



www.racetothetop.org

tracking supermarket progress towards a
fairer and greener food system

2003 company profile

ICELAND

1.1 Engagement with Race to the Top

ICELAND worked constructively with other project partners to develop and test the data collection methods used by the project. ICELAND participated in the pilot year (2002) and in that year submitted a full data set. The company did not supply data in 2003, and at the beginning of November sent a letter to RTTT explaining that it would not be participating in the project in 2003-4.

1.2 Company overview

ICELAND—now the Big Food Group—was founded by Malcolm Walker in 1970 and was floated in 1984. It has 760 Iceland stores as well as Booker grocery wholesale business (two thirds of group turnover) with which it merged in 2000, as well as Woodward Foodservice. ICELAND was the first national food store to ban GM products from own-label produce (in 1998), and went on to ban artificial colours and flavours. In June 2000, ICELAND bought up 40% of the world's organic vegetable crop to become an organic-only supermarket. This move into organics was followed by a slump in sales and the resignation of Walker under a cloud. The group has refocused on its core customers—C2DE families shopping in the high street. The company has recently delivered a long awaited turnaround. Profits in 2002-3 were £11.7 million on sales of £5 billion. Iceland have brought non-organic vegetables back into the stores and revisited stance on social issues. The ICELAND experience is often cited by other retailers as a cautionary tale in the business case for social and environmental responsibility.

1.3 2003 results: overview

No data were submitted.

A store shelf survey of local and locality foods stocked by retailers was conducted by Sustain and the NFWI. To find how Iceland performed in this survey, see [http://www.racetothetop.org/documents/results/Mod4_results_2003.pdf]

Comments from the BigFood Group plc:

No comments were provided.

