

Department of Agriculture & Cooperation

Recommendations/suggestions and success stories/best practices in the implementation of the RTI Act in the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation.

Successful implementation

The Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture has been able to implement the RTI Act, 2005 in letter and spirit with thumping success. The Department is receiving a large number of applications on various issues relating to Agricultural Schemes and Programmes. The applications are generally concerned with Agricultural Policy, Production and Productivity, Cooperation, Horticulture, Plant Protection, Fertilizer, Administration and Schemes for NGOs etc. Therefore, the Department has posted a large amount of detailed information relating to these areas on its website www.agricoop.nic.in.

For the issues raised by the applicants which concern more than one Ministry/ Department, all out efforts are made to identify and locate the appropriate Public Authority to which such applications concern. The applications are thereafter transferred to such concerned Ministries/Departments. Apart from this all the schemes and Programmes being implemented by various Divisions of the Department have also been made available in detail on the website for easy access for the general public as a proactive measure as per Section 4 (2) of the RTI Act, 2005.

Successful Decentralization

For speedy disposal of the applications the CPIOs/Appellate Authorities were decentralized in the Department last year with the appointment of Deputy Secretary level officers as CPIO and next higher level officers as Appellate Authority in the respective Divisions of the Department. During the past one year after decentralization, it has been observed that the process/disposal of applications has been working with promptitude. The transfer of applications to other Public Authorities has also quickened. Similarly, the cases of appeals are also being disposed off comparatively in much lesser time with the issue of necessary orders for compliance by the CPIOs. In certain cases where the issues raised in application concern more than one Divisions of the Department, the RTI Cell is coordinating with the collection/compilation of the information to be supplied to the applicant in consolidated shape.

Facilitation Centre in RTI Cell

A facilitation centre is also operating under RTI Cell where the applications are received by hand from the applicants with the payment of application fee in cash. In many cases, matters relating to other Departments/ Organizations are also received here. In such cases the applicants are guided properly for consulting the appropriate website of the concerned Department and to approach the designated CPIO of that Department / Organization. Even if the application fee is received in wrong mode, the applications are processed for the supply of information and the applicants are advised to pay the fee in correct mode in the Meanwhile. In a number of cases, applicants are seeking information relating to the State Governments and other autonomous organizations. In such cases also the applications are transferred to the concerned CPIOs of the State Government/Organizations with the advice to the applicant to contact the concerned CPIO.

Suggestions

A) As in some cases the exercise of transfer of applications to other CPIOs concerned, collection of information and sending replies is a time consuming process, the total time limit of 30 days given for sending replies should exclude the weekly holidays (Saturday and Sunday) at least, otherwise the time limit of 30 days should be increased to 45 days.

B) It should be ensured that every Ministry/Department is having and maintaining an exclusive RTI Cell for dealing with the RTI applications and for proper coordination and monitoring in the implementation of RTI Act, 2005 to facilitate the timely transfer of applications to facilitate the timely transfer of applications.
