It is **always** best to look at the label. Leaflets are available in Consumer Advice Centres which tell you about some of the other things you can learn about foods from their labels, including what additives are in the food and what datemarks mean.

YOUR RIGHTS REDUCED

The Law has recently been changed to make it more difficult to tell what country goods come from.

Until January 1986, textiles and clothing, shoes and other footwear had to be marked with the country of origin. So did cutlery and domestic electrical appliances like washing machines, televisions, heaters and food mixers.

Now the government has removed the law which gave consumers the right to know where these goods come from. Lambeth Council opposed this change in the law, and argued that consumers should be able to choose for themselves what to buy and be given full information about all goods.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU WANT TO BOYCOTT SOUTH AFRICAN GOODS

So, if you want to boycott goods from South Africa you need to know which brand names to look for and to be careful when buying goods which are most likely to be from South Africa. These are textiles and clothes, including tights, socks and underwear. These goods, often made by Rex Trueform, are sold under names like "Pat Shrub" and "Miss Cassidy". Potted plants and flowers are now being imported from South Africa in larger numbers.

When buying these goods look at the label. If it doesn't say where they're from, ask in the shop. If they can't, or won't, tell you, the safest course of action is not to buy them.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE

You can choose whether you join in the anti-racist campaign against South African goods. But when you have decided, your choice depends on knowing what you are buying. Labelling gives you the information to carry out your decision **BUT ONLY IF YOU LOOK AT THE LABEL FIRST.**

TELL THE TRADER

Remember too that many retailers feel forced to sell goods sold by their competitors, so tell the shop why you are not buying particular goods. It may help the trader to decide it is not worth stocking them in the future.

HOW TO COMPLAIN

If you feel you have been misled or find foods mentioned in this leaflet which are not clearly marked, complain to your local Consumer Advice Centre. The responsibility to enforce most of the laws in this leaflet rests with the Directorate of Environmental Health and Consumer Services. You can help us to do this by telling us when there is cause for complaint.

LAMBETH

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Lambeth Council's Health and Consumer Services Committee has a responsibility to make sure consumers can choose goods and services on the basis of full and accurate information. Consumer boycott campaigns depend on information and when it is not available our rights are weakened. That is why we support an extension of the law to give fuller information about goods and services and oppose moves to restrict this right.

In South Africa black people are using their buying power against apartheid by boycotting the shops outside the townships where they have been made to live. Consumers in this country do not make enough use of their power to support just causes or to win a fair deal for themselves. I hope this leaflet will help people in Lambeth become more aware of how they can use this power and realise that in doing their daily or weekly shopping they can make a positive contribution to creating a fairer society in South Africa.

Alison Higgs

ALISON HIGGS
Chair of Health and Consumer Services Committee