



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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www.gov.uk/defra

**Your ref:**

**Our ref:** RFI 6969, 6981 6991

**Date:** 18 December 2014

Dear

### **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: ON GOVERNMENT BUYING STANDARDS**

Thank you for your requests for information, which we received on 23 and 24 October and 2 November, about Government Buying Standards, particularly the ethical standards therein. As you know, we have handled your requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

We have taken each of your requests in turn, as follows:

#### GBS for ICT equipment 2010

**1. When are these standards due to be revised?**

Defra has no recorded plans on this matter. It may however interest you to know that we are currently reviewing all our buying standards to see if any have become out of date, and what changes may be necessary. In addition, you may wish to note that the most recent Energy Star requirement which came into force in 2013 now applies. By relying on Energy Star in respect of energy efficiency the standards are automatically updated in that respect.

**2. Were/are any NGOs consulted for this product category? If so, which ones, and which other organisations?**

A process was undertaken in around 2010 to revise these standards to reflect the new version of Energy Star. From information available from a stakeholder list dated 2011, we think that the following organisations may well have been part of the stakeholder review process for the earlier ICT update. We do not hold definitive information on this point.

<b>Organisation</b>
Acer
Apple
BIS (WEEE Advisory Board)
Bradford University (involved with HEEPI)
Brother
Canon
Cap Gemini
Computacenter
Dell
Digital Europe
ECOS



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IN PEOPLE**

Epson
EST
Forum for the Future
Fujitsu
Greenpeace
HEEPI
HP
IBM
Intellect
Kyocera
Lexmark
LG Improvement and Development
Ncomputing
Oce
Probrand
RDC
Ricoh
Sharp
Sony
Toshiba
UKCEED
VeryPC
Waste Watch
WRAP
WWF
Xerox

#### GBS for textiles 2010

**1. When are these standards due to be revised?**

We do not have an agreed schedule for revising this standard, and so this information is not held by Defra.

**2. Were/are any NGOs consulted for this product category? If so, which ones, and which other organisations?**

Stakeholders were invited to comment on a draft GBS, including NGOs, procurement staff, policy leads in Government, and representatives from industry. NGOs were invited to comment, via the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan steering group, on the update to the GBS. They included the Better Cotton Initiative and the Salvation Army. See:

<http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/sustainable-clothing-action-plan-1>

Fairtrade Foundation responded with comments.

#### The GBS for textiles (2010)

**1. Does DEFRA have information on public organisations that used ethical award criteria for textiles? Or ethical contract performance conditions? If so can examples be provided?**

Defra does not hold information in this respect.

2. **Did DEFRA provide any further guidance on ethical award criteria or contract performance conditions to government departments? If so can I get a copy?**

No further guidance was provided, and so this information is not held by Defra. You may wish to note that Defra commissioned a report on social and ethical criteria which was published earlier this year. See:

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=19143&FromSearch=Y&Status=3&Publisher=1&SearchText=ethical&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10#Description>

#### Spending on textiles/clothing

**2010's impact assessment for textiles recorded public spending on textiles as totalling £1,1 billion in 2008, (66% by central government and 34% by local government). Are there more/updated details on this, specifically:**

This information is not held by Defra.

3. **Which departments spent what – especially the biggest spending departments. MOD. NHS organisations, councils as a whole etc. Annual figures if possible, for any convenient 12 months.**

This information is not held by Defra.

4. **What main products they purchased: eg, clothing or non-clothing textiles.**

Clothing is the main product purchased by central Government Departments.

#### Reports on country of origin

5. **Does DEFRA, or departments, keep records on which countries textiles/garments are sourced from? If so can some details be provided?**

Defra does not hold records on which countries textiles/garments are sourced from. It sources very little by way of textiles itself. From discussions at meetings with other departments, Defra believes that some Departments do have such records, but it does not hold information about this.

#### Reports on working conditions

**GBS for textiles state that bidders should provide information to illustrate that their suppliers should be independently audited. Some accreditation schemes are mentioned. Others aren't.**

6. **Is there any information on auditing schemes contractors have used? Their standards? Or their methods of interviewing workers? (They vary)**

Defra does not hold this information.

7. **The aim was to 'demonstrate how contractors are addressing 'living' wage provision...avoidance of child labour.' (By definition 'living' wage rates are significantly higher than legal minimums, and factory auditing schemes only check compliance with local legal minimums where they exist).**

- a. **Does DEFRA have any information on wage rates actually paid in developing country factories, and applicable legal minimums?**

No

- b. **Working hours?**

No

- c. **Details of non-compliances found or remediation measures?**

No



**8. Does DEFRA include ethical award criteria or contract performance conditions in GBS for other product categories? If not, does it plan to?**

The food GBS includes a criterion on fair trade tea and coffee for inclusion in technical specifications / contract performance conditions. The balanced scorecard (an evaluation matrix) also includes social and ethical criteria including ILO standards and the Dairy Code of Practice, on fair contract terms, for the evaluation stage. See:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/food-buying-standards-for-the-public-sector-the-plan-toolkit>.

Social criteria are part of the definition of legal and sustainable timber under the UK government's Timber Procurement Policy (TPP). See:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/timber-procurement-policy-tpp-guidance-and-support>

The TPP is encompassed within the relevant Government Buying Standards as well as applying in its own right. Defra does not hold information as to future plans.

**9. Does DEFRA liaise with Value Wales, Scotland Excel, or the Scottish Procurement Service about ethical issues or drawing up Government Buying standards?**

This information is not held by Defra. You should note that Defra is in touch with the devolved administrations on the subject of Government Buying Standards in general. Ethical issues have not recently been discussed.

DEFRA's involvement in the UK's transposition of the new European Procurement Directives by the Cabinet Office

**1. Has DEFRA been consulted by the Cabinet Office about 'ethical' policies? (Or environmental factors, commonly the focus of sustainable procurement policies?)**

Defra received formal consultation documents about transposition of the new Directives, but not specifically about these policies. Defra flagged up to Cabinet Office (CO) the report on social and ethical criteria which was published earlier this year (see web link above).

**2. Did DEFRA submit any proposals to the Cabinet Office about promoting the use of ethical contract performance conditions or award criteria in public sector contracts? If so, can I get a copy, or a summary of main elements?**

Defra has not submitted formal proposals and so this information is not held by Defra. However, it has given CO the report referred to above.

**3. Did DEFRA consult DfID about ethical issues concerning the transposition? If so, can I get a copy of DfID/joint proposals?**

DEFRA has not consulted DfID about transposition and so this information is not held by Defra.

**4. Are there any plans for DEFRA (with or without DfID input) to make proposals to the Cabinet Office in future about UK regulation's promotion of ethical procurement policies? If so, are there any details about timescales or proposed regulations or strategies?**

Defra does not hold information as to future plans. You may wish to note that CO rather than DEFRA lead on procurement policy, as opposed to taking into account environmental considerations.

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 the address below.

Yours sincerely,

**Defra FOIA and EIRs Team**

[InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Annex A**

### **Copyright**

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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