



Customer Service Action Plan
2005/07



THE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE & FOOD
AN ROINN TALMHAÍOCHTA AGUS BIA

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Foreword by the Minister

I am pleased to publish the Department's Customer Service Action Plan and Charter as it demonstrates a strong and continuing commitment to the improvement of the standard of service provided to all of its customers. This commitment follows on from previous plans produced under the Government's Quality Customer Service Initiative adopted in July 2000 in setting goals to be achieved in customer service and demonstrates how it will give practical effect to improvements for all its customers. The introduction for the first time of a Customer Service Charter is a particularly significant development in that it sets out the specifics of the level of services that can be expected from the Department.

The action points set out in the plan demonstrate the way in which a fair, efficient and courteous service will be provided and enhanced where possible. I note that the plan contains specific delivery targets for many sectors. Through the use of a dedicated Quality Customer Service Unit, the Department will continue to monitor and improve service delivery. Customer feedback focus groups of individual customers and representative bodies, together with the Monitoring Committee on the Protocol for Direct Payments to Farmers and the Consumer Liaison Panel will be used to ensure meaningful dialogue.

Progress under the Government's Principles of Quality Customer Service will be monitored over the three years of this plan and I feel that consultation with all the parties in the agri-food sector will result in further efficiencies in the delivery of services to the industry and rural society. I would also like to assure the staff of the Department in this period of change that, as valued internal customers of the Department, they will be properly supported and consulted in relation to service delivery issues.

I look forward and am committed to maintaining the traditional high standard of service to all those involved in Agriculture.

Mary Coughlan



John Browne
Minister of State



Brendan Smith
Minister of State



Introduction by the Secretary General

This is the third Customer Service Action Plan produced by the Department under the terms of the Government's Quality Customer Service Initiative of 1998 and covers the period 2005-2007. The successive plans have set out the standard of excellence for service delivery to all of the Department's customers, together with the means by which these standards are to be achieved and the timescales agreed as appropriate.

The publication of the Customer Service Charter marks a further significant development in the continuous improvement of services to our customers. It outlines the detail of the standard of service to be provided over the three year period covered by the plan.

It is acknowledged that the principles of Quality Customer Service are essential to all activities throughout the Department. There is a strong commitment to those principles in our Statement of Strategy which sets the goals for the Department. QCS is included in Divisional Business Plans produced annually under the terms of the Department's Statement of Strategy. The Consumer Liaison Panel and Regional Customer Panels continue to monitor the services provided with a view to their possible improvement.

Our staff will continue to be made aware of Quality Customer Service principles which are embedded in their dealings with all customers. They themselves, while providing service, are recognised as internal customers of the Department and will be fully supported and consulted in relation to delivery of the service they provide. Their monitoring and improvement of the service they provide form an essential element of our plan.

This Action Plan commits us to the delivery of the highest standards. We are confident that with the co-operation of staff and customers of the Department the ambitious targets set can be achieved.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Moran". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tom Moran

Role of the Department of Agriculture and Food

Statement of Strategy

The published Statement of Strategy 2003-2005 outlines the mission and values of the Department together with implementing goals and strategies.

Our Mission is

To lead the sustainable development of a competitive, consumer focused agri-food sector and to contribute to a vibrant rural economy and society.

In pursuing this Mission we seek to:

- Ensure the highest standards of food safety, consumer protection, animal health and welfare and plant health
- Maximise the contribution of the agriculture, forestry and food sectors to national economic and social development
- Contribute to broad based action by public agencies and others in support of a sustainable rural economy
- Promote environmentally friendly and sustainable systems of agriculture, forestry and food production to protect and enhance the natural environment
- Provide a quality service to all our customers, both internal and external, in a context of partnership and openness
- Achieve the highest possible standards of corporate governance and accountability
- Develop and implement a range of actions to support our mission

Values

In fulfilling this Mission we subscribe to core public sector values, as follows:

- Behaving ethically, fairly and impartially and respecting equality
- Being diligent, rigorous and thorough
- Operating to the highest standards of efficiency and accountability
- Being open and accountable and recognising that we serve the people of this country
- Promoting partnership through consultation with, and respect for, our staff and all our customers
- Continually assessing our resources, systems and structures to ensure best practice

The Statement of Strategy contains a strong commitment to the implementation of Quality Customer Service (QCS) principles. One of the key goals is to:

Develop our human and physical resources and our operational capabilities and ensure the delivery of quality service to our customers, both internal and external.

Business Plans

In the preparation of the Department's 65 Divisional Business Plans, particular attention is focused on the issue of Quality Customer Service. Targets as published in the Protocol on Direct Payments to Farmers and in this Plan are included as performance indicators in the business plans. This ensures that staff at all levels throughout the organisation have an awareness of QCS and are continually working towards the delivery of a high quality service by meeting these targets.

Structure and Staffing

There are over 4,580 staff members working in the Department, 75% of whom are working outside of Dublin in locations at regional, county and local levels.

In 2001 a new structure was put in place within the Department to enhance organisational flexibility and competence, and has resulted in the separation of policy from operations in some areas, and the alignment of functions to reporting arrangements.

Structural improvements have also been brought about in the establishment of new work areas and in the strengthening of other areas. This new structure consists of 4 Groups:

- Policy
- Food Safety and Production
- Agriculture Payments
- Corporate Development

These are comprised of 11 units, each headed by a member of the Management Advisory Committee. This structure facilitates co-ordination of related work areas, which is important as many issues that arise cut across the various functional areas and require Department wide co-ordination.

In turn there are 65 Divisions each led by a Head of Division, i.e. Principal Officer, Senior Inspector, Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector, Senior Superintending Research Officer, Head of Legal Unit or Director of Internal Audit.

It should also be noted that there are 85 different grades within the Department, which is an indication of the range of activities that come within our remit, and of the diversity of skills available.

Further Planned Decentralisation

As part of the Government's decentralisation initiative, this Department has drawn up a Decentralisation Implementation Plan, which provides for the preparation of a specific training plan for those coming into the Department as a result of Decentralisation. The Department will ensure, in whatever arrangements are made for the hand-over of work and responsibilities from existing to new staff, that the credibility of the Department is maintained with its customers throughout.

Customers

The Department's customers are many and varied. Externally they range from farmers, those involved in forestry and the agri-food industry to consumers, special interest groups, and non-farm rural dwellers and include other Government Departments and EU Institutions. Some of these are very well represented by the agri-food industry and other organisations, which participate in on-going negotiations and consultations with the Department within the framework of the Partnership Programme 'Sustaining Progress'.

Others, such as consumers, are represented on our Consumer Liaison Panel, and generally, customers are regularly consulted through surveys, customer panels and the use of Customer Comment Cards.

In keeping with the spirit of the QCS principle of the Internal Customer, the Department recognises that staff members must be provided with the best possible support, including quality office accommodation, facilities, and Information Communications Technology (ICT) systems, timely information, advice and training services, in order to enable them to deliver an excellent service to our external customers. Procedures will continue to be developed to ensure that staff are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.



We are committed to promoting a service that is accessible and relevant to all our customers and that accommodates the needs of particular groups of customers under the equality legislation.

Services

The services provided by the Department include direct income payments to farmers, market support measures and the promotion of animal health and welfare, crop production, rural development and food safety. A list of our main schemes and services is contained in a booklet entitled 'Schemes and Services' which is available free of charge from all our public offices.

State Bodies

The State Bodies operating under the aegis of the Department are:

- An Bord Bia
- National Milk Agency
- The Irish National Stud Co. Ltd.
- Teagasc
- Coillte Teoranta
- COFORD

The functions and contact details for these bodies are set out in Appendix II.

Department of Agriculture and Food Customer Charter

We are committed to providing our customers with the most timely, efficient and courteous service possible. Our actions are guided by the Quality Customer Service Principles set by Government in July 2000.

In that context, we will seek to:

- Provide comprehensive information in a user-friendly format on all of our schemes and services and offer every possible assistance to customers to understand and comply with the relevant terms and conditions
- Consult with our customers on a regular basis on how, when and where those schemes and services are delivered
- Set real and achievable targets for service delivery which will meet the expectations of our customers
- Monitor performance against the achievement of those targets
- Ensure the maintenance of Appeals procedures
- Ensure the maintenance of Complaints procedures

We undertake to treat our customers equally and seek to accommodate diversity.

We intend to continue our policy of improving our office facilities to provide, where possible, high-quality physical access in keeping with the requirements of people with special needs.

We will be proactive in our efforts to ensure that those expressing a wish to be dealt with through Irish are also afforded the same quality of service.

