



UK Statistics
Authority

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on Agriculture

*(produced by the Department for Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs)*

© Crown Copyright 2014

The text in this document may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the document specified.

Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

For any other use of this material please write to Office of Public Sector Information, Information Policy Team, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU or email: licensing@opsi.gov.uk

About the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

The Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. It is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and good practice in relation to official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has two main functions:

1. oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority;
2. independent scrutiny (monitoring and assessment) of all official statistics produced in the UK.

Contact us

Tel: 0845 604 1857

Email: authority.enquiries@statistics.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
London
SW1V 2QQ

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on Agriculture

*(produced by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs)*

ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION

The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* gives the UK Statistics Authority a statutory power to assess sets of statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. Assessment will determine whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated as National Statistics.

Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics comply with the *Code of Practice*. The *Code* is wide-ranging. Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

Designation as National Statistics should not be interpreted to mean that the statistics are always correct. For example, whilst the *Code* requires statistics to be produced to a level of accuracy that meets users' needs, it also recognises that errors can occur – in which case it requires them to be corrected and publicised.

Assessment reports will not normally comment further on a set of statistics, for example on their validity as social or economic measures. However, reports may point to such questions if the Authority believes that further research would be desirable.

Assessment reports typically provide an overview of any noteworthy features of the methods used to produce the statistics, and will highlight substantial concerns about quality.

Assessment reports also describe aspects of the ways in which the producer addresses the 'sound methods and assured quality' principle of the *Code*, but do not themselves constitute a review of the methods used to produce the statistics. However the *Code* requires producers to "seek to achieve continuous improvement in statistical processes by, for example, undertaking regular reviews".

The Authority may grant designation on condition that the producer body takes steps, within a stated timeframe, to fully meet the *Code's* requirements. This is to avoid public confusion and does not reduce the obligation to comply with the *Code*.

The Authority grants designation on the basis of three main sources of information:

- i. factual evidence and assurances by senior statisticians in the producer body;
- ii. the views of users who we contact, or who contact us, and;
- iii. our own review activity.

Should further information come to light subsequently which changes the Authority's analysis, it may withdraw the Assessment report and revise it as necessary.

It is a statutory requirement on the producer body to ensure that it continues to produce the set of statistics designated as National Statistics in compliance with the *Code of Practice*.

Contents

Section 1: Summary of findings

Section 2: Subject of the assessment

Section 3: Assessment findings

Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

Annex 2: Compliance with Standards for Statistical Reports

Annex 3: Summary of assessment process and users' views

Annex 4: Summary of Requirements from Assessment reports 22, 72,
150 and 154

1 Summary of findings

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This is one of a series of reports¹ prepared under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*². The Act gives the Statistics Authority power to re-assess whether the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*³ continues to be complied with in relation to official statistics already designated as National Statistics. This report covers the sets of statistics (collectively referred to as agricultural statistics in this Assessment report) produced by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and reported in:

- *Agriculture in the United Kingdom*⁴ (AUK)
- *Cereals usage by Millers, Brewers, Distillers and Maltsters UK*⁵ (Cereals Usage)
- *Animal Feed Statistics for Great Britain*⁶ (Animal Feed Statistics)
- *Cereal Stocks UK / England and Wales*⁷ (Cereal Stocks)
- *United Kingdom Milk Prices and Composition of Milk*⁸ (UK Milk Prices and Composition)
- *Availability and usage of milk by dairies in England and Wales*⁹ (Milk Availability and Usage)
- *United Kingdom Slaughter Statistics*¹⁰ (UK Slaughter Statistics)
- *United Kingdom Egg Statistics*¹¹ (UK Egg Statistics)
- *United Kingdom Poultry and Poultry Meat Statistics*¹² (UK Poultry and Poultry Meat)
- *Farm Accounts in England – Results from the Farm Business Survey*¹³ (Farm Accounts)
- *Farm Rents England*¹⁴ (Farm Rents)

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html>

² http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agriculture-in-the-united-kingdom-2012>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cereal-usage>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-feed-production>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cereal-stocks>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-milk-prices-and-composition-of-milk>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/milk-utilisation-by-dairies-in-england-and-wales>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cattle-sheep-and-pig-slaughter>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/egg-statistics>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/poultry-and-poultry-meat-statistics>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farm-accounts-in-england-201213>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farm-rents>

