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Elin Jones AM/AC  
Y Gweinidog dros Faterion Gwledig  
Minister for Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref: OAQ(3)0365(RAF)  
Ein cyf/Our ref ourref

Brynle Williams AM  
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Cardiff Bay  
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17 July 2008

*Brynle Williams*

I am writing to inform you about the techniques used to digitally measure the land area of farm holdings in Wales, which you raised in plenary on 25 June 2008 under OAQ(3)0365(RAF). You specifically asked about officials' consideration of three-dimensional mapping.

The European Commission (EC) requires Member States to have a Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) in place to provide the control and to facilitate cross-checks of CAP and rural development scheme claims and payment information. The EC require the LPIS to contain the parcel boundaries for all fields declared under the Single Application Form and that each parcel must be uniquely referenced. Within the UK, Ordnance Survey map data is used, in the main, to derive the parcel boundaries. The Ordnance Survey data is two-dimensional, as are all national systems and therefore, the LPIS across the UK is based on two-dimensional mapping. Digital terrain models, which take height measurement at various points and enables land parcels to be projected to gain a three-dimensional area are available but our computer systems are not enabled to use these data. Advice from the Commission is that the two-dimensional approach is correct and can be justified from both a practical and an agronomic point of view. Aerial photography is used to supplement Ordnance Survey data but is not as accurate and is only used where Ordnance Survey data is not fit for purpose.

The Single Application Form guidance makes provision for farmers to submit revised area measurements, which may take account of slope (three-dimensional mapping). Where farmers consider that the digitally produced map by the Welsh Assembly Government significantly underestimates the surface area of the land concerned, they may make their own arrangements to have the land professionally surveyed.

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Any plans/maps submitted under these arrangements should be surveyed and certified by an independent person who must hold a qualification from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, the Institute of Civil Engineers or some other similar professional body. The map must also contain areas of ineligible features (for example rocks or scrub) and habitats and features if mapped for an Agri-environment Scheme (such as Tir Gofal). These should be measured using the same techniques as are used for the land parcel. In hilly areas, there is often a greater density of ineligible feature (scree for example) which negates any increase to area derived from slope.

Any changes to the parcel area may require a reassessment of payments or entitlements as these may have been originally derived using the plan area (two-dimensional area).

If a farmer or the Welsh Assembly Government requires changes to be made to land parcels boundaries, ineligible features or agri-environmental habitats and features within the parcel, the areas will revert to be based on plan area (two-dimensional area). To revert to a three-dimensional measurement of the area, the farmer would need to engage a surveyor as mentioned above to provide revised maps and measurements.

Yours sincerely



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