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AMD cheers govt calls to end 'single-vendor' IT tenders

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AMD has applauded moves made by the Japanese, US and French governments to block vendor-specific technology procurement contracts.

Last month, the US Office of Management and Budget asked all senior governmental procurement staff to use objective benchmarks and performance measures for contract specifications, and adhere to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) requirements restricting the use of brand names.

The Japanese Secretariat to the Inter-Ministry/Cabinet Consultative Committee on Information Technology System Procurement made much the same demand of government buyers over there.

Similarly, the French Ministry of Economy, Finances and Industry in March instructed government technology buyers to stop using either brand names or minimum clock frequency specifications in tenders' processor descriptions.

Last October, the European Commission [told](#) (http://www.channelregister.co.uk/2004/10/13/ec_probe_widens/) France and a number of other nations that they must cease making single-vendor procurement contracts - unless it was appropriate to do so because, say, there was only one vendor.

The EC order followed a [warning](#) (http://www.theregister.co.uk/2004/04/22/ec_intel_unfair_tenders/) issued in April 2004, that member states' governments must abandon such restrictive tenders or face court action. Then it had Germany and Italy in mind; the October statement added France, the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland to the list. Most have followed the EC request, Germany in [December 2004](#) (http://www.channelregister.co.uk/2004/12/21/german_it_tenders/).

It is easy to see why AMD is so annoyed. One French computer procurement contract that came under EU scrutiny was worth up to €500m (\$643m) - a fair proportion of which would have gone to Intel as the producer of the chips specified in the tender.

Quite apart from wanting a fair crack at such sums, AMD reckons less-restrictive tenders could have save the taxpayer up to 30 per cent - assuming of course that they had resulted in the selection of an alternative CPU supplier.

To be fair to Intel, no one has claimed that it has in any way attempted to steer tenders toward suppliers of computers containing its chips; but there's no doubt it has been a beneficiary. AMD reckons it would do rather better if government procurers didn't simply assume there was one supplier, or that a given vendor is inherently able to supply superior products.

Intel and AMD fans will argue until the cows come home as to the merits of their respective favoured chip makers' products, but anyone spending public money should be obliged to make the most of the taxpayers' revenues at their disposal, and buy according to independently determined price:performance figures. ®

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