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***News Release***

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**County Armagh couple jailed for VAT fraud**

A farmer and his wife have been jailed for their role in a £610,000.00 VAT fraud, after a HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) investigation into their County Armagh beef cattle farm.

Joseph Cassidy, 50, of Killyfaddy Road, Tassagh was a VAT registered beef farmer from January 1995. Between July 2011 and March 2015, Cassidy made fraudulent VAT claims totalling £610,000.00.

Cassidy and his wife Anna Cassidy, 51, who was responsible for the farms business records, were arrested on 23 February 2016 on suspicion of VAT fraud and money laundering offences. The premises and the adjoining farmyard were searched by HMRC officers and business records were seized.

HMRC investigators established that Anna Cassidy held two bank accounts; a business account into which the VAT repayments were paid and a savings account in her name.

Both Anna and Joseph Cassidy pleaded guilty to the fraudulent evasion of VAT and money laundering offences. Both appeared at Newry Crown Court on 28 November 2019. Joseph Cassidy was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment, and Anna Cassidy was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment. The judge ruled that each will spend half of their sentence in jail and the rest on licence.

Confiscation proceedings are now underway to recover the tax stolen.

**Notes for editors**

1. Joseph Cassidy (DOB 27/08/1969) from Killyfaddy Road, Tassagh, County Armagh, was sentenced to 18 months in prison at Newry Crown Court on 28 November 2019. He pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing in Newry Crown Court to the fraudulent evasion of VAT and money laundering offences. He will spend half of his sentence in jail and the rest on licence.
2. Anna Cassidy (DOB 17/07/1968) now from Drumbeg Park Armagh, was sentenced to 15 months in prison at Newry Crown Court on 28 November 2019. She pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing to the fraudulent evasion of VAT and money laundering offences. She will spend half of her sentence in jail and the rest on licence.
3. Joseph and Anna Cassidy were arrested on 23 February 2016 on suspicion of VAT offences contrary to Section 72 of the VAT Act 1994 and money laundering offences contrary to Sections 327, 328 and 329 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.
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