

# **Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute**

## **Freedom of Information: Publication Scheme**

**June 2007**



A Non-Departmental Public Body

# Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute: Publication Scheme

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## 1 Introduction to AFBI

The Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute (AFBI) was created on 1st April 2006 as an amalgamation of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Science Service and the Agricultural Research Institute of Northern Ireland (ARINI). AFBI is a DARD Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) and carries out high technology research and development, statutory, analytical, and diagnostic testing functions for DARD and other Government departments, public bodies and commercial companies.

AFBI's NDPB status enables it to be innovative and entrepreneurial in its approach to business development. AFBI is forging new partnerships with other scientific institutes and research organisations and extending the range of services it offers. This enables AFBI's unique breadth of scientific capabilities in the areas of agriculture, animal health, food, environment and biosciences to be offered to a wider prospective national and international customer base.

AFBI is managed by an independent Board which is also responsible for monitoring its performance. The Agriculture (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 for the creation of AFBI can be viewed at the following web address: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2004/20043327.htm>

The aims of the institute are to:

- underpin DARD objectives for the agri-food sector by scientific programmes designed to improve performance in the market, to safeguard animal and plant health, to maintain and invest in the environment, and to build a successful rural economy and society;
- meet the challenges of change by providing high quality cost-effective services;
- develop the science base in Northern Ireland to contribute to local, national and international efforts;
- provide specialist expertise and facilities for both industry and public sector bodies for contracted scientific services.

## 2 The Freedom of Information Act and the Publication Scheme

### 2.1 The Freedom of Information Act

The [Environmental Information Regulations 1992 \(and 2004\)](#) created a right of access for all environmental information subject to UK exemptions, while the [Data Protection Act 1998](#) gave individuals the right of access to information held about themselves. The [Freedom of information Act 2000](#) has been designed to further establish this new culture of openness and transparency in public administration. It gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities, sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities. A 'Public Authority' is defined in the Act, and includes but is not restricted to, central and local government, non-departmental public bodies, the police, the health service and schools, colleges and universities. Any person who makes a request to a public authority for information must be informed whether or not the public authority holds that information and, subject to exemptions, supplied with that information.

AFBI, along with every other public authority from November 2002, has a legal duty under Section 19 of the *Freedom of Information Act* to adopt and maintain a scheme relating to the publication of information by any authority that has gained approval from the Information Commissioner, an office set up to ensure compliance with the requirements of the act.

## 2.2 The Publication Scheme

Every public authority is required to adopt and maintain a publication scheme setting out the classes of information it holds, the manner in which it intends to publish the information, and whether or not a charge will be levied for the information. It is intended the Publication Scheme should be a living document, which will be modified and developed in accordance with public interest, comments and feedback. Some information may still be withheld; the reasoning behind this is explained in Section 7 of this document. When considering whether or not we have to withhold information we will take into account the grounds listed in The [Freedom of Information Act](#) and the [Environmental Information Regulations](#). We will also consider whether the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. In any event, if we do have to withhold information we will explain our decision for doing so.

Our publication scheme specifies:

- the classes of information which AFBI publishes (or intends to publish);
- the manner in which information in each class is, (or is intended to be), published and;
- whether the material is (or is intended to be) available free of charge or on payment of a fee.

Responsibility for the scheme rests with the Head of the Business Support Unit, AFBI.

Responsibility for maintaining the scheme on a regular basis rests with AFBI's FOI Officer.

### 3 How to access and obtain information

This publication scheme sets out the information that we will publish, how and when we will do so, and whether this information will be available free of charge or on payment. The classes of information we will publish are set out under clearly defined headings that reflect our structure and operation.

Publication does not refer solely to printed material. Publication has been interpreted as broadly as possible to include electronic documents, information included on the website, minutes of meetings, reports, glossy brochures and leaflets.

The **classes of information** to be published are set out in clearly defined categories, which reflect the structure and operations of the Institute. Under each class heading there is a brief description of what is included and, where appropriate, identifying any items of information within the class that will not be routinely available. In some cases a class may include a single publication, whereas others may describe a range of publications.

