

<b>COMPLAINT NUMBER</b>	20/292
<b>ADVERTISER</b>	NZ Wood
<b>ADVERTISEMENT</b>	NZ Wood Television
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	3 August 2020
<b>OUTCOME</b>	No Grounds to Proceed

**Advertisement:** The voiceover for the television advertisement for NZ Wood said “The time to stop runaway global warming is running out. Fast growing trees are the most effective way, at this time, for us to fight climate change, they suck carbon from the atmosphere... And there’s more jobs, and income, if you grow trees, than farming sheep and beef”. The last shot of the advertisement shows the NZ Wood logo with the phrase “NZ Wood – For a better world”.

**The Chair ruled there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.**

There were six complaints about this advertisement:

**Complaint 1:** I believe this NZ Wood advert is untruthful and misleading in claiming that “there’s more jobs and income if you grow trees, than farming sheep and beef”. More jobs may be generated for the short time that trees are being planted but over the long term, this is not the case.

**Complaint 2:** Ad was about forestry and is misleading and factual wrong

**Complaint 3:** This 30 second advertisement makes bold claims that “There is more jobs and income if you grow trees than farming sheep and beef” B+LNZ have done an analysis before this ad aired that suggests that this claim is not accurate. The next comment states that “That’s why smart farmers are so bullish planting out trees and loving our forests” As Stuff.co.nz article headlines “Implies farmers are dumb if they don’t embrace forestry” I feel that this advertisement lacks a message and is more a “choose us not them kick back” after recent media coverage of research data and benefits of keeping New Zealand farmable land in farming not trees. I think that the wider aspect of this advertisement goes against your standard codes Rule 2 (B) and Rule 2 (H) Please Review.

**Complaint 4:** The NZ wood advertisement is misleading, insulting, bias and incorrect when referring to smart farmers, increased income from planting trees vs sheep and beef and quite frankly offensive to ordinary hard working farmers. Agriculture provides long term jobs vs one off planting and pruning and contributes much more to the wider community. Income from trees is a one off every 25yrs. Timber is nearly at an all time low with massive job losses country wide vs meat, both lamb and beef are coming off all time highs in the spring with prospects good for the coming one, while one of the only industries to come out of the lock-down virtually unscathed.

**Complaint 5:** This advertisement is full of inaccurate information with no research cited to back up the claims made. One of which, that forestry employs more staff than sheep and beef farms. This advertisement singles out one particular industry and claims that farmers are not smart if they don’t plant their farms in pine trees. Very disappointed an

advertisement like this is being shown on tv without any substantiated evidence to back up their claims.

**Complaint 6:** Such bold claims when research data and visual and environmental impacts suggests otherwise. False advertising. 14/07/2020 channel 1

**The relevant provisions were Advertising Standards Code - Principle 2, Rule 2(b), Rule 2(e), Rule 2(h);**

**Principle 2: Truthful Presentation:** Advertisements must be truthful, balanced and not misleading.

**Rule 2(b) Truthful Presentation:** Advertisements must not mislead or be likely to mislead, deceive or confuse consumers, abuse their trust or exploit their lack of knowledge. This includes by implication, inaccuracy, ambiguity, exaggeration, unrealistic claim, omission, false representation or otherwise. Obvious hyperbole identifiable as such is not considered to be misleading.

**Rule 2(e) Advocacy advertising:** Advocacy advertising must clearly state the identity and position of the advertiser. Opinion in support of the advertiser's position must be clearly distinguishable from factual information. Factual information must be able to be substantiated.

**Rule 2(h) Environmental Claims:** Environmental claims must be accurate and able to be substantiated by evidence that reflects scientific and technological developments.

**The Chair** noted the Complainants' concerns the advertisement was misleading.

The Chair said the advertisement is an advocacy advertisement because it expresses the views of NZ Wood, an organisation which focuses on promoting New Zealand forests and wood resources.

### **About Advocacy Advertising**

Complaints about advocacy advertising are considered differently to complaints about advertising for products and services.

In assessing whether an advocacy advertisement complies with the Advertising Standards Code, the freedom of expression provisions under the Bill of Rights Act 1990 must also be considered.

Section 14 of the Act says: "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and opinions of any kind in any form." This freedom of expression supports robust debate on current issues in a democracy.

Under Rule 2(e) Advocacy advertising of the Advertising Standards Code:

- The identity of the advertiser must be clear
- Opinion must be clearly distinguishable from factual information, and
- Factual information must be able to be substantiated.

If the identity and position of the Advertiser is clear, a more liberal interpretation of the Advertising Standards Code is allowed.

**About this complaint**

The Chair confirmed the Advertiser's identity and position on the issue was clear.

The Chair noted the advertisement was a modified version of a previous advertisement made by NZ Wood. In the previous version the voiceover for the advertisement said: "Fast growing forest trees are the only effective way, at this time, for us to fight climate change". The new version says: "Fast growing trees are the most effective way, at this time, for us to fight climate change". Also, the original version said "And for employment as well – there's more jobs, and income, in forests - than farming that same land" and this has been changed to "And there's more jobs, and income, if you grow trees, than farming sheep and beef".

A complaint about the previous advertisement, 19/294, was considered by the Complaints Board and was Not Upheld. A majority of the Complaints Board said the advertisement was not misleading, when considered in the context of an advocacy advertisement, made by an organisation representing forest owners. The Board said it was acceptable for NZ Wood to say fast growing trees are the only effective way for them to fight climate change, through sucking carbon from the atmosphere.

The Chair said this precedent decision was relevant to the complaints before her. The Chair said the advertisement was making environmental claims which, in the context of an advocacy advertisement, did not reach the threshold to be misleading.

The Chair noted that the comparison about the number of jobs generated by forestry as opposed to farming had been made more specific in the new version of the advertisement, by stating "farming sheep and beef" not "farming that same land". The Chair noted the Advertiser had provided substantiation to support this view when responding to Complaint 19/294.

The Chair said taking into account context, medium, audience and product the advertisement was not in breach of Principle 2, Rule 2(b), Rule 2(e) or Rule 2(h) of the Advertising Standards Code.

The Chair ruled there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.

**Chair's Ruling:** Complaint **No Grounds to Proceed**

**APPEAL INFORMATION**

According to the procedures of the Advertising Standards Complaints Board, all decisions are able to be appealed by any party to the complaint. Information on our Appeal process is on our website [www.asa.co.nz](http://www.asa.co.nz). Appeals must be made in writing via email or letter within 14 calendar days of receipt of this decision.