- *Farm Household Income and Household Composition: Results from the Farm Business Survey: England*¹⁵ (*Farm Household Income and Composition*)
- *Farm Business Income by type of farm in England*¹⁶ (*Farm Business Income provisional and final estimates*)
- *Total factor productivity of the UK agricultural industry*¹⁷ (*TFP 1st and 2nd estimates*)
- *Total Income from Farming United Kingdom*¹⁸ (*TIFF 1st and 2nd estimates*)
- *Agriculture in the English regions*¹⁹ - *1st and 2nd estimates*
- *National average monthly wholesale prices of selected home-grown horticultural produce for England*²⁰ (*National average monthly wholesale prices*)
- *Agricultural Price Index*²¹ (*API*)
- *Farming Statistics provisional arable crop areas June, England*²² (*Provisional Arable Crop Areas*)
- *Farming Statistics Livestock Populations December, UK and England*²³
- *Farming Statistics Provisional Crop Areas, Yields and Livestock Populations June, United Kingdom*²⁴
- *Farming Statistics Final Crop Areas, Yields, Livestock Populations and Agricultural Workforce June, United Kingdom*²⁵
- *Farming Statistics Final Land Use, Livestock Populations and Agricultural Workforce June, England*²⁶ (*Final Land Use*)
- *Farming Statistics Final Crop Areas and Cattle, Sheep and Pig Populations June, England*²⁷

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farm-household-income-and-household-composition-201112>

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farm-business-income>

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/total-factor-productivity-of-the-agricultural-industry>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/total-income-from-farming-in-the-uk>

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agriculture-in-the-english-regions>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wholesale-fruit-and-vegetable-prices>

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-price-indices>

²² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-statistics-provisional-arable-crop-areas-as-at-1-june-2013-england>

²³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-statistics-livestock-populations-at-1-december-2012-uk-and-england>

²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-statistics-provisional-crop-areas-yields-and-livestock-populations-at-1-june-2013-uk>

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-statistics-land-use-livestock-populations-and-agricultural-workforce-at-1-june-2012-uk>

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-statistics-land-use-livestock-populations-and-agricultural-workforce-at-1-june-2012-england>

²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-statistics-final-crop-areas-and-cattle-sheep-and-pig-populations-as-at-1-june-2013-england>

- *Farming Statistics; Diversification and Renewable Energy Production on Farms in England*²⁸ (*Diversification and Renewable Energy*)
- *Summary results from the Farm Practices Survey England*²⁹
- *Organic Statistics; United Kingdom*³⁰ (*Organic Statistics*)
- *Survey of Orchard; Fruit England and Wales*³¹ (*Orchard Fruit*)
- *Basic Horticultural Statistics*³² (*BHS*)
- *Mushroom Production Area; England*³³
- *Business Management Practices on Farm, England*³⁴
- *Farm Countryside Maintenance and Management in England - Results from the Farm Business Survey*³⁵
- *Farm Energy Use: Results from the Farm Business Survey - England*³⁶

1.1.2 The previous assessments³⁷ of these sets of statistics were reported in Assessment reports 22, 72, 150 and 154. They have been re-assessed as part of the Statistics Authority's ongoing programme of re-assessment. This is discussed further in annex 4.

1.1.3 *AUK* is a compendium publication. Assessments of compendium publications against the *Code of Practice* relate to the processes involved in preparing the publication, rather than in producing the statistics that are included. The National Statistics designation relating to the compendium is not automatically conferred on any of the constituent series. Those sets of statistics will normally be subject to separate assessment to attain National Statistics status, but in some cases a compendium publication may include other statistics where this is helpful context. Designation of a compendium publication as National Statistics therefore means that the producer body has, for example: identified and met user needs in terms of the content of the publication; considered the appropriateness of each series for inclusion; and written appropriate commentary.

