

Our Ref: FoI/Req/16/189

Ms. Valerie Flynn
The Sunday Times

7th December 2016

Dear Ms. Flynn,

I refer to the request which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records held by this Department, as follows:

- 1. Speaking notes, briefing notes and any other records from the Ambassador's meeting with the Minister for Agriculture on 3 November concerning the recent trade visit to Morocco and Tunisia.*
- 2. Any other speaking notes, briefing notes, slides, delegate lists or other records for events relating to this trade mission.*
- 3. Correspondence between DFA and Department of Agriculture/Bord Bia on preparations for this trade mission.*

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on the 17th November.

The purpose of the trade mission was to promote Irish dairy and meat sector businesses in Morocco, and to further develop the trading relationship between Ireland and Morocco.

In relation to the first point of your request; the Ambassador briefed the Minister orally (this would be normal practice) and as a result there are no speaking notes, briefing notes or any other records from that meeting. You might note that Minister Creed's trade mission was to Morocco only.

I have identified 98 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule below. I have made a decision to grant 90 of the records, part-grant 4 of the records and refuse 4.

Where access to records have been part-granted, parts of records 15, 21 and 22 are exempt from release under section 37(1) of the Act:

37(1) "Subject to this section, a head shall refuse to grant an FOI request if, in the opinion of the head, access to the record concerned would involve the disclosure of personal information (including personal information relating to a deceased individual)."

Where an exemption under Section 37 is invoked, consideration must be given to the public interest considerations under Section 37(5). It is my view that the public interest, in this case, does not warrant the release of this information. In relation to balancing the public interest that the request should be granted, and the public interest in ensuring the right to privacy of the individuals, I find that the public interest is in ensuring that the right to privacy of the individuals to whom the information relates is upheld.

Record 64 was also part-granted; parts were exempt from release under Section 33(1)(d) of the Act.

Section 33(1) states that; *A head may refuse to grant an FOI request in relation to a record (and in particular but without prejudice to the generality otherwise of this subsection, to a record to which subsection (2) applies) if, in the opinion of the head, access to it could reasonably be expected to affect adversely; (d) international relations.*

Access to records 86, 87, 88 and 90 have been refused under Section 33(1)(d) of the Act.

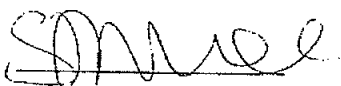
The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is responsible for managing relations between Ireland and 178 countries. It operates in a complex and diverse international environment, in a variety of locations and under varying local laws and customs. The conduct of international relations depends upon the creation and maintenance of trust and confidence between governments. In order to effectively carry out its role the Department needs to maintain this mutuality of trust. I have considered the possibility and likelihood that the full release of Records 64, 86, 87, 88 and 90 could result in negative consequences and their likely severity. In particular, their release could impair the good working relations between this country and another State. In that light, I have refused access or part-granted access to those records.

Right of Appeal

Should you wish to appeal this decision, you may do so in writing to the Freedom of Information Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 76-78 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2 or by email to foi@dfa.ie. A fee applies for an appeal for access to non-personal information; the level of this fee has been set at €30. For methods of payment, please contact FOI Unit at foi@dfa.ie, or 01-4082857.

You should make your appeal within 4 weeks (20 working days) from the date of this notification. However, the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances. The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of the staff of this Department.

Yours sincerely,



Shona Dunne