



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

Our ref: RF16004
Date: 3 December 2013

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: EIR Request: Radioactive Pollution from Fukushima Nuclear Reactor Emergency – Impact on UK Food, Sea and Air.

Thank you for your email of 12 November 2013 requesting information on the Radioactive Pollution from the Fukushima Nuclear Reactor emergency. We have tried to obtain as much information concerning your request and have answered each of your queries below.

1. *Has the department acknowledged that the Fukushima nuclear disaster may pose a serious threat to the quality of water and air in the UK?*

During the emergency in 2011 Defra was involved with a number of other agencies and departments in monitoring the levels of radiation, particularly Iodine 131 and Caesium 137, in the air at ground level in the UK. Extremely low levels of radioactivity were detectable in the UK but these quickly declined in a matter of weeks. They are no longer detectable in the UK. Public Health England considered at the time that there was no health risk to people living in the UK from the release of radioactive material from the Japanese nuclear power plant. Further information is available at:

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/Radiation/UnderstandingRadiation/UnderstandingRadiationTopics/RadiationIncidents/JapaneseNuclearIncident/>

There has been many press articles, documentaries and investigations into the radioactive water that has been leaking from the Fukushima reactor into the Pacific Ocean and the subsequent pollutant effect on air and water.

The Public Health England (PHE) (formerly known as Health Protection Agency) comprised a report 'HPA-CRCE-041 – Environmental Radioactivity Surveillance Programme: Results for 2011 including Monitoring following the Fukushima Dai-ichi Accident in Japan' which can be found at:

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/Publications/Radiation/CRCEScientificAndTechnicalReportSeries/HPACRCE041/>

The report is the latest of a series in which the results of the Health Protection Agency's Environmental Radioactivity Surveillance Programme are presented. It contains the measurement data for the year 2011.



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

2. Has the department taken any steps to assess the threat of radioactive pollution to the UK from the Fukushima nuclear disaster?

Other than the initial assessment undertaken with other government departments and agencies, Defra has not taken any further steps to assess the threat of radioactive pollution to the UK from the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

3. Has the department undertaken any scientific analysis in respect of measuring levels of radioactive isotopes, particular Caesium 137, in the sea and air affecting the UK?

The Defra Executive Agency, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) produces a survey report of radioactivity on food and the environment each year. These reports have been sponsored in the past by the Environment Agency, the Environment and Heritage Service (Northern Ireland), the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. They cover the whole of the UK and surrounding seas.

The UK government response to the incident in 2011 is discussed in the Radioactivity in Food and the Environment (RIFE) report, which includes data on concentrations of radionuclides in: food, sediments, soils, air, water and plants, plus radiation dose rates over various substrates. Further information is available in the 2011 RIFE report (pages 200-204) at: [http://www.cefas.defra.gov.uk/publications-and-data/scientific-series/radioactivity-in-food-and-the-environment-\(rife\).aspx](http://www.cefas.defra.gov.uk/publications-and-data/scientific-series/radioactivity-in-food-and-the-environment-(rife).aspx)

4. Has the department undertaken any scientific analysis in respect of analysing and assessing the impact of the Fukushima disaster on the food chain in the UK?

The information within the RIFE report also discusses impacts on the food chain and the assessments undertaken by government. Defra has not conducted any work in addition to this.

A number of UK government departments and agencies including CEFAS and the FSA have been in regular contact with the Japanese Government and will continue to share information and experience gained from their routine radiological monitoring programmes and research. CEFAS together with other government agencies are engaged in radiological monitoring and research programmes on an ongoing basis publishing these findings on the internet.

5. Has the department worked or interacted with any other government or non-government departments in assessing the effect on the UK from the Fukushima nuclear disaster?

During the emergency, Defra worked within the government emergency processes, including the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), to assess the potential impacts on the UK. During separate discussions on the air sampling in the UK, Defra worked closely with the Health Protection Agency (now Public Health England); Food Standards Agency, Environment Agency, CEFAS, Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI), DECC, Government Office for Science, Met Office and the Radiation Incident Monitoring Network (RIMNET).

6. Has the department taken any steps to assess the possible risk of increased radiation levels in tuna coming into the UK and entering the food chain?

Defra is not responsible for food safety risks. This lies with the Food Standards Agency.

With regard to the safety of tuna, the Food Standards Agency advises that regulations remain in place restricting the import of food from Japan. Under these regulations, certain foods, including fish and seafood, from specified prefectures (regions) of Japan must have certificates confirming that they have been tested and that levels of radioactivity are below the legal limits set in Japan. As a precautionary measure, this requirement covers all food and feed from Fukushima Prefecture and a list of foods specified in the regulations for a further 14 prefectures.

www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/imports/banned_restricted/japan

Extensive testing continues to show no evidence for harmful levels of radioactivity in fish and seafood from the Pacific Ocean beyond the coastal waters of the affected prefectures of Japan.

Finally, in relation to the effects of the radioactivity from Fukushima on fish stocks (as opposed to the effects on humans from consumption of fish), scientific studies suggest that tuna would be unlikely to be affected when considered against the effects of the background sources of natural radioactivity

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/content/2943>

I hope this information is helpful to you, should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area of the letter.

Annex A - Copyright

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including any non-commercial research you are doing and for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder. Most documents supplied by Defra will have been produced by government officials and will be Crown Copyright. You can find details on the arrangements for re-using Crown copyright on OPSI (Office of Public Sector Information) at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/click-use/index.htm>

Information you receive which is not subject to Crown Copyright continues to be protected by the copyright of the person, or organisation, from which the information originated. You must ensure that you gain their permission before reproducing any third party (non Crown Copyright) information.

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 within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Brendan Walsh, Head of Defra's Information Rights Team at, Area1B Ergon House, Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AL, (email: informationrights@defra.gsi.gov.uk) who will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure can be found at: www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/policy/opengov/complain/info.htm

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have 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