In this Charter, we set out the following:

- The quality of service we seek to provide by telephone, through written correspondence, from our Public Offices and in processing applications for schemes and services

- The opening hours of our offices
- Sources of information about the work of the Department
- What you can find on our website
- How to access records under Freedom of Information Acts
- Developments in Information Technology
- Your role in ensuring the quality of our service
- Our Customer Complaints Procedure (including contact details for our Quality Service Unit) and information on the Agriculture Appeals Office, the Forest Service Appeals Unit and the Ombudsman
- Consultation and Evaluation of our performance

The Quality of Service we will aim to Provide

Telephone

- LoCall numbers available where appropriate
- Name and telephone number of official concerned
- A courteous and helpful attitude
- Correct information
- A timely response
- If the enquiry cannot be answered immediately, your details will be taken and you will be called back as soon as possible
- Messages left on voicemail facilities will be dealt with promptly and, where required, calls returned

Correspondence (including emails)

- A reply to general correspondence within twenty working days, where possible
- Where this is not possible, an acknowledgement containing the contact details of the person dealing with your correspondence will be issued
- Where appropriate, information outlining our Customer Complaints and Appeals Procedures
- Contact details for the staff member handling your correspondence – full name, location, phone number and email address – in letters and emails
- Clear, concise and user-friendly language



In Our Public Offices

- Appropriate Signage
- Clean, safe and accessible facilities
- Minimum queues where possible
- Enquiries dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible
- Your privacy respected and, where required, separate facilities made available to allow business to be conducted confidentially

In Processing Scheme Applications/Claims

- Applications dealt with consistently and impartially in accordance with the relevant scheme's Terms and Conditions
- Decisions and payments, as far as possible, made within the agreed deadlines
- Where appropriate, information drawing attention to time limits or conditions which might result in disqualification or a penalty if not observed, to accompany application forms
- Information provided on the appeal procedures available if your application is unsuccessful or a penalty is applied

Opening Hours

All Department Local Offices provide a service to customers during the hours of 9.30a.m. to 12.30p.m. and 2.00p.m. to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday. The possibility of greater flexibility in the opening hours of our local offices (e.g. lunchtimes, evenings during periods of peak demand) will be examined as appropriate, in the context of the changing circumstances of our customers.

Information Sources

Publications giving comprehensive details of all our main Schemes and Services and the structure and operation of the Department are available from a number of sources:

- from Corporate Affairs Division, Department of Agriculture and Food, Kildare Street, Dublin 2. Telephone: 01 607 2802.
- by email from publications@agriculture.gov.ie
- from our website www.agriculture.gov.ie
- our public offices



These include Schemes and Services, Statement of Strategy, Customer Service Action Plan, Annual Report, Annual Review and Outlook, Compendium of Irish Agricultural Statistics, Annual Fact Sheet on Irish Agriculture and a range of information booklets/leaflets on a variety of issues such as the CAP, Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health, Tillage and Horticulture and Forestry Guidelines.

You can find detailed information on page 452 of the Aertel Teletext service on RTÉ Network 2 about developments in agriculture, consumer protection, and information on closing dates for various schemes.

We will continue to place regular advertisements in both local and national press informing you of significant developments in our Schemes and Services.

We will also organise further public information meetings on major changes in policy and/or operations where appropriate.

Our Website www.agriculture.gov.ie

Our website includes all recent Ministerial Speeches and Press Releases on agriculture related subjects of public interest. There is extensive information on Agricultural Production, Food Safety, the Agri-Food industry, Animal Health and Welfare, Agri-Payments, the Environment and the Forest Service easily accessible from the home page.

You can also find out about many specialist agriculture-related subjects on the site and access a wide range of general services, including those offered by Government Departments generally, State Bodies and other relevant organisations by using the links provided.

Users can register for the Departments existing and future electronic services such as iMAP, Animal Health Computer System, Herd Profile, Calf Births Registration etc. by selecting the services button on the Homepage of the Department's website.



Users can also register for topics they are interested in, and they will receive updates by email and/or short messaging service (SMS) when information pertaining to their chosen subjects is published on the website.

www.agriculture.gov.ie/register.jsp

Freedom of Information

When you require access to records held by the Department, we will make as much as we can readily available to you. Where this is not possible, you can apply for access to certain records under the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003. If you wish to do so, you should contact our FOI Unit for advice and guidance on the application procedures:

Freedom of Information Unit
Department of Agriculture and Food
Agriculture House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 607 2952

Email: **FreedomOfInformation@agriculture.gov.ie**

Information Technology

Enhanced technological facilities are being continually developed and introduced to deliver a faster and better service. These include systems for:

- Animal identification and traceability
- Animal Health Controls
- Calf Registration System
- Herd Profiling
- Payments and Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)
- Enhanced accounting – assists payments and EFT
- Online access to iMAP land parcelling
- Short Messaging Services (SMS) text alerts

Role of the Customer in Ensuring Quality Service

You can help us to provide you with a Quality Service by following these simple guidelines:

- Quote reference numbers, where available, in all correspondence and communications with the Department
- Date all written correspondence
- Become fully familiar with the terms and conditions of schemes before filling out applications
- Complete forms carefully and legibly
- Provide accurate and clear information
- Submit all necessary supporting documentation
- Check that applications are fully complete and signed
- Submit applications in sufficient time before closing date
- Obtain proof of posting
- Ensure correspondence is sent to the correct address
- Inform us of any changes in circumstances which may have a bearing on our decision
- Respond quickly to any queries raised or with any additional information requested in support of applications

Please treat our staff with the same level of courtesy you expect from us.

Complaints Procedures – Formal and Informal

At all times, we try to provide an excellent service to our customers. However, if you have a problem with the quality of service you have received, you may contact our Quality Service Unit on an informal basis, where you will be guaranteed a confidential and prompt response.

You can also avail of our formal complaints procedure. A brochure setting out the process is available at all our public offices, from our website **www.agriculture.gov.ie/complaintsbrochure** or by contacting us at:

Quality Service Unit
Department of Agriculture and Food
Agriculture House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 607 2694

LoCall: 1890 200 510 Ext. 2694

Email: **QualityServiceUnit@agriculture.gov.ie**

All complaints will be dealt with in an objective and impartial manner. If we make a mistake or fail to deliver a quality service we will seek to rectify the situation as quickly as possible. We will also give an explanation and, where appropriate, an apology.

Making a complaint will not in any way adversely affect how you will be treated by the Department in the future.

Agriculture Appeals

We will fully support the Agriculture Appeals Office in the provision of an independent, accessible, fair and timely service which enables you to appeal the decisions of this Department in respect of certain schemes which are listed in the Schedule to the Agriculture Appeals Act 2001, as amended.

Appeals should be addressed to:

Agriculture Appeals Office
Kilminchy Court
Portlaoise
Co. Laois

Tel: 0502 67167

LoCall: 1890 671671

Fax: 0502 67177

Email: appeals.office@agriculture.gov.ie

Web: www.agriappeals.gov.ie

Forestry Appeals

We will continue to provide an appeals procedure for customers of the Forest Service which ensures that decisions taken in relation to entitlements under Forestry grant and premium schemes can be appealed.

Application should be made in writing, setting out the grounds of appeal to:

The Appeals Unit
Forest Service
Department of Agriculture and Food
Johnstown Castle Estate
Co. Wexford

LoCall: 1890 200 223

Fax: 053 43834

The Ombudsman

Our Customer Complaints Procedure and the Agriculture and Forestry Appeals Systems are in addition to your statutory right to make a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman. However, the Ombudsman will usually expect the customer to have first made a complaint to the Department and to have tried to resolve the matter directly in this manner.

The Ombudsman operates completely independently of the Government and provides a fair, impartial and confidential service free of charge. You can contact the Ombudsman at:

Office of the Ombudsman
18 Lower Leeson Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 639 5600

LoCall: 1890 22 30 30

Fax: 01 639 5674

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.ie

Web: www.ombudsman.ie

Consultation and Evaluation

We will consult with our customers on a regular basis and will evaluate our performance against this Charter and our Customer Service Action Plan by:

- Monitoring our performance against the commitments set out in both documents
- Reviewing complaints lodged with the Quality Service Unit
- Providing Comment Cards at our Local Offices
- Organising regional Focus Groups
- Carrying out surveys as appropriate

A combination of these measures will be undertaken each year and the results will be published in our Annual Report and on our website.

Department of Agriculture and Food
Agriculture House
Kildare St
Dublin 2

Tel: **01 607 2000**

Web: www.agriculture.gov.ie

Customer Service Action Plan 2005-2007

The Principles of Quality Customer Service

The principles of Quality Customer Service as set by Government cover a wide range of topics from Equality and Diversity to better co-ordination between Government Departments. This section sets out how we as a Department plan to implement each principle, and further builds on commitments given in our previous Customer Service Action Plans and our Customer Charter.

Quality Service Standards

Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which customers can expect, and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

The Department has published, and is committed to the implementation of a Customer Charter which sets out clearly the level and quality of service which the public can expect in their dealings with the Department. For convenience, the Charter is also set out on pages 6-9 of this publication.

