

4.7 Code of Business Ethics

Enhancing a Professional Ethos

Teagasc encourages behaviour that befits the professional ethos of all members of the organisation. Staff behaviour should be consistent with their own high standards, those of their colleagues and the organisation as a whole. Their behaviour should support the core public sector values of integrity and impartiality.

Structures and procedures are required to engender a spirit of co-operation within the organisation. Staff should use these structures and procedures and be supportive of one another in the organisation.

(a) Ethics in Public Office

The [Ethics in Public Office Acts, 1995](#) and [2001](#) provide for the annual disclosure of registrable interests by holders of designated directorships and occupiers of designated positions of employment in specified Public Bodies. Its primary concern is ensuring the registration of interests of staff member where such interests could materially influence the performance of their Public Service functions.

Another important provision of the 2001 Act is the requirement to draw up codes of conduct, indicating standards of conduct and integrity for members of the public service. To fulfill this requirement, Teagasc has adopted the Civil Service Code of Standards & Behaviour. A summary of the Code of Standards & Behaviour is outlined below.

The essence of any system of ethics in the Public Service is to ensure that Government, in the broadest sense, is working only in the public interest. The objective is to demonstrate that those who are participating in public life are not seeking to derive personal advantage from the outcome of their actions. The legislation is founded on the presumption of integrity but recognises that specific measures should exist to underpin compliance.

In Teagasc, the provisions of the [Ethics in Public Office Acts, 1995](#) and [2001](#) in relation to disclosure of registrable interests, apply to:

- The Chairman and Authority Members
- All positions where the maximum salary is not less than the maximum salary of a Principal (general service grade, Class B PRSI) in the Civil Service
- The Director
- And all staff who have delegated authority to authorise procurement commitments of €15,000 or greater

Under this Act, all holders of the above mentioned staff and positions are furnished with a letter explaining the Act and requesting them to complete a Statement of Interest on an annual basis. Persons who consider they have no such registrable interests are required to complete a nil statement. Those who do have registrable interests are required to complete a Statement of Interest. These statements are returned to the Head Office and the Authority Chairman must report on our compliance with these requirements in the Teagasc annual report.

For more information on the Ethics in Public Office Acts or to download a Nil Statement or Statement of Interest form please refer to the Tnet or the [Standards in Public Office Commission website](#)

(b) Teagasc Code of Standards & Behaviour

[The Ethics in Public Office Act 2001](#) included a requirement to draw up codes of conduct, indicating standards of conduct and integrity for members of the public service. In order to fulfil this requirement Teagasc has adopted the Civil Service Codes of Standards & Behaviour to devise the Teagasc Code of Conduct. The Chairman of Teagasc is required to furnish a Report to the Minister for Agriculture Fisheries & Food each year confirming that a Code of Standards and Behaviour has been put in place and is being adhered to by all staff and management.

The main provisions of the Code are outlined below, however all staff must familiarise themselves with the Code. Please refer to the T-Net to view the full version of the Code.

- Staff must be impartial in the performance of their duties
- Staff must respect the constraints of the law
- Staff must maintain high standards of service in all of their dealings with the public/clients
- Staff are required to have due regard for Teagasc resources to ensure proper, effective and efficient use of public money
- Staff must show due respect to their colleagues including their beliefs and values
- The use of their official positions by staff to benefit themselves or others with whom they have personal or business ties is not allowed. Staff are also forbidden to seek to influence decisions on matters pertaining to their official positions other than through established procedures
- Staff may not engage in outside business or activity which would in any way conflict with the interests of Teagasc
- Staff who occupy “designated” positions for the purposes of the Ethics in Public Office Acts have certain statutory obligations in relation to disclosure of interests. These obligations are additional to any obligations imposed by the Code
- Staff should not receive benefits of any kind from a third party which might reasonably be seen to compromise their personal judgment or integrity
- The same principle applies to any acceptance of hospitality. Within the general framework of guidelines set out in the Code, every care must be taken to ensure that (a) any acceptance of hospitality does not influence, or be seen to influence, the discharging of official functions [Section 17] and (b) that there are clear and appropriate standards in place which have been notified to all staff in relation to payment for work on behalf of outside bodies
- Staff must not seek contracts with Teagasc for supply of goods or services whether for their own benefit or for the benefit of any company with which they may have an involvement in a private capacity
- Staff shall not accept an appointment, or particular consultancy project, where the staff member concerned believes that the nature and terms of such appointment could lead to a conflict of interest or the perception of such, without first obtaining the approval of the Director of Administration or Director of Teagasc as appropriate. Additionally, staff who hold positions which are “designated” positions for the purposes of the Ethics in Public Office Acts must, within twelve months of resigning or retiring, obtain the approval of the Director of Administration or the Director of Teagasc as appropriate before taking up any outside appointment
- Staff involved in research must adhere to the principles of good research at all times

(c) Acceptance of Gifts

It is Teagasc policy not to accept benefits, gifts or hospitality of any kind from suppliers or from any third party who could potentially have a beneficial relationship with the organisation.

This is to ensure that no staff member in Teagasc can be perceived to have had their integrity or judgment compromised in any way or be seen to have been influenced in their official position within the organisation.

Where a staff member has an existing relationship with an actual supplier or any third party already connected to the organisation; it is permissible to accept small benefits, gifts or hospitality (not exceeding the value of €100 in total in any year). Where this is the case, such benefits, gifts or hospitality should be distributed equally, where possible, among all staff members associated with that relationship. Where it is not possible to distribute those benefits, gifts or hospitality equally, they should be allocated among all staff members associated with that relationship on a shared basis e.g. raffle. A small benefit, gifts or hospitality that is personalised by its nature (e.g. personal invite) to an individual staff member can only be accepted within the above limits and the staff member must seek their line manager's approval to accept the small benefit, gifts or hospitality in these circumstances. A line manager will only grant such approval to a staff member if they are fully satisfied that it will not be perceived as influencing their official position.

No benefits, gifts or hospitality of any kind should be accepted from a supplier or any third party who may be likely to tender for Teagasc business (or renewal of existing business) in the short term or where a tender process is ongoing.

Version	Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Policy Owner
1.0		n/a	Corporate Services