#### 3.1 Accessing information

The methods by which available information may be accessed or obtained are listed against each information class. Much of the information is available on our website at [www.afbini.gov.uk](http://www.afbini.gov.uk).

AFBI's website has been designed to allow for future growth and to support the increasing demand for electronic sources of information. The current structure is:

- **About Us** - includes what we do (including promotional DVD), information on AFBI Board, location maps of all AFBI sites with address and directions, a list of our facilities, job opportunities and contact us information
- **Services** - includes information on the various services we offer under the areas Diagnostic & Analytical, Contracted Research, Scientific Skills Training and Specialist Advice.
- **Research** – includes information on our main science themes, collaborations and outputs
- **News** – includes topical releases/articles/events
- **Publications** – list of conventionally published documents and leaflets including AFBI Board minutes

Published information may also be obtained in hard copy. Certain very large documents or manuals may be made available for viewing by arrangement however, where practicable we will

endeavour to supply sections of these documents by other means to meet specific needs. We intend, as far as possible, to make material available on our website on an ongoing basis at [www.afbini.gov.uk](http://www.afbini.gov.uk)

### **3.2 Obtaining information**

Where information is available on the website, a hyperlink will direct you to the correct page on the website. Information may also be available by other methods indicated. If required, you may telephone or write to the person below for details.

For information not readily accessible via this publication scheme, you can obtain the information required by writing (or emailing) to AFBI including your name, address and a description of the information required. You should provide as much detail as possible to identify the information you are seeking including:

- Your name & address
- The information or documents you would like to access; and
- The way you would like the information sent to you (for example, as hardcopy or via email)

Requests should be addressed to:

Freedom of Information: Publication Scheme,  
The Business Support Unit,  
Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute,  
18a Newforge Lane,  
Belfast, BT9 5PX  
Telephone: +44 (0)28 90 255689  
Fax: +44 (0)28 90 255035  
Email: [info@afbini.gov.uk](mailto:info@afbini.gov.uk)

## **4 Charges and copyright issues**

### **4.1 Charges**

Wherever possible, we shall aim to make information available free of charge. The exceptions are:

- when a cover charge is indicated for a printed document
- when substantial resources are required to respond to a request

AFBI does not charge for documents downloaded from its website. However, the user will have to meet any charges by their internet service provider and personal printing costs. For those without Internet access, a single printout from the website will be available by post from the Business Support Unit. Multiple printouts or archived copies of documents which are no longer available on the website, may warrant a charge to cover the cost of photocopying and postage. We will let you know this at the time of your request. Any charge will be payable in advance. Information that either carries a charge or for which a fee will be levied has been clearly identified under each class.

### **4.2 Copyright issues**

The supply of documents under Freedom of Information does not give the person or organisation who receives them an automatic right to re-use the documents in a way that would infringe copyright, for example, by making multiple copies, publishing and issuing copies to the public.

Brief extracts of any of the material included in this Publication Scheme may be reproduced under the fair dealing provisions of the [Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988](#) (sections 29 and 30) for the purposes of research for non-commercial purposes, private study, criticism, review and news reporting.

## **5 Equality Requirements**

This publication scheme has been reviewed in the light of the Institute's statutory obligations under [Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998](#). A formal screening process, based on criteria set by the Equality Commission, has been applied and has determined that the scheme has no significant impact on equality of opportunity within the terms of the Act. We are not therefore required to carry out an equality impact assessment on the Publication Scheme. In keeping with the Institute's commitment to promote equality of opportunity, the publication scheme is available, upon request and within a reasonable timeframe, in Braille, disc, audio-cassette and minority ethnic language.

## 6 The classes of information available under our Scheme

### 6.1 Role, function and management of AFBI

Class Corporate Aims and Objectives of AFBI  
Description AFBI Mission Statement, key aims, end-of-year business and corporate plans  
Availability <http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/about-us/what-we-do.htm>  
<http://www.afbini.gov.uk/corporate/publications.htm> - the business and corporate plans will be available from Oct 2007

Class Corporate Performance Reporting  
Description Annual report and accounts  
Availability Requests for hardcopy should be directed to the contact address detailed in this publication under section 3.2 Obtaining Information. This information will be available from Oct 2007.