Action Points

- Promote and create awareness of our Customer Charter in our public offices
- Monitor the implementation of standards set out in the Charter and report each year on these standards in the Department's Annual Report
- Have an adequate supply of copies of Customer Charter and Customer Service Action Plan 2005-2007 freely available in our public offices
- Ensure staff bring our commitment to QCS and our publications to the attention of customers



Equality/Diversity

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community).

Identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

The Department has always sought to deal equally with all customers, taking account of diversity as appropriate. We will continue to do so, with particular reference to this principle. We will seek to identify, through the consultative process, barriers to customers trying to avail of our services and take action to eliminate these.

The Human Resource Strategy for the Department re-affirms our commitment to the internal customer: It has as a key goal the application of equality to all aspects of the work of the Department.

Action Points

- Treat customers equally and work towards eliminating barriers, as and when they are identified
- Advise our customers that information on Equality/Diversity matters is readily available on the website of the Equality Authority: **www.equality.ie**
- Proactively implement our Human Resource Strategy with particular regard to the Equality/Diversity commitments

Physical Access

Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure appropriate signage, privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.



The Department's public offices are listed with full address and telephone details in Appendix III.

The Department has a proactive policy on Health and Safety. Our goal is to have a safe, accident free workplace for staff and customers.

Action Points

- Consult with customers regarding their needs
- Conduct ongoing inspections of offices to ensure ease of physical access
- Continue to provide Health and Safety training to staff as required by legislation

Information

Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication.

Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

The Department is committed to providing information to our customers that is clear, accurate and timely. Public Information meetings will continue to be held, as appropriate, to keep customers updated in relation to new schemes or major changes to existing schemes administered by the Department. Forms, guidelines, help sheets and information leaflets will be reviewed regularly with a view to keeping them simple, clear, easy to complete and as user-friendly as possible.

Action Points

- Review significant Department publications to ensure relevance and accuracy
- Make current versions of these publications available in our public offices, on request, and on our website
- Continue to produce such documents in the formats required by people with special needs, as and when requested
- Effectively disseminate the information to our customers through the efficient and widespread use of modern communication channels including teletext, media, website and SMS text messages
- Allow clients to register for access to the Department's electronic services such as internet mapping, Calf Registration, Herd Profile etc.
- Organise public information meetings for customers as the need arises
- Continue consultation with relevant customer representative groups to make scheme-related material such as forms and help sheets as simple and user-friendly as possible
- Consult customers during the period of this Plan about their experience in accessing information provided and implement improvements where required
- Install kiosks in more Department Local Offices to allow clients free access to Government and related websites

Timeliness and Courtesy

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer.

Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.

We will seek to deliver our services in a courteous manner fostering a climate of mutual respect between staff and customers. We will be sensitive to the particular needs of our customers.

Action Points

- Deliver, to the greatest degree possible, all our schemes and services within the timeframes set out in Appendix I of this Plan
- Review Customer Service training in consultation with staff and provide appropriate updating of skills where required



- Evaluate our performance against the quality standards of service we have committed to providing to customers by telephone, correspondence, in our public offices and in the processing of Scheme Applications and Claims as set out in the Customer Charter
- Review and improve standards of delivery where appropriate

Complaints

Maintain a well publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

The Department's Customer Complaints Procedure may be used where a customer is dissatisfied with the quality of service received while dealing with the Department. The Forest Service Appeals Procedure and the Agriculture Appeals Procedure described in the next sections should be used where a customer is unhappy with a decision made in relation to an application.

Leaflets outlining the Customer Complaints Procedure are available in all our public offices, and staff will advise customers who express dissatisfaction with the quality of service of their right to lodge a complaint, and how they may do so. It is our policy that complaints are taken seriously and dealt with promptly, in an objective and sympathetic manner. Complaints may be made in person, by telephone, by letter or by email and should initially be made by contacting the officer in charge of the area to which the complaint relates.

If you are unhappy with the outcome or if there is an undue delay in resolving your complaint, you may pursue the matter by making a formal complaint to the Quality Service Officer who can be contacted at:

Quality Service Unit
Department of Agriculture and Food
Kildare St
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 607 2694

LoCall: 1890 200 510 Ext. 2694

Email: QualityServiceUnit@agriculture.gov.ie

The Quality Service Unit will deal with formal complaints as follows:

- All complaints will be logged on receipt
- Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days
- The complaint will be investigated by an officer not involved in the event giving rise to it
- Where possible a substantive reply will issue within 20 working days

Where the complexity of the matter requires a longer period of investigation than that set out above, the complainant will be given a revised response time and informed of progress on the matter on an on-going basis. If it is found that the Department has made a mistake or is otherwise at fault, we will apologise and take whatever measures are necessary to prevent a similar situation recurring.

Notwithstanding these arrangements, you may also make a complaint to the Ombudsman at:

Office of the Ombudsman
18 Lr Leeson St
Dublin 2

Tel: 01 639 5600

LoCall: 1890 22 30 30

Fax: 01 639 5674

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.ie

Web: www.ombudsman.gov.ie

Action Points

- Review current formal complaints procedures in consultation with our customers as appropriate
- Recommend corrective action where necessary in individual cases
- Revise general rules, procedures and practices where necessary
- Publish summary statistics on complaints received in our Department's Annual Report
- Make customers aware of the Complaints Procedure as appropriate

Appeals

Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

Forest Service Appeals Procedures

The Appeals procedure in the Forest Service is handled by an administrative unit of the Forest Service. Every customer has the right to appeal against any decision of the Forest Service affecting their entitlements under the grant and premium schemes. In practice, the majority of appeals relate to refusal of applications for planting approval or where approval is given for a lesser area than sought.

Under environmental regulations, which came into force in October 2001, an extensive consultation process is undertaken before an afforestation proposal is approved in certain environmentally sensitive areas. The public is notified by means of a press notice in local papers and invited to submit observations on afforestation proposals in areas designated as any of the following:

- A proposed Natural Heritage Area, Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area or a National Park
- An area containing an archeological site or feature with intensive public use
- A prime scenic area in a County Development Plan or listed in an Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes

Local Authorities and environmental organisations are also formally consulted about applications relating to such areas. If the public or any of these organisations object to the planting proposal, their observations and objections are taken into consideration in the deliberations of the Forest Service on the proposal. If the decision on the proposal means that such objections are not upheld, those who objected are informed of their right to appeal within 21 days.

The Forest Service Appeals Unit will deal with appeals as follows:

- All appeals will be logged on receipt
- Appeals will be acknowledged within 5 working days
- The appeal will be put before the Appeals Committee for consideration
- Where possible, a substantive reply will issue within 20 working days

Where the complexity of the matter requires a longer period of investigation than that set out above, the complainant will be given a revised response time and informed of progress on the matter on an ongoing basis. Provision for a statutory appeals procedure is proposed for new legislation which is in the course of preparation.

Currently, the Appeals Committee is comprised of senior officers from both the Inspectorate and the Administrative sides of the Forest Service. The proposal under appeal is re-examined and, in most cases, an on-site inspection is carried out. Independence and quality of decisions are assured by the fact that inspections and adjudication on appeal cases are carried out by more senior officers previously uninvolved in the making of the original decision. The landowner may also attend the site inspection if they wish.

Appeals should be made in writing setting out the grounds of appeal and addressed to:

The Appeals Unit
Forest Service
Department of Agriculture & Food
Johnstown Castle Estate
Co. Wexford

LoCall: 1890 200 223

Customers also have recourse to the Office of the Ombudsman if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their dealings with the Forest Service Appeals Unit.

Action Points

- Inform customers of the appeal procedure when giving any unfavourable decision
- Review general practices and procedures in light of outcome of appeal cases
- Publish summary statistics on appeals in Department's Annual Report



Agriculture Appeals Office

The Agriculture Appeals Office was established to provide an appeals service to farmers who are dissatisfied with decisions of the Department of Agriculture and Food regarding their entitlements under certain schemes. The mission of the Office is to provide an independent, accessible, fair and timely appeals service for Department of Agriculture and Food scheme applicants, and to deliver that service in a courteous and efficient manner.

The Office was established in May 2002 as a result of a commitment made in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and the Protocol on Direct Payments to Farmers. The legislation implementing this undertaking, the Agriculture Appeals Act, was enacted in July 2001. This Act, along with the Agriculture Appeals Regulations 2002, specifies the functions of the Director of Agriculture Appeals and the Appeals Officers, the decisions that may be appealed and the procedures to be followed in respect of such appeals. Appeals Officers are fully independent in the performance of their duties.

One of the main features of the Office is the right of an appellant to an oral hearing where an Appeals Officer brings together the appellant and the Department officials to hear both sides of a case. Hearings are held in private at locations around the country convenient for the appellant. In cases where no oral hearing is held, the Appeals Officer always makes contact with the appellant to discuss the case. Following consideration of all of the facts of a case, comprehensive decision letters, including reasons for the decision, are issued to both the appellant and the Department. Decisions of Appeals Officers are binding on the Department.

