An Rialálaí Agraibhia
Agri-Food Regulator

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# Code of Conduct For Employees

**Document Control**

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## Introduction

This Code of Conduct is drawn up in pursuant to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. It does not purport to explicitly provide for all situations which may arise but sets out the main elements of the Code of Conduct including the requirement that employees should act in accordance with its overall ethical intent. It should not be regarded as being limited by any defects or omissions that may exist from time to time in any relevant rules, guidelines or policies. The Code is additional to and does not in any way restrict the legal obligations of employees.

The Code is intended to:

(a) establish an agreed set of ethical principles;

(b) promote and maintain confidence and trust, and

(c) prevent development or acceptance of unethical practices.

## General Principles/Conflicts of Interest

The Chief Executive, as a Member of the Agri-Food Regulator, is obliged to complete a statement of interests.

Employees must declare in writing to the Head of Corporate Services, who maintains a confidential record, any personal or family interest or possible conflict of interest that might affect their impartiality in carrying out their duties immediately if such exists or as soon as it occurs.

Employees of the Agri-Food Regulator may not involve themselves in outside employment or business interests which are in conflict, or in potential conflict, with the business of the Agri-Food Regulator, or would prevent them from carrying out their duties. Where a question arises as to whether or not a case involved a conflict of interest for an employee, the matter should be brought to the attention of his/her immediate superior. Where such cases warrant it, the Chief Executive shall determine the question and his/her decision shall be final.

Where an employee is retiring/resigning from employment with the Agri-Food Regulator, they will be required to sign a confidentiality statement committing to upholding the principles of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and confirming that all information received while in the Agri-Food Regulator will be treated as confidential. A log of confidentiality statements signed by employees will be maintained by the Agri-Food Regulator. Retiring/resigning employees will also be required to confirm that they have returned or disposed of in an appropriate manner, all papers obtained during their employment.

## Gifts and Entertainment

Employees of the Agri-Food Regulator must not accept, give gifts, hospitality, preferential treatment or any other benefits or favours which might affect or appear to affect the ability of the donor or the recipient to make independent judgement on business transactions. Some suppliers, consultancies/service providers and contractors may send unsolicited gifts to named employees with whom they have contact. In such cases, employees should notify the Head of Corporate Services who will decide whether the gift may be accepted. In the case of non-personal gifts, these should be distributed in an equitable manner among all staff.

Entertainment of the Agri-Food Regulator employees by suppliers is acceptable within normal commercial criteria. These are defined as follows:

- A meal may be accepted at a local venue (but this must not include residential stay).
- A ticket for a sports or other public entertainment event at a local venue may be accepted.
- Under no circumstances may cash or cash vouchers be accepted by any employee.

Under no circumstances may any employee, acting in a professional or personal capacity, solicit or request a gift, donation or support from suppliers of goods or services to the Agri-Food Regulator, without the express written permission of the Chief Executive or an officer nominated by him/her.

Where a question of the giving of a gift to people or organisations doing business with the Agri-Food Regulator arises, the approval of the Chief Executive or the Head of Corporate Services should be sought beforehand. Gifts of this kind must be taken and should not normally exceed €100 in value.

## Integrity and Loyalty

The Agri-Food Regulator is committed to working vigorously and energetically but also ethically and honestly. Employees may not acquire business information or the business secrets of competitors or potential competitors by improper means. Employees may not use the Agri-Food Regulator resources or time for personal gain, for the benefit of persons or organisations unconnected with the Agri-Food Regulator or its activities, or for the benefit of competitors.

Employees of the Agri-Food Regulator acknowledge the responsibility to be loyal to the Agri-Food Regulator and are fully committed to all its business activities, and to conform to the highest standards of business ethics.

## Information

The Agri-Food Regulator will provide access to general information relating to its activities, in a way that is open and enhances its accountability to the general public. The Agri-Food Regulator will provide accurate and timely accounts and reports which reflect its business performance.

Employees of the Agri-Food Regulator must at all times maintain the confidentiality of information obtained in the course of the Agri-Food Regulator 's business and their attention is drawn to the paragraphs above under the heading 'Conflicts of Interests'.

Employees of the Agri-Food Regulator must respect the confidentiality of sensitive information held by the Agri-Food Regulator.

This includes:

a. commercially sensitive information, including but not limited to, future plans or details of major organisational or other changes such as restructuring;
b. personal information; and
c. information received in confidence by the Agri-Food Regulator.

There will be appropriate prior consultation with third parties where, exceptionally, it is proposed to release sensitive information in the public interest.

Employees of the Agri-Food Regulator must not disclose privileged or confidential information when employment ceases. It is strongly recommended that the acceptance of further employment where there is potential for conflict of interest should be avoided for a reasonable period of time after the exercise of a function in the Agri-Food Regulator has ceased.

The Agri-Food Regulator will comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Acts 1998 to 2018 and the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 to 2014.

## Statutory Obligations

The purchasing activities of the Agri-Food Regulator are to be conducted in accordance with best business practice.

The Agri-Food Regulator has adopted a Corporate Procurement Plan which details tendering and purchasing procedures and processes, as well as approved levels of authority for approval of expenditure and these are strictly adhered to. The procedures outlined in the Corporate Procurement Plan are compatible with and complement EU Public Procurement Directives as well as other relevant national and international trade control mechanisms.

The Corporate Procurement Plan is designed to provide an objective framework to assess the products and value-for-money of suppliers, and to provide the organisation with goods and services at competitive prices.

## Employees' Obligations

The Agri-Food Regulator is fully committed to:

a. the fulfilment of all its regulatory and statutory obligations;
b. the operation of controls to prevent fraud, including adequate controls to ensure compliance with prescribed procedures in relation to the claiming of expenses for business travel;
c. co-operating with internal audit in the internal audit process;
d. ensuring that its accounts and reports accurately reflect its business performance and are not misleading or designed to be misleading;
e. compliance with employment equality and equal status legislation;
f. fairness in all business dealings;
g. valuing customers and treating all customers equally;
h. promoting the development of a culture of 'speaking up' whereby workers can raise concerns regarding serious wrongdoing in the workplace without fear of reprisal;
i. placing the highest priority on promoting and preserving the health, safety and welfare of its employees and;
j. ensuring that community concerns are fully considered and minimising any detrimental impact of its operations on the environment.

All employees of the Agri-Food Regulator are required to bear these principles in mind in the conduct of their duties.

## Enforcement and Responsibility

It is essential that the provisions of this Code be understood and observed by all employees of the Agri-Food Regulator. It is not possible for a set of rules or guidelines to provide for all situations which may arise. Employees of the Agri-Food Regulator will bear in mind, therefore, that it is primarily their responsibility to ensure that all of their activities, whether covered specifically or otherwise in this document, are governed by the ethical principles described here.

A copy of this Code of Conduct is distributed to all employees of the Agri-Food Regulator and to all new employees on their appointment. Employees will acknowledge that they have received and understood the requirements of this Code.

## Review

The Agri-Food Regulator commits to review the Code annually or as appropriate.