



An Roinn Airgeadais  
Department of Finance

E109/177/01

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8 February 2002

**Circular 6/2002: Confined competition for appointment to the post of Director in the Agriculture Appeals Office, Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development**

A Dhuine Uasail,

1. I am directed by the Minister for Finance to announce the holding, by the Civil Service Commission, of a confined competition for appointment to the post of Director in the Agriculture Appeals Office, Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

**Background**

2. The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is establishing a new Agriculture Appeals Office on a statutory basis. This office will be located in Portlaoise. The legislative framework governing the establishment of the office, the appointment of appeals officers and associated matters are set out in the Agriculture Appeals Act 2001 (No. 29 of 2001).

The Office will have over 20 staff and will deal with appeals from farmers in respect of all the grant schemes paying directly to farmers. The Department pays out over €1,000 million in direct payments to farmers every year involving the processing of over 600,000 individual grant applications. The Office will also deal with appeals under the National Beef Assurance Scheme and will provide an appeals system for Dealers in certain animals and poultry.

**Job Description**

3. The Director of Agriculture Appeals will act as the Chief Appeals Officer, will be involved in completing the process of setting up the Office and will be responsible for all aspects of the operation of that Office.

TO ALL DEPARTMENTS

[For Department, read Department/Office throughout this Circular.]

The key challenges for this post include:

- The organisation and change management activity associated with the creation of a new office, based on best practice, which will bring together a team of appeals officers and support staff from various backgrounds and the creation of a common sense of purpose among these staff.
- The delivery of an appeals system which meets the Department's commitments under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and the Protocol on Direct Payments to Farmers and which is in compliance with the Agriculture Appeals Act.
- The design and delivery of the highest standard of quality customer service to farmers in line with the Department's stated objective on customer service.
- Leadership and the development of an expert team, comprising a range of skills, capable of delivering an appeals service, which is seen to be fair, efficient, independent and readily accessible to the farming community.

Particular Responsibilities:

- Ensuring that the new office is established and fully operational within the time scale laid down by the Department.
- Playing a key role in the recruitment of appeals officers and support staff.
- Overseeing the accommodation arrangements in the new location.
- Ensuring that appeals officers are adequately trained in administrative law.
- Ensuring that appeals are dealt with fully and speedily.
- Ensuring that decisions of appeals officers are fair and in accordance with the rules of natural justice.
- Preparing reports for the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development including annual reports on the operation of the Appeals Office and any other reports requested by the Minister.
- Accountability for the new office and securing value for money.
- Ensuring effective liaison between the Appeals Office and the Department so that the appeals process operates smoothly and efficiently.

### **Personal Requirements**

4. The successful candidate will:

- Have well developed strategic and operational management skills, a demonstrated ability for critical analysis of complex issues and a record of achievement in his/her career to date.
- Have an appreciation of the special nature of the work involved in processing appeals, the environment in which appeals must be dealt with, including oral hearings, the consistency that is required across cases and over time and the need for clear logic in the application of the processes throughout so that the justice of the decisions can be clearly explained.
- Have a good knowledge of the schemes and services administered by the Department, including the legislative and practical aspects of the schemes or otherwise can demonstrate that, having a basic understanding of and appropriate experience in the operation of similar schemes, can quickly acquire the particular in-depth knowledge.

- Be able to anticipate customer needs and maintain a top quality service to meet those needs.
- Have sound judgement and excellent interpersonal and communication skills.
- Have team building and leadership qualities, which will enable him/her to establish and manage a new office and to motivate and provide effective direction to a range of professional, technical and administrative staff.

### **Eligibility**

5. Candidates must,

(a) on the date they apply for the competition, be serving in an established capacity in the Civil Service in a grade in respect of which the maximum point is either equal to or higher than the maximum point of the Assistant Principal (standard) scale - €52,438.91.

### **AND**

(b) on 1 February 2002, must have not less than three years' service in their existing grade or an aggregate of three years' service in eligible grades. In this context credit is given for all job-sharing service on the same basis as full-time service.

6. Officers on probation are not eligible to compete except where they would have been eligible had they remained in their previous grade and they have served continuously since satisfactorily completing a period of probation. Periods of special leave without pay should not be considered to break continuity of service for this purpose.