The Office deals with appeals under the following schemes:

- Livestock Premium Schemes (including Suckler Cow Premium, Special Beef Premium, Slaughter Premium, Extensification Premium and Ewe Premium)
- Disadvantaged Areas Compensatory Allowances Scheme (previously known as Headage payments)
- Area Aid Scheme (including the Arable Aid Scheme)
- Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS)
- Early Retirement Scheme
- Organic Scheme
- Improvement of Dairy Hygiene Standards and Farm Waste Management
- Alternative Enterprise Schemes
- Installation Aid
- Non-valuation aspects of the On-Farm Valuation Scheme for TB and Brucellosis Reactors



The Office can be contacted at:
Agriculture Appeals Office
Kilminchy Court
Portlaoise
Co. Laois

LoCall: 1890 671 671

Tel: 0502 67167

Fax: 0502 67177

Email: appeals.office@agriculture.gov.ie

Web: www.agriappeals.gov.ie

As with the Forestry Appeals Unit, customers have further recourse to the Office of the Ombudsman if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their dealings with the Agriculture Appeals Office.

Action Points

- Publicise the Agriculture Appeals Office, including maintaining a dedicated website – www.agriappeals.gov.ie
- Publicise to customers the schemes and decisions that fall within the remit of the Agriculture Appeals Office and of their right to lodge appeals with the Office
- Let customers know when they are being informed of an unfavourable decision of their right, where applicable, of appeal to the Agriculture Appeals Office and provide information on how to make an appeal
- Review on a regular basis the schemes to which the provisions of the Agriculture Appeals Act 2001 apply and include new schemes when and as appropriate
- Ensure that customers are also advised of the Review/Appeal mechanism, if any, available to them in respect of any scheme or service to which the Act does not apply and how they may pursue such Review/Appeal
- Publish an Annual Report to the Minister for Agriculture and Food

Consultation and Evaluation

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

There are very well developed structures in place for consultation with a wide range of representative bodies, including industry organisations, in the context of schemes supported by payments from FEOGA, and in relation to policy development and regulatory matters. In addition there is consultation with the Social Partner Farm Organisations in relation to service delivery targets for the Department's main payment schemes and related services. This is done through a Protocol Monitoring Committee, which was established under an independent chairman following the publication in July 2000 of the Protocol on Direct Payments to Farmers.

The consultative process has, in more recent years, been widened to include external regional panels composed of randomly selected customers and the relevant Departmental staff to discuss service delivery issues.

This Plan itself was compiled following a number of special initiatives which included a series of Focus Groups around the country comprising of randomly selected farmers who provided feedback on their experiences of service received from the Department and ways in which they felt that it could be improved.



Action Points

- Continue the Consumer Liaison Panel which was established in 2002
- Implement, where possible, recommendations from the Consumer Liaison Panel
- Extend the use of Regional External Customer Panels/Focus Groups from 2005
- Carry out further surveys of External Customers as appropriate, in relation to the service of the Department
- Provide information on feedback from Panels/Focus Groups, surveys, etc. in the Department's Annual Report
- Ensure that Customer Service Comment Cards are available for use by the public in all our offices throughout the period of this Plan
- Ensure that results obtained from consultations inform policy development on service delivery issues

Choice

Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

The Department will continue to examine ways in which we can improve the choice available to customers accessing our services. It will use new technologies, where possible, to improve service delivery.

Action Points

- Provide maximum feasible choice to customers in accessing services (e.g. ICT developments in Electronic Fund Transfer; direct payments to bank accounts and SMS text notifications)
- Utilise developments in information and communication technologies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services – AIM (Animal Identification and Movement system), iMap, AHCS
- Continue to ensure that the principle of choice is included in issues considered by customers in as many of the consultative processes as possible
- Continue to extend the use of electronic systems and data to reduce form filling by our customers

- Seek to ensure that a high quality of service continues to be delivered to those customers who may not have access to these technologies
- Upgrade telephone services as required
- Online access to iMAP land parcelling
- Short Messaging Services (SMS) text alerts

Official Languages Equality

Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

We will be proactive in our efforts to ensure that those expressing a wish to be dealt with through Irish are afforded the same level and quality of service. Such services through Irish will be provided in accordance with the Official Languages Act 2003.

Action Points

- Implement immediately the directly applicable sections of the Official Languages Act 2003
- Comply with all future regulations made under the Act
- Develop and implement a scheme to broaden and deepen availability and quality of service through Irish (in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Act)
- Ensure adequate training of staff to facilitate delivery of the new services to a satisfactory standard

Better Co-Ordination

Foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

The Department will continue to co-operate with other Departments to improve co-ordination on service delivery at national and local levels.

eGovernment Initiatives

At present the Department is participating in the Civil Service wide Government initiatives including REACH (an agency established to develop integrated state services for customers), BASIS (an eGovernment initiative for the business community) and OASIS (on-line access for customers generally to service information and support) which will make it easier to do business with the State at every level.

Cross Departmental Co-operation

The Department co-operates closely with many other Government Departments in the implementation of Government policy. We will liaise closely with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and other State Agencies involved, in order to ensure that, as far as possible, the rural economy and society remain vibrant.

The Department is working closely with the Revenue Commissioners and Reach to complete the Revenue to Agriculture Single Administrative Document Export Refunds (RASER) system. This is an electronic system to cater for the submissions of CAP export declarations.

We are also involved in networking with other Government Departments in relation to service delivery on many fronts including Animal Health and Welfare, the Environment, Food Safety and North/South initiatives.

Action Points

- Actively participate in cross Departmental initiatives such as 'REACH', 'BASIS' and 'OASIS' and provide for an integrated approach to the delivery of public services
- Continue to work closely with Revenue to maximise the uptake by traders of the electronic submission of CAP Export declarations through RASER
- Continue co-operation with Government Departments where appropriate

Internal Customer

Ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.

The Department recognises the critical role of staff in delivering a quality service to external customers. Procedures have been put in place to ensure, as far as possible, that they are properly supported at all times and consulted in relation to service delivery issues. The Partnership structures already in place in HQ and regional offices, and which are in the process of being extended to all local offices, will continue to be a valuable part of the consultation.



A Department wide survey identified the internal supports required to enable the provision of a high quality service to external customers. Following this, an internal customer panel made up of staff from all streams (technical, professional and administrative), all grades and all locations was formed. This panel examined the results of the survey and compiled a report including a series of recommendations on improvements in supports to staff.

After consideration of the Report, Management decided to implement approximately 70% of those recommendations, and progress on implementation was posted on the Department's intranet, eZone, for the information of all staff.

A framework for a significant new training strategy is currently under development. Our Human Resource Strategy (2002) provides for a strategic approach to Human Resource Management issues for the future, which will focus on the needs of staff.

The Strategy includes the HR Management policies in all areas affecting staff including

- Management style
- Communications, devolution of Personnel function
- Recruitment, performance management and development

- Training
- Promotions
- Equality
- Working environment
- Industrial relations
- Safety and health
- Retirement

Action Points

- Establish new internal customer panel(s) on special/general customer service issues as appropriate (e.g. ICT, Decentralisation, Training)
- Initiate new staff surveys, where required
- Further develop staff seminars on general/specific issues (e.g. Strategic Management Initiative, structured interviews, Performance Management feedback)
- Monitor implementation of the HR Strategy
- Extend and improve, where possible, the use of effective communication channels to keep all staff informed of key issues affecting the Department and their work, e.g. eZone (the Department's intranet), email, 'Connections' staff magazine)

December, 2004

Appendices

Appendix I – Payment or Decision Targets

Important Note:

Target delivery times are subject to all documentation and other requirements being correct at time of application.

FEOGA Schemes

Service	Target Delivery Time
Purchase of Barley into Intervention	30-35 days (EU regulatory requirement)
Purchase of Beef into Intervention	45-65 days (EU regulatory requirement)
Purchase of Butter into Intervention	45-65 days (EU regulatory requirement)
Purchase of Skimmed Milk Powder into Intervention	120-140 days (EU regulatory requirement)
Storage of Intervention beef	30 days (PPA)
Storage and Transport of Intervention Barley	30 days (PPA)
Storage of Intervention Skimmed Milk Powder	30 days (PPA)
Storage of Intervention Butter	30 days (PPA)
Export refunds for milk and milk products	85% within 60 days
Beef export refund payments	2 months
Export refunds for processed agricultural products	85% within 60 days
Export refunds for pigmeat, poultry, eggs and cereals	85% within 60 days
Pigmeat and Poultry export licences:	
■ where export refund is guaranteed	8 days
■ immediate request with export refund not guaranteed	24 hours
Cereals:	
■ export licence	3 days
■ import licence	24 hours
Milk and Milk Products:	
■ export licences	5 working days
■ import licences:	
1. Tariff Quota licences for unspecified Countries of Origin	5 working days
2. Non-Quota preferential licence	5 working days
3. Tariff Quota licences for Specified Countries	5 working days
4. General licences	1 working day
Subsidy on butter and cream used in pastry and ice cream	1 month
Subsidy on butter supplied to Hospitals	1 month
Concentrated Butter Scheme	1 month
Subsidy on Skim Milk Powder used in compound feed	1 month
School Milk	1 month (from first and final report) or 3 months (from receipt of claim)
Aid for casein and caseinates	1 month
Production Refunds in the Sugar Sector	Issued on application
Aid for Private Storage (APS) of butter and cream	Contracts to be agreed within 30 days
Aid for Private Storage (APS) of emmenthal cheese	Ongoing
Aid for Private Storage (APS) of sheepmeat and pigmeat	Contracts to be agreed within 5 working days

Securities will be released at the earliest opportunity following clearance of all documentation and other relevant matters.

