



21 June 2021

Ms Éilis Fallon
Committee Secretariat
Committee of Public Accounts
Leinster House
Dublin 2.

Ref: S0418 PAC33

Dear Éilis,

Further to the query contained in the transcript (Pages 9 and 10) of the Committee meeting of the Committee of Public Accounts on Tuesday 25 May 2021 and in particular to the query with regard to Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine staff costs and administration relating to the bovine TB eradication programme and a request for a breakdown of staff costs, administration and supplies.

Below please find the DAFM response:

Staffing costs

To inform the financial deliberations of the TB Stakeholder Forum in 2018, DAFM surveyed staff throughout the Department who were engaged in the operation of the Bovine TB Eradication Scheme.

It identified 354.4 Full-Time Equivalent officials (FTEs) involved in the management of the Programme across administrative, veterinary and technical grades. This includes staff working in areas of:

- Policy
- Lab testing
- Research
- Legal issues
- Procurement
- Managing compensation schemes
- Epidemiology
- Programming
- Etc

In line with standard methodology on staff costing, it was estimated that 44.8 FTE staff costs at policy level accounted for €2.7 million between administrative and veterinary staff.

The operations of the TB Programme are overseen by the 2 Area Management Teams (AMTs) and 16 Regional Veterinary Offices (RVOs). The Programme includes over 9 million individual bovine tests per annum and in-depth interaction with over 4,000 herds who experience a TB breakdown. It also involves management of the Wildlife Programme in every county in Ireland with the objective of reducing the risk of spread of TB from badgers to cattle. Management of the TB Programme is in general the primary function of the AMT/RVO network.

It was estimated that the 293.3 FTE staff costs between the AMTs and RVOs amounted to €18.3 million – veterinary €6.8 million, technical staff €5.1 million and administrative €6.4 million.

DAFM pay Whole-Time Veterinary Inspectors (WTVIs) to undertake a proportion of TB testing. This amounted to €1.4 million in 2018.

The Animal Health Computer System (AHCS) is used for managing the bovine TB eradication Programme. Staff IT developer costs of €1.2 million accrued in 2018.

Longtown farm outside Clane in Co Kildare is managed by DAFM. Part of its functions include quality assurance validation work in relation to the tuberculin used in testing cattle.

DAFM maintains an extensive laboratory network between Backweston, Cork, Sligo, Athlone, Kilkenny and Limerick. These labs are used for a range of TB testing for bovines, badgers and deer.

Staffing costs associated with Longtown farm and the laboratory network for the TB Programme were €2.3 million.

Taken together, these staffing costs amount to just over €27 million, in 2018.

Estimates of staffing costs in 2019 and 2020 include providing for wage adjustments in line with public sector pay developments and the sanctioning of an additional 16 posts in 2020 to support the TB Programme across the various functions of the Programme.

Administrative Costs

In 2018, administration costs were €1.1 million for the Programme. Over 98% of this relates to Travel and Subsistence payments to DAFM staff in undertaking their official duties as part of the TB Programme. The balance is accounted for with minor miscellaneous items such as printing costs.

Supplies


Expenditure on ERAD Supplies	2018	Purpose
	€'000	
Tuberculin	2,798	Testing cattle
Hauliers	887	Removing reactor cattle
Courier Services	146	Transporting lab samples to labs
Testing Kits	40	Wildlife Programme supplies
Lab Equipment	183	Lab related
PPE Gear	33	Lab related
Waste Disposal	18	Lab related
Veterinary Consumables	61	Lab related
Miscellaneous	175	Lab related
Total Expenditure	4341	

To note

While the objective of this exercise was to capture all DAFM staff and admin costs associated with the Programme, it does not capture time and cost of officials outside of areas that directly contribute to the Programme. This includes senior DAFM officials and support functions such as Legal Services, Central Procurement and others.

Also, no account has been taken of the staff costs of Veterinary Public Health Team who undertake reactor management in lairages and collect samples from carcasses in slaughter plants for the TB Programme.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B Gleeson', written over a horizontal line.

Brendan Gleeson
Secretary General