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Mr Paul Powlesland

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17 October 2018

Dear Mr Powlesland

**Freedom of Information request reference: 50187**

Thank you for your e-mail of 12 September 2018, in which you ask;

1. How many acres/hectares of Low THC cannabis (Hemp) were grown in the UK under Home Office licence in the years 2017 and 2018
2. How many Low THC cannabis (hemp) growing licences were awarded by the Home Office in the years 2017 and 2018
3. What percentage of the Low THC cannabis (hemp) grown under licence is used for:
  - a. fibre,
  - b. seed
  - c. leaf/flower.

Your request is being handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I am sorry for the delay in responding to your request.

Firstly, I would like to clarify that cultivation of all varieties of the genus *Cannabis* can only lawfully occur in the UK under licence issued in accordance with Regulations 5 and 12 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations (MDR) 2001 and licences are issued under these provisions.. The genus *Cannabis* contains tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) which is the psychoactive component within the plant which is subject to control, in addition to the 'parts' of the plant named by the Act.

Cultivation of cannabis can only take place under Home Office licence issued in accordance with the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971; this licensing requirement applies irrespective of the THC content of the plant.

A licence is required to cover both cultivation and possession. The genus *Cannabis* is a controlled drug in Class B of The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (MDA and Schedule 1 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001). Under these Regulations, a licence may be issued authorising cultivation.

The Misuse of Drugs (Designation) Order 2001 restricts the licit use of cannabis to possession for research (High THC) or “other special purposes”. Low THC cannabis grown for the commercial production of industrial hemp fibre or the pressing of seed for oil is an “other special purpose” within the meaning of Section 7(4)(a) of the MDA.

Licenses for the cultivation of low THC Cannabis (industrial hemp) are granted to enable the use of non-controlled parts of the plant (i.e. seeds and fibre/ stalk only). There needs to be a defined commercial end use and the Home Office only licences plants grown from approved seed types with a THC content not exceeding 0.2%. The licenses are generally issued for a validity period of three growing seasons.

I am able to disclose some of the information that you requested, as follows, and will respond to your questions in turn.

In respects to question 1, we hold the information which you have requested in a disaggregated format from which we would have to manually extract the information for each case, before then considering whether any exemptions to disclosure existed. Therefore we have concluded that this element of your request is exempt from disclosure under Section 12 of the FOIA.

Under Section 12 of the FOIA, the Home Office is not obliged to comply with an information request where to do so would exceed the cost limit. After careful consideration we have estimated that the cost of meeting your request would exceed the cost limit of £600 specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. The £600 limit is based on work being carried out at a rate of £25 per hour, which equates to 24 hours of work per request. The cost of locating, retrieving and extracting information can be included in the costs for these purposes. The costs do not include considering whether any information is exempt from disclosure, overheads such as heating or lighting, or items such as photocopying or postage.

Turning to question 2, I am able to disclose the number of Low THC (industrial hemp) licences granted in 2017 and 2018 to date is as follows;

<b>Year</b>	<b>Low THC Cannabis cultivation licence granted</b>
2017	9
2018	18

In regards to question 3 a and b, the Home Office does not hold information on the percentage of the Low THC cannabis (hemp) grown under licence that is used for fibre and seed.

Finally, with regards to question 3 c, as outlined above, the Home Office policy does not allow the use of the controlled parts (leaves and flowers), of the cannabis plant and therefore a Home Office licensed ‘hemp’ grower could not lawfully use the ‘green’ material (i.e. leaves and flowers).

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to [foirequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:foirequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk), quoting reference **50187**. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response. As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request would be reassessed by staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. If you

were to remain dissatisfied after an internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the FOIA.

Yours sincerely

**Drugs and Firearms Licensing Unit**

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