

TRADE EXPERTS GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduction

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) was established on 16 October 2001 as an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

In accordance with its aim to be a customer focused organisation, RPA established commodity specific Experts Groups to take forward issues affecting the trade, and to capture customer feedback. RPA is now amalgamating the Meat, Cereals and Non Annex I, Dairy and Sugar Experts Groups* to form one Trade Experts Group.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to:

§ establish terms of reference for the Trade Experts Group. The Group membership will be independent, willing and representative, encompassing the different requirements and interests of stakeholders and customers of the industries.

The remit of the Group is to:

§ facilitate a direct means for stakeholder and customer members to input into RPA's operations and, in particular, raise legitimate queries and concerns relating to RPA schemes (listed at Appendix 1) and/or schemes which cut across the responsibilities of DEFRA and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), for open consultation;

§ capture feedback and report to the Group on the levels of customer service RPA delivers;

§ receive feedback from the Group on existing schemes and ensure this is reflected through the appropriate channels for consideration;

§ keep stakeholder and customer members up to date on new initiatives or changing business requirements that could impact on stakeholders. Regular updates and advance warning will be given particularly when any internal RPA changes are likely to impact on customers' business operations and/or service delivered to customers.

* A separate Fresh Fruit & Vegetables Aid Experts Group will be maintained at present.

3. Membership

Membership of the Group will include those drawn from organisations representing the trade associations, or individuals who are willing and able to fulfil a representational role.

The Group will be made up of RPA officials and industry representatives. Other officials or RPA's control agents may, at the Chair's discretion, be invited to join the Group.

A standing invitation to Defra, the Devolved Administrations and HMRC will be open. However, the Group should not be used for raising issues which are covered by established consultation procedures offered by these Departments. The Group will be chaired by an RPA senior manager and RPA will provide secretariat support. Membership of the group will be reviewed annually.

4. Organisation

Communication will be via a virtual stakeholder group (by e-mail using the designated mailbox set up for this purpose) with the option of holding specialist meetings as necessary to discuss specific issues.

Members are expected to participate in representative capacity for their organisation or association. The forum is not intended to be used for individual members' interests or that of any individual company.

5. Virtual Group Via e-mail

A dedicated e-mailbox has been set up for the use of Trade Expert Group members (TradeExpertsGroup@rpa.gsi.gov.uk). Legitimate queries, concerns, or feedback relating to RPA schemes may be submitted at any time by trade representatives via e-mail to the Trade Experts Group mailbox.

RPA will consider the issues raised and provide a response by e-mail within 15 working days. The question and response will also be distributed by e-mail to the other members of the Group for information.

RPA will distribute relevant information on new initiatives or changing business requirements, draft commission regulations and Notices to Traders (where appropriate) by e-mail and request feedback from the Group.

6. Specialist Meetings

Where a trade representative considers that a specific issue can not be resolved by e-mail and the issue requires discussion, a request for a meeting should be submitted to the Trade Experts Group e-mailbox.

The Chair will consider the request and agree to the holding of a meeting as necessary. If a meeting is not appropriate, the secretary will contact and advise the trade representative accordingly, explaining the reason behind this decision.

If the Chair agrees to the need for a meeting, RPA will arrange a date and venue and inform all Trade Expert Group members of the meeting. Meetings will usually be held at RPA Newcastle, but other venues may be used if necessary. The specific issues raised will be discussed, customer feedback will be requested, and actions agreed (if appropriate) at each meeting.

A meeting may also be held if RPA considers that a specific issue requires discussion with the group.

7. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of trade representatives to seek, collate and present the views of members and to provide feedback.

RPA Trader Scheme Operations (TSO) Policy will be responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring action on proposals and decisions made by the Group.

TSO Policy will also ensure sufficient resources are made available for the Group to function effectively (ie venue and administrative support).

The Group will have no statutory powers, nor will officials or Ministers be obliged to accept its advice or recommendations, although the reasons for the rejection of advice will be given to the Group. Any papers produced by RPA and circulated to the Group should not be published without the express permission of RPA. At the discretion of the Chair, discussion of sensitive issues may be subject to the Group's agreement to place an embargo on disclosure.

TSO Policy
RPA
January 2009

Appendix I

SCHEMES COVERED BY THE EXPERTS GROUP

Intervention

Butter
Skimmed Milk Powder
Beef
Pigmeat
Cereals

Private Storage Aid

Butter (Unsalted or Salted)
Cheese (Grana Padano, Parmigiano Reggiano, Provolone)
Sheep or Goats Cheese
White Sugar
Olive Oil
Beef
Pigmeat
Sheep or Goatmeat

Internal Markets

Sugar in the Chemical Industry (SCI)
Sugar Production Charge
Starch End Use
Whisky

Export Refunds

Non Annex I
Milk
Sugar
Cereals
Beef, Pigmeat, Poultrymeat, Sheepmeat and Goatmeat
Special Export Refund

Import and Export Licensing

Sugar
Milk
Cereals
Beef, Pigmeat, Poultrymeat, Sheepmeat and Goatmeat
Beef Import Tariff Quota

Export Refund Certificates

Non Annex I