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

From the Minister

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

26 January 1982

THE EFFICIENCY STRATEGY 1982 - THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME

Your Principal Private Secretary wrote to Ministers' Private Secretaries on 15 December inviting proposals for the 1982 programme.

As I said in my letter of 27 November to Baroness Young, copied to you, we will be co-operating in the scrutiny of personnel work; and I propose a study of the use of written documents in my ... Department as in the attached detailed proposal. The aim would be to reduce the volume and cost of written documents: this is an area of work which I discussed with Derek Rayner some time ago and I know he found the idea interesting. The results will I hope be of relevance to other departments than my own in view of the general implications of the topic.

I have nothing further to propose for 1982: the relevant officials in my Department will be very much preoccupied with putting into effect the Coopers and Lybrand Report recommendations on financial planning, control and monitoring. As I said in my earlier letter, I think it is more important to press on with this than to divert effort into an additional major scrutiny covering some of the same ground.

I am copying this letter to Cabinet colleagues, Sir Derek Rayner, Sir Robert Armstrong, Sir Douglas Wass, Robin Ibbs and John Cassels.

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PETER WALKER

a. Subject

The generation and use of written documents in MAFF.

b. Costs of the activity

To be established by the study.

c. Reasons for selecting this subject

The use of written documents is integral to the work of MAFF, but the daily weight of paper passing across the desks of Ministers and staff at all levels has become very burdensome. Entry to the EC has added a further dimension to the growth of paper, in view of the very large number of documents generated by the Council, the Commission and their respective services. The necessity for this weight of paper needs to be tested and challenged with a view to reducing the burden and streamlining the work of the Department without loss of control, public accountability, efficiency, reliability or any other necessary feature of Government activity.

d. Terms of reference

To examine selected posts and/or functions of MAFF in order

- (a) to identify the main purposes for which written documents are produced (or copied);



(b) to consider whether and, if so, how the preparation, copying, circulation and storage of such documents could be reduced or made less costly;

(c) to assess the financial and other advantages and disadvantages of the necessary changes; and

(d) to make recommendations.

e. Proposed starting and finishing dates

Dates in 1982 to be determined dependent on availability of a suitable Scrutiny Officer.

f. Scrutiny officer and reporting arrangements

Examining officer - one Principal (to be selected), with appropriate support

Reporting arrangements - to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in consultation with the Permanent Secretary MAFF and the Rayner Office. The report will be of interest to other Heads of Departments.