1.1.4 Section 3 of this report adopts an 'exception reporting' approach – it includes text only to support the Requirements made to strengthen compliance with the *Code* and Suggestions made to improve confidence in the production, management and dissemination of these statistics. This abbreviated style of report reflects the Head of Assessment's consideration of aspects of risk and

²⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/diversification-and-renewable-energy-production-on-farms-in-england-in-2010>

²⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/series/farm-practices-survey>

³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/organic-farming-statistics-2012>

³¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/orchard-fruit-survey-2012>

³² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/basic-horticultural-statistics>

³³ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130403111415/http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/files/defra-stats-foodfarm-landuselivestock-mushrooms-110728.pdf>

³⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farm-business-management-practices>

³⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/countryside-maintenance-and-management>

³⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farm-energy-use>

³⁷ <http://statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html>

materiality³⁸. The Assessment team nonetheless assessed compliance with all parts of the *Code of Practice* and has commented on all those in respect of which some remedial action is recommended.

- 1.1.5 This report was prepared by the Statistics Authority's Assessment team, and approved by the Assessment Committee on behalf of the Board of the Statistics Authority, based on the advice of the Head of Assessment.

1.2 Decision concerning designation as National Statistics

- 1.2.1 The Statistics Authority judges that the statistics covered by this report are readily accessible, produced according to sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest, subject to any points for action in this report. The Statistics Authority confirms that the statistics listed above are designated as National Statistics, subject to Defra implementing the Requirements listed in section 1.5 and reporting them to the Statistics Authority by April 2014.
- 1.2.2 Defra has informed the Assessment team that it has started to implement the Requirements listed in section 1.5. The Statistics Authority welcomes this.

1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

- 1.3.1 Defra plans to evaluate current user engagement activities and draw up an organisation-wide user engagement strategy for its statistical services as a whole, to be finalised in March 2014. All of the users that fed into this Assessment valued the statistics and reported that they felt that the statistics teams in Defra are helpful and responsive.
- 1.3.2 The commentary in some of the statistical reports is informative and has been used as examples of good practice in teaching sessions provided by the National Statistician's Good Practice Team. Where the statistics are produced from surveys, information about the quality of the statistics, such as confidence intervals and response rates is provided. Some of the reports present statistics in graphs and charts to aid user interpretation, but some do not conform to good practice standards for clarity.
- 1.3.3 Defra informed the Assessment team that the statistics teams within Defra have engaged with Eurostat to help develop more efficient approaches to producing the statistics needed by Eurostat. For example, under discussion are the level of detail of labour questions in the Farm Structure survey, the sample size requirements for the survey of farm production methods and the current requirement for the June census to be held every 10 years. Defra is currently working alongside the European Commission on changes to data requirements resulting from the review³⁹ of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- 1.3.4 Some of the reports covered by this assessment present a helpful summary of the ways in which farmers, the government and others use the statistics.

³⁸ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/guidance-about-assessment/criteria-for-deciding-upon-the-format-of-an-assessment-report.pdf>

³⁹ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/policy/capreform/index.htm>

However, others present only a standard paragraph stating that the statistics are used by government for policy making, without providing details of the policy under consideration. The reports where data are required by European Union (EU) legislation clearly note the requirement. However, only *AUK 2012* and the latest *Diversification and Renewable Energy* releases provide good descriptions of how the statistics are used by the EU and provide links to reports which have used the statistics.

1.4 Detailed recommendations

- 1.4.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that Defra could strengthen its compliance with the *Code*. Those which the Assessment team considers essential to enable designation as National Statistics are listed in section 1.5. Other suggestions, which would improve the statistics and the service provided to users but which are not formally required for their designation, are listed at annex 1.

1.5 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

Requirement 1	Document the needs of users, the use made of agriculture statistics and the types of decisions they inform for the statistical reports listed in paragraph 3.1 (para 3.1).
Requirement 2	Publish information about users' experiences of agricultural statistics, data quality and the format and timing of reports, relating to the agricultural statistics not included in the published summary of unprompted user feedback (para 3.2).
Requirement 3	Confirm that future changes to methods or classifications will be announced in advance (para 3.3).
Requirement 4	Ensure that all the agriculture statistics reports provide a statement explaining the nature and extent of revisions at the same time that they are released (para 3.4).
Requirement 5	Publicise official statistics in ways that enable users to identify and access information relevant to their needs (para 3.5).
Requirement 6	Improve the commentary in <i>National average monthly wholesale prices</i> so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics (para 3.8).
Requirement 7	Provide links to comparable statistics produced for Scotland and Northern Ireland (para 3.9).

