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SCAM ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday November 30, 2015

Farmers warned of targeted fraud attacks

Farmers are being warned to be extremely wary of any suspicious calls, texts or emails as fraudsters specifically target the agricultural sector when EU grant payments begin to arrive in bank accounts next month.

From December, farmers start to receive large funds through the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), the European Union's main rural payments scheme.

Information about the payments, including the recipients' names and the amount paid, is publically available, meaning criminals are able to target directly victims and make their approaches appear more convincing.

The scam communications will typically claim that fraud has been detected on the farmer's bank account and that urgent action is required to safeguard funds. The victim is then persuaded to divulge personal or financial information, or even to transfer money directly into a so-called 'safe account'.

With some grants worth hundreds of thousands of pounds, in past years fraudsters have stolen significant amounts of money from their victims. As well as farmers, other organisations which use farm land also receive BPS funds.

Tony Blake, Senior Fraud Prevention Officer at the Dedicated Card and Payment Crime Unit, said:

“Criminals are well aware of when these annual payments start to arrive and will look for any opportunity to defraud their victims. It is vital that farmers, and other recipients of the payment, are alert to these scams and are very wary of any phone calls, texts or emails out of the blue asking for personal or financial information, or to transfer money to another account.

“If you receive such a call or message, hang up the phone and do not reply directly. Instead, wait five minutes and ring your bank to alert them to the scam, using a phone number that you trust – such as the one from the official website.”

Advice on how to avoid this type of scam:

Be wary of:

- Any calls, texts or emails purporting to be from your bank, the police, a Government body or other organisation asking for personal or financial details, or for you to transfer money.
- Cold callers who suggest you hang up the phone and call them back. Fraudsters can keep your phone line open by not putting down the receiver at their end.
- Any request to check that the number showing on your telephone display matches an organisation's registered telephone number. The display cannot be trusted, as the number showing can be altered by the caller.

Remember:

- You will never be asked for your 4 digit PIN or your online banking password, or for you to transfer money to a new account for "fraud reasons".
- If you receive a suspicious call, hang up, wait five minutes to clear the line, or where possible use a different phone line, then call your bank or card issuer on their advertised number to report the fraud.

Never disclose your:

- Four digit card PIN to anyone, including the bank or police.
- Your password or online banking codes.
- Personal details unless you are certain you know who you are talking to. People are not always who they say they are.

ENDS

For further information please contact the Financial Fraud Action UK press office on 020 3217 8436 or email press@ukcards-ffauk.org.uk

Notes to editors:

The Dedicated Card and Payment Crime Unit (DCPCU) is a unique pro-active police unit, with a national remit, formed as a partnership between Financial Fraud Action UK, the City of London Police and the Metropolitan Police together with the Home Office. It is fully sponsored by the cards and banking industries, with an on-going brief to investigate, target and, where appropriate, arrest and seek successful prosecution of offenders responsible for card, cheque and payment fraud crimes. It is headed up by a Detective Chief Inspector and comprises officers from the Metropolitan and City of London police forces who work alongside banking industry fraud investigators and support staff.

Financial Fraud Action UK (FFA UK) is responsible for leading the collective fight against fraud in the UK payments industry. Its membership includes banks, credit, debit and charge card issuers, and card payment acquirers in the UK. It provides a forum for members to work together on non-competitive issues relating to financial fraud. Its primary function is to facilitate collaborative activity between industry participants and with other partners.

Financial Fraud Action UK (www.financialfraudaction.org.uk) works in close partnership with The UK Cards Association on industry initiatives to prevent fraud on credit and debit cards, and the Cheque & Credit Clearing Company on credit clearing and cheque fraud.

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