Regional Operational Programmes under the National Development Plan

Service	Target Delivery Time
Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Horticulture Sector	
■ Processing of Grant Applications	8 weeks
■ Processing of Payments Claims	1 month
Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Cereal Sector	
■ Processing of Grant Applications	15 weeks
■ Processing of Payment Applications	1 month

Schemes of Direct Payments to Farmers

Service	Target Delivery Time
Disadvantaged Area Compensatory Allowances	Agreement was reached with the farming organisations that payments in all eligible cases would commence on 21st September of the year of application with a view to having all payments made by 1st December.
Early Retirement Scheme	Processing of valid application to scheduling for payment stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Applications not selected for pre-payment inspection within 10 weeks* ■ Application selected for pre-payment inspection within 12 weeks* ■ Issue of payment following approval within 6 weeks* ■ Payments monthly thereafter for duration of pension period.
Rural Environment Protection Scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Application for admission to scheme ■ Application for annual payment 	Processing of valid application to scheduling for payment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Applications not selected for pre-payment inspection within 12 weeks* ■ Applications selected for pre-payment inspection within 14 weeks* ■ Issuing of payment following approval within 1 month ■ Processing of valid application to scheduling for payment within 10 weeks* ■ Issue of payment following approval within 1 month
Farm Waste Management Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Issue of approval following receipt of valid application within 3 months* ■ Approval for payment following receipt of notice of completion of works and valid supporting documents within 3 months* ■ Issue of payment following approval for payment within 6 weeks*
Dairy Hygiene Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Issue of approval following receipt of valid application within 3 months* ■ Approval for payment following receipt of notice of completion of works and valid supporting documents within 3 months* ■ Issue of payment following approval for payment within 6 weeks*
Alternative Enterprise Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Issue of approval following receipt of valid application within 3 months* ■ Approval for payment following receipt of notice of completion of works and valid supporting documents within 3 months* ■ Issue of payment following approval for payment within 6 weeks*
Installation Aid	Processing of valid application to scheduling for payment stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Applications not selected for pre-payment inspection within 10 weeks* ■ Applications selected for pre-payment inspection within 12 weeks* ■ Issue of payment following approval within 6 weeks*

* To apply from commencement of new schemes

Notes

*** Target delivery times for farmers under the above schemes will be subject to a revised protocol to be agreed in 2005.**

The new Single Payment regime will impact on a number of schemes which will be discontinued.

These are the Suckler Cow Premium, Special Beef Premium, Ewe Premium, New Slaughter Premium, Deseasonalisation Slaughter Premium, Extensification Premium and Arable Aid Premium Schemes. Residual payments from these discontinued Premia Schemes will be paid during 2005.

In the case of schemes generally the applicant will be notified when his/her application has been approved for payment and of the amount due.

All REPS participants receive advance payments. In the case of annual payments, payments will not be delayed pending inspections. Where an inspection takes place after the annual payment has been made, in the event of a penalty arising the penalty will be recovered from the following year's annual payment. Where the inspection takes place in the final year any money to be recovered will be deducted from payments due to the participant under other schemes.

Disease Eradication Schemes/Disease Control

Service	Target Delivery Time
Compensation – Bovine TB and Brucellosis eradication schemes	TB and Brucellosis compensation will be paid within 2-4 weeks of the date of receipt of the required correct documentation or of eligibility as per terms and conditions applying to individual compensation elements viz. Income Supplement, Hardship Grant and Depopulation Grant Schemes
BSE Depopulation	Payment will be made within 4 weeks of receipt of necessary documentation

District Veterinary Office Services

Service	Target Delivery Time
Interpret test reports	10 days
Check and issue permits	1 day
Finalisation of herdnumber application (after receipt of all required information)	28 days
Collect reactors – once valuation process concluded	7 days
TB/Brucellosis breakdown – veterinary investigative work	60 days
Private test permission (sale)	same day
Issue permit to buy into a restricted herd following DVO investigation	1 day
Issue certificates of stock/herd profiles	5 days
Haulier payments	30 days (Prompt Payment Period)
Valuer Fee Payments	30 days (Prompt Payment Period)
Farm Relief Service Payments	30 days (Prompt Payment Period)
Private Veterinary Practitioners fees on AHCS	30 days (Prompt Payment Period)
Supplies to Veterinary Practitioners	5 days
Issue of supplies of original tags	15 working days
Issue of replacement tags	3 working days
Issue of original passports	3 working days
Approval/issue of replacement passports	8 working days
Issue of CMMS compliance certificates	Same day issue for applications received before 3pm
BSE Eradication	
Respond to suspect case	1 working day
Class A Disease Surveillance	
Respond to suspect case (excluding BSE)	same day
Arrange valuation & payment	1-30 days

Valuation Timescales – TB and Brucellosis Eradication Schemes

Service	Target Delivery Time
Period after which 1st Valuation to be undertaken by Valuer from date of notification by Department	3 working days
Period for Valuer to convey completed valuation details in writing to farmer and Department	2 working days
Period after receipt of 1st Valuation within which both the farmer and the Department must confirm acceptance/rejection of valuation	2 working days
Period within which appeal valuation must be completed	Additional 4 working days
Arbitration process will only be undertaken after the reactors have been slaughtered.	

Beef

Service	Target Delivery Time
Issuing of Export Licences to Meat Processors/Live Cattle Traders	5 days
■ 5 day licence	1 day
Issuing of Import Licences	
■ Thin Skirt (GATT)	1 day
■ Frozen Beef (GATT)	1 day
■ Balance Sheet Beef	1 day
■ Hilton	1 day
■ Commercial (full duty)	1 day
In connection with the above – security release/forfeiture	8 weeks

Pigmeat

Service	Target Delivery Time
Process Applications for Approval of pigmeat production plants	4 months
Issue of Licences/Approvals for pigmeat premises	2 days

Sheep

Service	Target Delivery Time
Monitoring of Lamb Carcase Classification Scheme under EU Regulations	Ongoing. Annual Report issued.
Lamb Price Reporting System	Weekly
Wool Marketing Act 1968	
■ Inspections carried out	Ongoing
■ Wool Price Reporting System	Fortnightly
■ Approve or refuse applications for registration as a wool buyer or wool exporter	6 months
Issue of Tariff Quota Licences for Specified Countries	1 working day

Beef/Sheep Meat

Service	Target Delivery Time
Process Applications for Approval for beef/sheep meat export production plants	4 months
Issue of Approvals	2 days
Issue of Health Certificates	2 days
Issue of Veterinary Certificates	2 days

Poultry/Game Meat

Service	Target Delivery Time
Process Applications for Approval of poultry/game meat production plants/hatcheries/supply farms	4 months
Issue of Approvals for poultry/game meat production plants/hatcheries/supply farms	2 days
Process Applications for Approval of egg packing centres and egg and poultrymeat producers under marketing standards legislation	2 months
Blood Sampling of Birds for Export	5 days
Issue of Health Certificates	2 days
Issue of Veterinary Certificates	2 days

Livestock Breeding

Service	Target Delivery Time
Issuing Bull Permits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inspections of bulls for permits twice yearly ■ Permits issued within one month of inspections
Kerry Cattle Preservation Grant Scheme:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Applications ■ Payments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Forwarded to Kerry Cattle Society within 3 days of receipt ■ Made within 3 weeks of return of form from Society
Live Stock (Artificial Insemination) Act, 1947 and Regulations 1948	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Issuing of Semen Distribution Licences ■ Issuing of Field Service Licences ■ Issuing of D.I.Y. A.I. Licences ■ Approval for D.I.Y. A.I. training courses ■ Issuing ovine AI licences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 weeks 8 weeks 3 weeks 4 weeks 4 weeks
European Communities (Trade in Bovine Breeding Animals, their Semen, Ova and Embryos) Regulations 1996. S.I. 112 of 1996	
Approval of:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Semen Collection Centres <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1st stage: Approval of Plans 2. 2nd Stage: Approval of Premises ■ Ova/Embryo Collection/Production Teams ■ Bulls/semen for use in the A.I. services ■ Cattle Breed Societies for the maintenance of Herd Books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 weeks 8 weeks 10 weeks 2 weeks 6 months
European Communities (Pure-bred Sheep and Goat Flock-book) Regulations, 1994 SI No.16 of 1994	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sheep Flock Book Approvals 	6 months
Pedigree Sheep Breed Improvement Programme – production of results of analysis from supply of complete dataset at Spring PSBIP meeting	Results issued to participants on dates agreed with individual sheep breed societies
Galway Sheep Breed Improvement Programme	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Delivery of results to applicants by Teagasc 	Raw data supplied to Teagasc by 1st June Research issued by Teagasc, Athenry to participants by 10th September
Diseases of Animals Act, 1966 (Foot-and-Mouth Disease) (Regulation of Sheep Shearing) Order, 2001, SI 228 of 2001	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Registration of Sheep Shearers 	1 week
Council Directive 92/65/EEC and Regulation 13 of the Europeans Communities (Trade in Animals and Animal Semen, Ova and Embryos) Regulations 1996. SI 12/1996	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approval of ovine Semen Collection Centres 	6 months