Class Corporate Governance  
Description Roles and function of board, with list of members and their registered interests; Risk Management Strategy, Corporate Risk Register  
Availability <http://www.afbini.gov.uk/corporate/afbi-board.htm>  
<http://www.afbini.gov.uk/corporate/publications.htm>

### 6.2 AFBI Scientific Services

Class Diagnostic and Analytical  
Description Description of the diagnostics and analytical scientific services AFBI provides to both DARD and other public bodies and commercial customers. Includes Animal Disease Diagnostics, Hillsborough Feed and Information System, Chemical Residue Monitoring and the Coastal Monitoring Programme.  
Availability <http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/services/diagnostic.htm>  
<http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/services/diagnostic/adds.htm>  
<http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/services/diagnostic/forage-analysis.htm>  
<http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/services/diagnostic/services-diagnostic-analytical-services.htm>

Class Specialist Advice  
Description Details of the specialist advice AFBI provides to a wide range of public and private bodies. Includes predicted grass growth information and outputs from the Pesticide Usage Survey.

Availability <http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/services/specialist-advice.htm>  
<http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/services/specialist-advice/pesticide-usage-overview.htm>  
<http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/services/specialist-advice/grasscheck.htm>

Class Research

Description Includes information on AFBI's involvement in the impact of climate change; the search for alternative energy supplies; sustainable consumption; natural resource protection; sustainable food and farming (including animal health & welfare.

Availability <http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/research.htm>

Class Training and Education

Description List of training AFBI provides in a wide range of techniques and technologies including specialist courses in statistics, food hygiene.

Availability <http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/services/training.htm>

### 6.3 Scientific Publications

Class Scientific Information

Description Published information resulting from the Institute's research projects including press articles

Availability In writing to the contact address detailed in this publication under section 3.2 Obtaining Information.

### 6.4 News releases, newsletters and AFBI events

Class Press releases, articles and AFBI-hosted events

Description Current and archived AFBI news

Availability <http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/news.htm> and in writing to the contact address detailed in this publication under section 3.2 Obtaining Information.

Class AFBI Newsletter

Description AFBI general newsletter 'Sciential' and AFBI's Veterinary Sciences Division newsletter, 'Vetline'

Availability <http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/news/news-newsletters.htm> and in writing to the contact address detailed in this publication under section 3.2 Obtaining Information.

## 6.5 Human Resources

Class            Staff Recruitment & Selection Policy

Description    The management procedure for recruitment and selection of staff in AFBI

Availability    <http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/about-us/about-us-careers.htm> and in writing to the request contact address detailed in this publication.

Class            Equal Opportunity Policy

Description    The institute's policy statement on equal opportunities and related matters

Availability    Requests should be directed to the contact address detailed in this publication under section 3.2 Obtaining Information.

## **7 Exempt Information**

In some instances you may find information has been “removed” from a document. This is because the information falls within an exemption. Where this occurs the document will be clearly marked to show where information has been removed and the exemption used.

The type of material to which an exemption will normally apply has been set out by the Act. Typically information may be withheld if its release would compromise the health and safety of staff; where confidential information or personal data about others is included, or for reasons of security. Where this occurs the material will clearly show where information has been withheld and explain what exemption has been applied and why.

## **8 Your Feedback**

We shall be reviewing this publication scheme from time to time and would value your assistance in identifying ways to improve it. If you have any comments, suggestions or complaints to make about the presentation, structure or content of the scheme, please forward these to the Business Support Unit.

The Business Support Unit,  
Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute,  
18a Newforge Lane,  
Belfast, BT9 5PX  
Telephone: +44 (0)28 90 255689  
Fax: +44 (0)28 90 255035  
Email: [info@afbini.gov.uk](mailto:info@afbini.gov.uk)