7. Officers on special leave with pay may apply, if otherwise eligible. Officers on special leave without pay (e.g. to serve with the EU) may be eligible; Personnel Sections should check cases not covered by Department of Finance Circular 33/91 with this Department. Officers on career break may apply if the terms of their career break conform with the provisions of Department of Finance Circular 18/98 and if they are otherwise eligible.

8. The eligibility of any particular grade or group for appointment under the terms of the competition applies exclusively to the post of Director in the Agriculture Appeals Office, Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development as covered by the terms of the circular.

### **Conditions of appointment**

9. The salary scale for the post, effective from 1 October 2001, is: €59,384.38 - €61,902.27 - €64,403.65 - €66,925.35 - €69,050.90 - €71,253.89 (after three years satisfactory service at the maximum) - €73,454.35 (after six years satisfactory service at the maximum). In addition, the post will attract an annual allowance of €6,350. The appointment will be subject to the usual conditions governing such appointments, and

as such, will be in an acting capacity in the first instance. An officer whose service is not satisfactory, or who opts not to remain in the post, may, at any time up to the end of one year, be returned to his or her former Department or duties. Any extra payment arising from the assignment would then cease.

### **The competition**

10. Selection will be by competitive interview conducted by the Civil Service Commission. The interview board may, having examined the applications of all candidates by reference to the nature of the duties and the personal requirements described in paragraphs 3 and 4 above, decide that not all of the candidates will be invited to attend before the board for interview. In addition, the board may, at its discretion, require candidates to undergo a preliminary interview and invite only those who reach the requisite standard to attend for competitive interview to select the candidate best qualified for appointment.

11. (i) In placing in order of merit the candidates considered best qualified for appointment, the Civil Service Commission will give credit for proficiency in both Irish and English, in accordance with Department of Finance Circular 30/90 and Department of the Public Service Circular 43/75, and any other relevant instruction to candidates qualified for the award of such credit.

(ii) If they so wish, candidates other than those qualified for the full credit of 6% as at (i) above, may, if they are admitted to the competitive interview, have an assessment made of their ability to communicate effectively in both Irish and English. Ability in the language in which the interview is conducted will be assessed at the interview and in the other language by a separate language test. Candidates who, as a result of this assessment, show that they are proficient in both Irish and English will be given credit in respect of such proficiency.

### **Applications**

12. Candidates should obtain their application forms from their own Personnel Section. The Civil Service Commission will supply application forms to Personnel Sections on request. Candidates should return their completed application forms directly to the **Chief Executive Officer, Civil Service Commission, Chapter House, 26-30 Abbey Street Upper, Dublin 1**, to reach there as soon as possible but not later than **5.15 p.m. on Friday 22 February 2002**. This closing date must be strictly observed. Candidates invited to interview must be prepared to make themselves available at short notice. It is expected that interviews will take place in March 2002.

13. The Civil Service Commission will contact Personnel Sections in respect of candidates being called to interview. For each such candidate the Personnel Officer will be required:

- (i) to certify that he or she
  - has worked well and been satisfactory in his/her present grade,
  - has been satisfactory in general conduct,
  - fulfills the conditions of eligibility set out in paragraphs 5-8 above,

and where appropriate

(ii) to send to the Civil Service Commission an assessment of the candidate's suitability for promotion to the post of Director on a form to be supplied by the Civil Service Commission.

14. Candidates should note that (i) eligibility for the competition and (ii) health and the level of sick leave are not verified by the Civil Service Commission until a candidate comes under consideration for appointment. Admission to the competition therefore, does not imply acceptance by the Commission. In particular, candidates should note that the Personnel Officer will not have verified the health and the level of sick leave of those called to interview; accordingly, admission to the competition and/or an invitation to interview does not imply that they meet the health and sick leave criteria. In considering a successful candidate's suitability for appointment from the point of view of health and sick leave the Commission will have regard to Department of the Public Service Circular 34/76, as amended by Department of Finance Circulars 32/91 and 33/99. If candidates have doubts about any aspect of their eligibility, they should clarify their position with their Personnel Section before proceeding with their application.

### **Circulation**

15. Personnel Sections should bring this Circular to the notice of all eligible officers serving in their Departments and associated Offices without delay, including eligible officers on maternity leave, career break and other relevant forms of leave. If candidates have any queries about this Circular they should contact their Personnel Section. Subsequent enquiries about their candidature should be addressed directly to the Civil Service Commission.

Mise le meas,

Joe McGovern  
Assistant Secretary