



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

T:
helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.defra.gov.uk

Your ref:
Our ref: RF6297
Date: 13 March 2014

Dear

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: DETAILS OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S
MEETING WITH BASF IN JANUARY 2014**

Thank you for your request for information about the agenda, minutes, meeting papers, attendees, outcomes and all communications regarding the meeting between the Secretary of State Owen Paterson and BASF in January. We received this on 13 February 2014. As you know, we are handling your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

Following careful consideration, we have decided not to disclose some of this information.

I enclose a copy of the information which can be disclosed, which the letter from the Secretary of State is proposing a meeting with BASF.

The remainder of the information requested is being withheld as it falls under the exception in regulation 12 (4)(e) of the EIRs, which relates to the disclosure of internal communications, which is relevant because the withheld information comprises notes circulated within Defra about objectives and outcomes for the meeting.

In applying this exception we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure. We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosure of information concerning GMOs, the companies developing them and how the Government is approaching this issue. We also appreciate that openness can increase public trust in, and engagement with, the Government, and that the ultimate aim of the EIRs is to increase environmental protection by ensuring greater access to relevant information.

On the other hand, there is a strong public interest in withholding the information, which comprises internal communications recording discussions on sensitive policy issues.



Disclosing these particular documents would undermine Defra's ability to engage effectively with stakeholders, and our ability to make and implement policy effectively. Departments need space to conduct some matters in private, and that is the case here.

Therefore, we have concluded that, in all the circumstances of the case, the information should be withheld.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIRs, 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 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

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) 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