Livestock Breeding (continued)

Service	Target Delivery Time
Musk Rats Act 1933 (Application to Mink) Order, 1965, SI No.199 of 1965	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approve/Refuse applications for registration as a Mink Farm 	3 months
European Communities (Breeding Pig Herd-book and Register) Regulations, 1994, SI No.16 of 1994	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pig Herd Book Approvals 	6 months
European Communities (Trade in Porcine Semen – Animal Health) Regulations, 1993, SI No.242 of 1993	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pig Semen Collection Centre Approvals 	6 months
Quality Stallion Purchase Incentive Scheme:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Decision to approve or refuse application ■ Payment of assistance 	2 months 1 month
Schemes operated by the Irish Horse Board (Marketing and Promotion, Stallion Performance Testing, Quality Mare Competitions, Genetic Evaluation, Stud Book Establishment and Development):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Decision to approve or refuse application ■ Payment of assistance 	1 month 1 month
International Equine Institute	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Payment of assistance 	1 month
International Equine Centre:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Decision to approve or refuse application ■ Payment of assistance 	2 months 1 month
European Communities (Equine Stud-Book and Competition) Regulations, 1993 S.I. 305 of 1993	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Decision on approval of bodies for the purposes of maintaining stud books ■ Decision of applications for exemptions for restrictive competitions 	6 months 6 months
European Communities (Beef Carcase Classification) Regulations, SI No. 45 of 2004. Issuing of licence to classify beef carcasses	Test applicant within 4 weeks of receipt of valid application. Issue licence within 2 weeks of successful completion of test.
ICBF_NDP Funding	3 months

Animal Products

Service	Target Delivery Time
Issuing of Health Certification for Export of Hides	24 hours
Sheep and Goats – Import/Export requirements	Same day
Live Animals import/export licences	7 days

Animal By-Products

Service	Target Delivery Time
Process Applications for Approval of	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rendering Plants ■ Fat Melters ■ Stores for storage of processed animal by-products ■ Hauliers of animal by-products ■ Premises for the usage of animal by-products for scientific purposes ■ Traders for marketing of animal by-products ■ Pet Food Plants ■ Knackeries ■ Composting plants 	4 months 4 months 2 weeks 2 weeks 2 weeks 2 weeks 2 weeks 2 months 2 months
Issue of Approvals	2 days

Voluntary Beef Labelling

Service	Target Delivery Time
Approval of statements for inclusion on labels	3 months
Issue of Approvals	2 days

Animal Welfare

Service	Target Delivery Time
Inspection/Approval of Cattle Vessels and Ferries	3 weeks
Approval of Lairages and Portal Facilities	2 months

Veterinary Medicines

Service	Target Delivery Time
Licence to Wholesale Animal Remedies	11 weeks
Licence to Retail Animal Remedies	11 weeks
Licence to sell Animal Remedies by Mail Order	10 weeks
Licence to Solicit Orders for Animal Remedies	12 weeks
Licensing Clinical Trials on Veterinary Medicines	12 weeks
Registration of Sellers of Companion Animal Medicines	3 weeks
Licence to Manufacture, Distribute Medicated Feedingstuff	12 weeks
Licensing of certain Animal Remedies in Specified Circumstances under Regulation 16 of the Animal Remedies Regulations	10 weeks
Licences to import Animal Remedies under Regulation 26 of the Animal Remedies Regulations	8 weeks

Milk Products

Service	Target Delivery Time
Food Safety and Quality Assurance of Milk Products	Ongoing
Quality control of casein exported to the USA	Ongoing
Butterfat check testing	Ongoing
Certification of Dairy Products for export:	
■ Regular	5 days
■ Specific	14 working days

Sugar Products

Service	Target Delivery Time
Import Licences	3 working days
Export Licences	5 working days

Horticulture/Plant Health

Service	Target Delivery Time
Issue of Licences for importation of plants subject to controls	1 week
Plant Breeders Rights	
■ Applications	1 week
■ Registration of Varieties	
■ with positive DUS (Distinctiveness, Uniformity, and Stability)	4 weeks
■ otherwise	2 years
Payment of aid for grass seed production	2 months
Issuing of plant health certificates, unless tests required	2 days
Inspection of plants/plant products, including cut flowers from third countries	2 days
Registration of plant producers/importers/traders	Within 1 month of application
Inspection of imported fruit and vegetable produce for Colorado Beetle	Daily
Sampling of plants, soil and other growing media etc. on nurseries/farms for nematode analysis	1 month
Withdrawal of certain fruit/vegetables from the market	1 month
Issue of import licences for certain fruit and vegetables	1 week
Testing of leaf samples for various diseases	1 month
Conservation of agricultural genetic resources – decisions on application for funding	12 weeks
Payment of aid for measures to improve the marketing and production of honey	1 month
Payment of annual grant to Federation of Irish Beekeepers	2 weeks
Issuing of Banana licences on instructions of EU Commission	16-23 in accordance with EU Regulatory requirements

Crop Variety Testing

Service	Target Delivery Time
Decision on application to have a variety accepted for testing.	4 weeks (contingent on all varieties arriving by the notified date.)
Entry to the National Catalogue of Agricultural Plant Varieties	
V.C.U. test results available from National List trial	
■ General	After 2 years (min.) trialing
■ Grasses	After 3 years (min.) trialing
■ Clover	After 4 years (min.) trialing
Recommended List trial results available	
■ General	After 3 years (min.) trialing
■ Clover	After 4 years (min.) trialing
Issuing of Recommended Lists:	
■ Winter Cereals	27 September
■ Spring Cereals	18 January
■ Sugar Beet	30 September
■ Forage Maize	1 March
■ Herbage	31 January
	All of the above dates are dependent on the weather conditions prevailing during the growing season and particularly at time of harvest

Seed Testing Station

Service	Target Delivery Time
1. Germination Tests (including Fluorescence)	Target Times will depend on different species
2. Analytical Purity Tests on seeds and mixtures of seeds	10 days
3. Moisture Testing	4 days
4. Biochemical Test for Viability of seeds	6 days
5. 1000 Grain weight (only) on all seeds	6 days
6. Hectolitre weight on all seeds	6 days
7. Screening Test – Cereals	6 days
8. Germination Capacity Test – Malting Barley	4 days
9. Intervention Testing – Cereals	4 days
10. Moisture Appeal Test	6 days
Pathology/Microscopy Services:	
1. General Pathology Tests	21 days
2. Loose Smut Test	21 days
3. Phytosanitary Certificates	4 days
4. Feed Microscopy	
■ Priority samples	7 days (for 80%)
■ Other samples	7 days (for 80%)

Potatoes

Service	Target Delivery Time
Meet Pre Basic seed orders from Potato Foundation Seed growers	3 weeks
Supplying nucleus potato microplants to private sector minituber producers	4 weeks
D.U.S Testing of new potato varieties	2 growing seasons
Registration/Licensing of potato growers and packers	Within 1 week of application
Laboratory testing of leaf samples from private sector potato minituber producers	1 week
Inspecting/sealing seed potato consignments	October – April on request
Issue of phytosanitary certificates	Within 1 week of application
Eelworm sampling	Within 4 weeks of application

Pesticide Control Service

Service	Target Delivery Time
Authorisation of plant protection products containing existing active substances which have not been reviewed	15 months
Authorisation of plant protection products containing existing or new active substances which have been reviewed (nationally or EU)	15 months
Preparation of monographs for new or existing substances	15 months
Review (legal considerations) of authorisation for plant protection products following EU approval of their active substances	6 months
Review (scientific considerations) of authorisation for plant protection products following EU approval of their active substances	15 months
Major change in the authorisation of plant protection products	15 months
Minor change in the authorisation of plant protection products	15 months
Extensions in the field of use of authorised plant protection products	15 months
Granting of a permission to market for plant protection products	15 months
Authorisation of plant protection products for trial purposes	3 months
Granting of permits to conduct field trials with plant protection products	3 months
Granting of parallel import approvals for plant protection products	2 months

Pesticide Control Service (continued)

Service	Target Delivery Time
Granting of back to back notifications, authorisations or permissions to market for plant protection products	3 months
Trivial amendments to notifications, authorisations or permissions to market for plant protection products	3 months
Notification of an existing biocidal product	3 months
Notification of a new biocidal product	3 months
Modification of a biocidal product notifications	3 months
Preparation of monographs for new or existing biocidal active substances	15 months
Authorisation of biocidal products for experimental and test purposes	3 months
Granting of permits to conduct field trials with biocidal products	3 months
Authorisation of biocidal products containing active substances included in Annex I or Annex IA	15 months
Registration of biocidal products containing active substances included in Annex IA	2 months
Mutual recognition of an authorisation for a biocidal product granted by another Member State	4 months
Mutual recognition of a registration for a biocidal product granted by another Member State	2 months
Granting of parallel import approvals for biocidal products	2 months
Granting of back to back notifications, authorisations or registrations for biocidal products	3 months
Trivial amendments to notifications, authorisations or registrations for biocidal products	3 months

Producer Groups

Service	Target Delivery Time
Fruit and Vegetable Producer Group Scheme	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ official recognition of the above Schemes ■ processing of claim for payment ■ payment of claims for aid 	3 months (as per EU Regulation) 3 months 1 month

Other

Service	Target Delivery Time
Issue of wine import licences	2 days
Issue of ethyl alcohol licences	2 days
Grant Aid for Institutional Research and Development	8 weeks
Food Institutional Research Measure – Payments based on progress reports	8 weeks
Capital Investment Scheme for the Marketing and Processing of Agricultural Products – Payment of Claims	3 months

Forest Service

<i>Service</i>	<i>Target Delivery Time</i>
Afforestation grant applications	Issue decisions within 10 weeks of receipt of applications (except in cases requiring public consultation)
Afforestation grants and premiums	90% of premiums to be paid by end-April each year
Tree Felling licences	Decisions on applications within 2 months of receipt of applications
Registration of seed stands	Decision on application within 6 months
Issuing of Certificates of Provenance	Decision on applications within 1 month
Issuing of Phytosanitary Certificates	Decision on applications and processing within 2 weeks
Forest pest and disease diagnostic service	Samples processed for analysis within 2 weeks. Diagnostic result within 3 months, dependent on nature of the sample.

Appendix II – State Sponsored Agencies which Come Under the Aegis of the Department of Agriculture and Food

Agency	Contact Details	Main Responsibility
An Bord Bia Clanwilliam Court Lr. Mount Street Dublin 2	Tel: 01 668 5155 Fax: 01 668 7521 Email: info@bordbia.ie Web: www.bordbia.ie	An Bord Bia is responsible for promoting and assisting the market development of Irish food and drink products and the production, marketing and consumption of horticultural produce, including amenity horticulture. This is achieved through the delivery of a wide range of specialist marketing and promotion activities.
National Milk Agency IPC House 35-39 Shelbourne Road Ballsbridge Dublin 4	Tel: 01 660 3396 Fax: 01 660 3389 Email: natmilk@eircom.net	The National Milk Agency continues to regulate, on a national basis, the supply of milk for liquid consumption.
The Irish National Stud Company Limited Tully Kildare	Tel: 045 521251 Fax: 045 522129 Email: stud@irish-national-stud.ie Web: www.irish-national-stud.ie	The core business of the National Stud is thoroughbred breeding. It is also involved in farming, tourism, and training personnel for the bloodstock sector.
Teagasc Head Office Oak Park Carlow	Tel: 059 917 0200 Fax: 059 918 2097 Email: Reception@hq.Teagasc.ie Web: www.teagasc.ie	Teagasc – the Agriculture and Food Development Authority is the national body with responsibility for providing advisory, training, research and development services geared to the Irish agriculture and food industry and rural Communities.
Coillte Teoranta The Irish Forestry Board Newtownmountkennedy Co. Wicklow	Tel: ++353 1 201 1111 Fax: ++353 1 201 1199 Email: pr@coillte.ie Web: www.coillte.ie	Coillte Teoranta manages State-owned forestry and related activities, on a commercial basis under the Forestry Act 1988.
Coford Arena House Arena Road Sandyford Dublin 18	Tel: 01 213 0725 Fax: 01 213 0611 Web: www.coford.ie For administrative and financial information contact: admin@coford.ie For general information contact: info@coford.ie	The National Council for Forest Research and Development (COFORD) coordinates and funds appropriate and cost-effective research to secure long-term industrial viability and optimise social, environmental and cultural developments associated with forestry.

Appendix III – Department of Agriculture and Food

Head Office	Agriculture House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2 LoCall: 1890 200 510 also 01 607 2000
Castlebar Office	Michael Davitt House, Castlebar, Co. Mayo. LoCall: 1890 200 507 also 094 903 5300
Cavan Office	Government Buildings, Farnham Street, Cavan, Co. Cavan. LoCall: 1890 200 508 also 049 436 8200
Maynooth Office	Maynooth Business Campus, Block B, Maynooth Co. Kildare. Tel: 01 505 3300
Portlaoise Office	Old Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. LoCall: 1890 200 506 also 0502 74400 Email: sbp_unit@daff.irlgov.ie
Wexford Office	Johnstown Castle Estate, Wexford, Co. Wexford. LoCall: 1890 200 509 also 053 63400

A-Z of Department Services

<i>Division/Section</i>	<i>Contact Number</i>
Accommodation	01 607 2883/607 2878
Accounts Division, Cavan	049 436 8200
Agricultural Structural Funds Division	01 607 2885
General Structural Policy Monitoring and Control of Structural Funds	
Agricultural Structures Division (Wexford)	053 63400
Farm Retirement Scheme Email: ers@agriculture.gov.ie Organic Farming Unit Email: organics@agriculture.gov.ie Rural Environment Protection Scheme Email: reps@agriculture.gov.ie Environment Section	
On-Farm Investment Schemes, Wexford	053 63400
Farm Waste Management Scheme Dairy Hygiene Scheme Alternative Enterprises Scheme of Installation Aid	
Aids for Private Storage, Wexford	053 65563
Agriculture Appeals Office, Kilminchy Court, Portlaoise	0502 67167 LoCall: 1890 671 671
Area Aid, Hume House, Dublin 4	
The following Lo-Call numbers are available for calling the Area Aid Unit directly:	
Counties: Cork, Kerry and Limerick	LoCall: 1890 200 503
Counties: Clare, Galway and Roscommon	LoCall: 1890 200 502
Counties: Donegal, Mayo and Sligo	LoCall: 1890 200 504
Counties: Carlow, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Tipperary, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow	LoCall: 1890 200 505
Counties: Cavan, Leitrim, Longford, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly and Westmeath Email: area-aid@daff.irlgov.ie	LoCall: 1890 200 498

<i>Division/Section</i>	<i>Contact Number</i>
Animal Health and Welfare Division	
Animal Remedies Regulations (including enforcement)	505 3320
Veterinary Surgeons Legislation, Veterinary Medicines	505 3319/20
Import/Export of Livestock, Horses, Birds	01 607 2862
Import/Export of Cats & Dogs	01 607 2827
Quarantine Procedures for Cats & Dogs	01 607 2640
Licensing of Purchase of Mammalian Meat & Bone meal and that of Poultry Offal	01 607 2707
Animal Welfare Issues, Marts, Legislation, & Swill	01 607 2049
Veterinary Laboratory Services	01 607 2288
Control of Horses	01 607 2288
Sheep Scab	01 607 2000 Ext. 3000
Legislation	01 607 2288
Central Meat Control Laboratory	01 607 2879
Compensatory Allowance & Premia, Mayo	LoCall: 1890 200 507
Corporate Affairs Division	01 607 2802
Crop Production & Safety	
Animal Feedingstuffs	505 3576
Cereal Variety	505 3337
Cereal Seed Testing & Variety Testing Seed Certification	505 3345
Fertilisers & Plant Trade	505 3579
Horticulture/Potatoes	505 3578
NDP Grant Aid (Horticulture, Potatoes & Grain Storage)	505 3580
Seed Testing	505 3328
Pesticides	505 3579
Dairy Science Laboratory, Harcourt Terrace, Dublin 2	01 616 341/676 2313
Economics and Planning Division	01 607 2875
Enquiry Unit	01 607 2690
ERAD	01 607 2876/505 3500
EU/Trade	01 607 2813/607 2724
Export Refunds – Wexford	053 63400
Finance Division	607 2861
Food Division	607 2841
Food Safety Liaison Division	
Safety Liaison Unit	01 607 2046
Animal Product Imports & Reimports	01 607 2892/607 2896
Forestry Administration, Wexford	LoCall 1890 200 223
Grants and Premiums	053 60200
Appeals	Fax: 053 43834
Felling	
Forestry Planning and Development	
Forestry Promotion and Training	
Environmental Policy	
Forest Service Inspectorate	01 607 2651
	Fax: 01 607 2545
Freedom of Information Unit	01 607 2952

