



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD  
WHITEHALL PLACE, LONDON SW1A 2HH

From the Minister

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP  
10 Downing Street  
London  
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8 January 1981

EFFICIENCY IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT: THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 1981

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I enclose, for inclusion in the 1981 scrutiny programme, a proposal for the scrutiny of certain routine laboratory tests at present carried out by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service of my Department.

I am copying this minute and enclosure to the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and to Sir Derek Rayner.

PETER WALKER

## RAYNER SCRUTINY 1981 - MAFF

a. Subject

Routine laboratory testing -

*and certain related tests*

- (i) the Rose Bengal Plate Test (RBPT) ~~for~~ monitoring brucellosis in all beef herds and of young stock in dairy herds, now carried out by Veterinary Service staff at three centres - Weybridge, Worcester and Lasswade (near Edinburgh).
- (ii) testing of samples for the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce, now carried out in regional laboratories of the Agricultural Science Service, the main commodities being butter and skimmed milk powder (SMP) for intervention buying, together with liquid skimmed milk and SMP for animal feedingstuffs under CAP subsidy schemes.

b. Costs (1980/81 financial year)

(i)	RBPT <i>and related tests</i>	
	Man-years	90
	Staff costs	£731,000
	Other costs	£133,000
(ii)	IBAP samples	
	Man-years	28
	Staff costs	£230,000
	Other costs	£30,000

c. Reasons for selecting this subject

- (i) Milk Ring Testing (MRT), for brucellosis monitoring of dairy cows, has already been contracted out to the Milk Marketing Board. The RBPT might also be contracted out: the contractor would have to be a quasi-official organisation to meet European Community requirements.
- (ii) Routine testing for IBAP diverts the Agricultural Science Service from its primary role and the work may be within the capability of Public Analysts.

d. Terms of reference

To examine, with reference to cost, efficiency and effectiveness the involvement of the Veterinary Service in the Rose Bengal Plate Test <sup>and certain related routine tests</sup> for brucellosis and of the Agricultural Science Service in routine laboratory testing for the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce; and to make recommendations.

e. Proposed starting and finishing dates

Start: 21 April 1981 (subject to the availability of suitable staff)

Finish: 28 August 1981

f. Examining officer and reporting arrangements

Examining officer - a Principal or an officer of equivalent rank yet to be selected.

Reporting arrangements - to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in consultation with the Permanent Secretary MAFF and Sir Derek Rayner's unit. The report will be of interest to the other Agriculture Ministers in the United Kingdom.