



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

**Your ref:**  
**Our ref:** RFI 5709  
**Date:** 6 September 2013

Dear

## **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: COUNTER-FRAUD ACTIVITIES**

Thank you for your request for information about counter-fraud activities, which we received on 9 August 2013. As you know, we have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

We noted that you sent a similar request to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA), an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). This reply is on behalf of both organisations.

### *1. How many staff does Defra / the RPA employ solely dedicated to countering fraud?*

A literal answer in terms of staff solely employed to counter-fraud would be none in relation to Defra and 2.5 officers in relation to the RPA. However, many individuals undertake jobs providing components of our control framework which includes actions to prevent or detect fraud and error. It is not possible to put a figure to this.

In addition, across our varied delivery landscape, which includes Defra, the RPA, and other arms length bodies, we do have an investigation function which consists of 23 full time equivalent staff. The function of this service is to investigate breaches of regulations for which the Department has policy responsibility. Our regulatory framework is very wide and includes protection of the natural environment, animal health and welfare, food standards and safety and the administration of various regulations prescribed by the Common Agricultural Policy. In some circumstances these breaches can arise from fraudulent intent but this is not the primary focus of the investigation and we do not differentiate between fraudulent and non-fraudulent breaches in our record keeping. Most of these breaches do not involve a cost to the UK exchequer. Given the expertise of this



function, it might also be used to investigate other allegations of fraud or to advise on the involvement of the Police.

*2. If it is possible, could these be broken down by job role i.e. investigator, intelligence, crime analyst, financial investigator etc?*

The Defra Investigation Service (DIS) mentioned above is made up of: 1 x Head of Unit, 2 x Senior Investigation Officers, 11 x Investigation Officers, 3 x Trainee Investigators, 1 x Intelligence Manager, 1 x Intelligence Officer and 4 x support staff.

Two of the above are accredited Financial Investigators and one is an IT Forensics Investigator.

*3. How many fraud criminal prosecutions have been pursued by your organisation in each of the last three years?*

The answer to this question needs to be read in the context of the answers to questions one and four; the Department undertakes most of its prosecutions in relation to infringements of those regulations.

Within the last three years our records indicate that there have only been two prosecutions, one each in respect of Defra and RPA, specifically in relation to fraud.

*4. How many other sanctions by type has your organisation pursued for fraud in each of the last three years?*

Where regulatory infringements have been found then this may lead to some form of sanction being applied. We do not have centralised records to show what action has been taken across the wide range of regulatory responsibilities covered.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA , and in keeping with the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

I attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

I also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

**Helen Morris**

**Defra Group Chief Internal Auditor**

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## **Annex A**

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## **Annex B**

### **Complaints**

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: [requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk)) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF