

# NARB Agrees Advertiser Can't Support Aspirational Net Zero Claims

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JBS - the second-largest food company in the world - made several aspirational claims about its commitment "to be net zero by 2040." Those claims were challenged by a trade association, who argued that the claims were misleading. As we [reported](#) in February, although NAD acknowledged that JBS had taken steps that "may be helpful towards achieving net-zero by 2040," NAD found that those steps weren't enough to support the implied claim that JBS was *currently* implementing a plan to "achieve net zero operational impact by 2040." JBS appealed the decision to the NARB.

In its appeal, JBS highlighted the steps it had already taken towards its goal, including that it had already spent millions of dollars, committed more than an additional billion, made efforts to define its emissions baseline, and set a near-term target date to submit a detailed roadmap to SBTi for its review. JBS argued that NAD was mistaken about what consumers expect when they see aspirational claims. Given that 2040 is 17 years in the future, JBS argued consumers would not expect the company to have made more progress toward its goal than it has documented as its progress to date.

The NARB panel agreed with NAD that "the challenged claims communicate that JBS is already in the process of implementing a documented plan that has been evaluated and found to have a reasonable expectation of achieving 'net zero' by the year 2040." Despite this, NARB determined that JBS hadn't actually formulated such a plan - instead, it was "in the exploratory stage of its effort." Moreover, given the complexities involved, the panel was also concerned "that JBS does not currently have sufficient scientific support to show that its goal is feasible."

JBS questioned whether consumers would really interpret its claims to mean, as NAD suggested, that JBS was currently implementing its plan and noted that its claims were actually part of a B2B campaign targeted at a more sophisticated audience. The panel dismissed these arguments. Even if the campaign was targeted to businesses, many claims appeared on websites that are readily available to consumers interested in supporting sustainability. Moreover, even a more sophisticated audience is "unlikely to understand the full complexity of the challenges inherent in JBS's net zero 2040 undertaking."

This decision suggests that companies face a high bar when making aspirational claims about their goals to achieve net zero in the future. Still, the decision leaves some room for companies that may not have made substantiation progress towards those goals. Like NAD, the NARB panel noted that JBS could still make "narrower truthful and not misleading claims regarding its efforts at researching potential methods for reducing emissions and any efforts it is undertaking to reduce emissions." The line between those permissible narrower claims and the broader ones may be hard to identify,

though.