

Date 03/03/2026
Your Ref
Our Ref 11128

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
Extension 35687
Direct Line 0131 465 5687
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richard.mutch@nhs.scot

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – FOOD

I write in response to your request for information in relation to food from overseas.

Question:

- I'm getting in touch regarding food and drink served to patients in the health board area. I'm interested to know which food and drink is sourced from overseas and how much has been spent on these foreign foods between January 2021 and December 2025
- If you could please offer an annual breakdown of the costs incurred for food and drink that the health board has sourced from abroad and which countries they're from, it would be much appreciated

Answer:

I am advised that the information you have requested is not held centrally. We would essentially need to trace every ingredient within every product, which goes far beyond the information we are required to hold.

Food businesses and suppliers are obligated to maintain one step forward and one step back traceability within their supply chains. While we do request the Country of Origin for each product, many items have multiple potential origins, and gathering precise details is neither quick nor straightforward.

Additionally, we do not tender directly for foreign or overseas food.

Examples:

- Canned fruits: Often packed in England, Belgium, South Africa, Holland, or elsewhere in the EU, but the fruit itself can originate from numerous countries worldwide.
- Frozen peas: These may be Scottish, British, or EU-sourced depending on the time of year, before being processed and packed.
- Pulses: Typically grown in various EU countries and packed in the UK in some cases.

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Chair Professor John Connaghan CBE
Chief Executive Professor Caroline Hiscox
*Lothian NHS Board is the common
name of Lothian Health Board*



Under the Freedom of Information Act NHS Lothian is not required to create new records to enable it to respond to your enquiry. This information is not collated or held in aggregate form and it would be necessary to review all case files relating food products over the period you have requested to assemble the information you seek. Even if NHS Lothian did this – and there would be significant cost implications in doing so – it would be unable to respond in full to your request. The information requested is therefore exempt under section 12.1 – Cost.

I am sorry I cannot help with your request.

If you are unhappy with our response to your request, you do have the right to request us to review it. Your request should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If our decision is unchanged following a review and you remain dissatisfied with this, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner within 6 months of receipt of our review response. You can do this by using the Scottish Information Commissioner's Office online appeals service at www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal. If you remain dissatisfied with the Commissioner's response you then have the option to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law.

If you require a review of our decision to be carried out, please write to the FOI Reviewer at the email address at the head of this letter. The review will be undertaken by a Reviewer who was not involved in the original decision-making process.

FOI responses (subject to redaction of personal information) may appear on NHS Lothian's Freedom of Information website at: <https://org.nhsllothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing
Cc: Chief Executive