

TINA.org's Complaint to the UK's Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)

Submitted on August 14, 2014

The text below was provided in the ASA's online complaint form at

<http://www.asa.org.uk/Consumers/How-to-complain/Online-Form/Step5.aspx>:

We would like to bring to your attention an important decision by Italy's Autorità Garante della Concorrenza e del Mercato (AGCM), an authority charged with protecting consumers from unfair commercial practices. The AGCM sanctioned Vemma Italia S.r.l. (Vemma) €100,000 for being a pyramid scheme in February 2014 and prohibited the company from spreading or continuing its unfair business practices in Italy. It is our understanding that Vemma has appealed this decision and is still operating in Italy. You can find a copy of the decision and a certified English translation of it on our website at <https://www.truthinadvertising.org/vemma-evidence/>.

Vemma also has operations in the United Kingdom under the name Vemma Europe, which is based out of Co. Kildare, Ireland. The company sells energy drinks, nutritional beverages, and weight management products through a multi-level marketing system throughout Europe, including in the United Kingdom. It is our understanding that the Vemma business is now becoming more popular in the UK among young adults. See "Students targeted by elixir 'pyramid scheme'" by Robin Henry, The Sunday Times, available at http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/article1442210.ece.

We thought it important to bring this matter to your attention because, as a practical matter, Vemma's U.K. compensation plan suffers from many of the same faults as the Italian compensation plan, which Italy's AGCM found to be a pyramid scheme.