<i>Division/Section</i>	<i>Contact Number</i>
Horticulture/State Bodies	01 607 2822
Livestock Breeding, Cavan	049 436 8200
Information (Press Office)	01 607 2190
Information Systems Division	01 607 2810
Internal Audit	01 607 2849
Irish Horse Board, Maynooth	505 3584
Irish Intervention Agency, Wexford	053 63400
ISO Projects Management Division	01 607 2991
Lands Division, Cavan	049 436 8258
Legal Services Division	01 607 2741
Livestock Breeding, Cavan	049 436 8200
Management Services Division	01 607 2694
Meat Policy Division	
Beef Policy	01 607 2880
Central Fees Unit	01 607 2930
Sheepmeat/Meat Trade	01 607 2935
Pigmeat	01 607 2700
Poultry/Eggs	01 607 2832
Meat Hygiene and Animal Byproducts	01 607 2839/01 607 2212
Abattoirs	01 607 2249
Knackeries	01 607 2249/01 607 2223
Rendering	01 607 2212/01 607 2441
Milk Policy Division	01 607 2856/01 607 2857
Milk Subsidies, Wexford	053 63405
National Beef Assurance Division	505 3300
National Cereal Breeding Station, Backweston, Leixlip	01 628 0609/01 628 0608
Organic Farming, Wexford	053 63400
Personnel Division	
Administrative Staff	01 607 2806
Agricultural Officers	01 607 2811
Inspectorate Staff	01 607 2253
Staff Training & Development	01 607 2783
Veterinary/Legal Staff	01 607 2254
Pesticide Control Service, Abbotstown, Dublin 15	01 607 2655
Records Branch, Land Commission (National Archives Premises), Bishop Street, Dublin 8	475 0766/67
Seed Testing Station, Abbotstown, Dublin 15	01 607 2871
Special Beef Premium Unit, Portlaoise	LoCall: 1890 200 506
Survey Branch, Land Commission (National Archives Premises), Bishop Street, Dublin 8	475 0769/70
Veterinary Research Lab, Abbotstown, Castleknock, Dublin 15	01 607 2869

Local Offices of the Department

Please note that in the instances marked with an asterisk (*) below some Department services are split within a county or cover part of another county. The split is based according to the herd number ranges as listed on page xx.

V = Veterinary Office

L = Livestock Office

AES = Agricultural, Environmental and Structures (formerly Farm Development Service)

<i>County</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Telephone</i>
Co. Carlow V/L AES Carlow/Laois East	Industrial Estate, Athy Road, Carlow	059 917 0022
Co. Cavan V/L/AES	Government Offices, Farnham Street, Cavan	049 436 8200
Co. Clare V/L/AES	Government Offices, Kilrush Road, Ennis	065 686 6042
Co. Cork Cork North* V/L AES Mallow/Fermoy NW Cork Central* V/L/AES Cork West* V/L/AES	Hibernian House, 80 South Mall Gooldshill, Mallow Hibernian House, 80 South Mall Darrara, Clonakilty	021 485 1400 022 21153 021 485 1400 023 36200
Co. Donegal V/L AES Donegal South AES Donegal North AES	Meetinghouse St., Raphoe Irwinsyard, Milltown, Donegal Town Govt Offices, High Road Letterkenny Government Offices, Oliver Plunkett Road, Letterkenny	074 914 5990 074 972 1048 074 912 2199 074 912 1188
Co. Dublin Dublin & Wicklow East* V/L AES Dublin & Wicklow East*	St. John's House High Street, Tallaght Dublin 24	01 414 9900
Co. Galway V/L AES Galway AES Galway North AES Galway East & South Rural Development	Dockgate Building, Merchants Road The Mall, Tuam Main St., Loughrea Custom House, Galway	091 507600 091 771381 093 24257 091 841098 091 562085/6
Co. Kerry Kerry North V/L/AES AES Kerry South	Govt Offices, Spa Road, Tralee Credit Union Building, Beech Road, Killarney	066 714 5052 064 31013
Co. Kildare Kildare & Wicklow West V/L AES Kildare & Wicklow West	Poplar House, Poplar Square, Naas Spring Garden House, Sallins Road, Naas	045 873 035 045 894 044
Co. Kilkenny V/L/AES	Government Offices, Hebron Road, Kilkenny	056 777 2400
Co. Laois V/L/AES	Government Offices, Old Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise	0502 74400
Co. Leitrim V/L AES	(See Co. Sligo) Govt Offices, Carrick-on-Shannon	071 962 0030

<i>County</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Telephone</i>
Co. Limerick V/L/AES Forestry Division I (South & East)	St Munchin's House, Dock Road, Limerick St Munchin's House Mallow Street, Limerick	061 208500 061 411181
Co. Longford V/L/AES	Government Offices, Ballinalee Road, Longford	043 50020
Co. Louth V/L AES	North Quay, Drogheda Government Offices, Millennium Centre, Dundalk	041 987 0086 042 933 4342
Co. Mayo V/L AES Mayo West AES Mayo North AES Mayo East	Michael Davitt House Castlebar Government Offices, Ballina The Square, Claremorris	094 903 5300 096 22161 094 937 1490
Co. Meath V/L/AES	Government Offices, Kells Road, Navan	046 907 9030
Co. Monaghan V/L AES	Main Street, Ballybay Old Garda Barracks, Monaghan	042 974 8800 047 81452
Co. Offaly V/L/AES	Government Offices Clonminch, Tullamore	0506 46037
Co. Roscommon V/L AES Rural Development & Environment	Circular Rd., Roscommon Church St., Roscommon The Square, Castlerea	090 663 0100 090 662 7251 094 962 0787
Co. Sligo Sligo & Leitrim V/L/AES	Govt Offices, Cranmore Road, Sligo	071 915 5030
Co. Tipperary Tipp. South* V/L Tipp. North* V/L/AES AES Tipp. Mid AES Tipp. South	Govt Offices, Davis Street, Tipperary Govt Offices, St Conlon's Road, Nenagh Liberty Square, Thurles Govt Offices, New Quay, Clonmel	062 80100 067 50014 0504 21664 052 21717
Co. Waterford V/L AES Waterford East AES Waterford West	The Glen, Waterford New Civic Offices, Davitts Quay, Dungarvan	051 301700 058 41279
Co. Westmeath V/L AES Forestry Division I I (North & West)	Bellview, Dublin Road, Mullingar Pearse Street, Athlone Bellview, Dublin Road, 044 44061 Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	044 39034 (090) 6494439
Co. Wexford V/L/AES	Vinegar Hill Lane, Templeshannon, Enniscorthy	054 42008
Co. Wicklow AES Wicklow East* V/L Wicklow West* V/L	No 2, The Murrough, Wicklow Town See Co. Dublin See Co. Kildare	0404 25000

* Area responsibilities of Veterinary and Livestock services in certain local offices

*Office**Herd Number Ranges*

Cork South West	D101001-D197999 D225001-D232999
Cork Central	D198001-D224999 D233001-D260999 D262001-D267999 D282001-D283999
Cork North East	D261001-D261999 D268001-D281999 D284001-D415999
Tipperary North	V101001-V176300
Tipperary South	V177001-V263999
Wicklow East (Dublin)	Z101001-Z148999
Wicklow West (Kildare)	Z201001-Z226999

Laboratories and Field Stations

	<i>Address</i>	<i>Telephone</i>
Blood Testing Laboratory	Model Farm Road, Cork	021 454 5377
Bull Performance Station	Tully, Kildare	045 521573
Central Veterinary Laboratory	Abbotstown, Castleknock, Dublin 15	01 607 2869
Central Meat Control Laboratory	Abbotstown, Castleknock, Dublin 15	01 607 2879
Dairy Science Laboratory	Harcourt Terrace Lane, Dublin 2	01 676 2313
Dairy Science Laboratory	Model Farm Road, Cork	021 454 3300
Dairy Science Laboratory	Killeely Road, Limerick	061 452444
Regional Veterinary Lab.	Model Farm Road, Cork	021 454 3931
Regional Veterinary Lab.	Leggetsraath, Hebron Road, Kilkenny	056 772 1688
Regional Veterinary Lab.	Knockalisheen, Limerick	061 452911
Regional Veterinary Lab.	Fawcetts Bridge, Doonally, Sligo	071 914 2191
Regional Veterinary Lab.	Coosan, Athlone, Co. Westmeath	090 647 5514
National Crop Variety Testing Centre	Backweston, Leixlip, Co. Kildare	01 630 2900 Fax: 628 0634
Pesticides Control Service	Abbotstown, Castleknock, Dublin 15	01 607 2655
Potato Farm & Lab.	Tops, Raphoe, Co. Donegal	074 914 5490
Seed Testing Station	Abbotstown, Castleknock, Dublin 15	01 607 2871