2 Subject of the assessment

- 2.1 *Agriculture in the United Kingdom (AUK)* has been published annually since 1988 and fulfils the requirement under the *Agriculture Act 1993*⁴⁰ that Ministers publish an annual report that covers matters relating to price support for agricultural produce that they consider relevant. AUK is a compendium publication, detailing a range of agricultural statistics, such as farm incomes, land use, livestock numbers, prices, production of key commodities, overseas trade, organic farming and the environment. The methods used to produce the statistics have changed over the years to reflect changing policy requirements (particularly at the EU level) and industry practices.
- 2.2 *Cereals usage by Millers, Brewers, Distillers and Maltsters UK (Cereals usage)* is a monthly publication that covers the use of wheat, barley and oats by wheat millers, flour producers, brewers, distillers, maltsters and oatmeal millers in the UK. It also includes information about flour production and stocks of cereal held by these cereal processors. The flour millers data includes use of wheat for starch and bioethanol fuel production. The Cereals Stocks Survey collects data twice a year, on the stocks of cereals held on farms in England and Wales. The Ports, Co-operatives and Merchants Survey is a twice-yearly survey of stocks of cereals held at ports, co-operatives and merchants in the UK.
- 2.3 *UK Milk Prices and Composition* is a monthly survey run in England and Wales to collect information on the volume, value and protein content of milk purchased from farms. Similar surveys are also run in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Additional information is collected by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) on the protein and butterfat content of the milk. The UK average farm-gate milk price, protein content and butterfat content is then calculated. *Milk Availability and Usage* is a monthly publication that includes information on the volume of milk used by dairies in England and Wales in the production of drinking milk and milk products.
- 2.4 *UK Slaughter Statistics* is a monthly publication providing UK statistics on the slaughter of cattle, sheep and pigs, dressed carcass weights and meat production. Additional information is provided each quarter on UK meat supplies. *Egg Statistics* publishes quarterly information on egg production, usage and prices. This includes UK egg packing station throughput by country and egg production system (intensive, barn, free range, organic) and prices paid by UK egg packers to producers. The information about egg usage includes the number of eggs bought by UK egg processors and the quantity of egg products they produce. Monthly information about trade in eggs and egg products is also included. *Poultry and Poultry Meat* is a monthly publication that includes the number of chicks placed and eggs set by United Kingdom hatcheries. It also includes statistics on the number of poultry slaughtered, average live weights of poultry and poultry meat production in the United Kingdom.

⁴⁰ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/37/contents>

- 2.5 The Farm Business Survey (FBS) is an annual sample survey of 1,850 businesses in England carried out by a consortium of FBS Research Centres⁴¹ on behalf of Defra. The survey collects a range of management accounting information about all aspects of farm business, such as data on the revenues from, and costs of, the farm business, assets and liabilities; how the land is used; areas and sales of crops, sales and purchases of livestock; and the amount of labour used. The annual publication *Farm Accounts in England* is the main output from the FBS. It brings together data about farm incomes, outputs and costs for the various farm types, farm sizes, regions and economic performance. Data from the FBS are also released in the annual publications: *Farm Rents; England (Farm Rents)*, *Farm Diversification in England*, *Farm Household Income and Household Composition; Results from the Farm Business Survey (Farm Household Income and Composition)* and *Farm Business Income by type of farm in England (Farm Business Income)*. The FBS collects data under the requirements of *Council Regulation No 79/65/EEC (amended)*⁴², to provide farm-level economic data to the European Commission Farm Accounting Data Network⁴³ (FADN). Since 2005, Defra has included extra modules of questions in the FBS on particular topics of interest, such as energy use on farms, countryside maintenance activities, farmers' management skills and water use on farms. These modules were originally intended to be repeated every three or four years and some have been run twice, but Defra have informed us that budget reductions since inception have meant that further iterations are unlikely. These statistics will collectively be referred to as statistics from the Farm Business Survey in this Assessment report.
- 2.6 Aggregate agricultural accounts for the UK have been produced since the introduction of the *Agriculture Act, 1947*⁴⁴, which obliged Ministers to carry out an annual review of the general economic condition and prospects of the agricultural industry. *Total factor productivity of the UK agricultural industry*⁴⁵ (*TFP 1st and 2nd estimates*) is used to provide an indication of the efficiency and competitiveness of the agricultural industry in the UK and is an important driver for farm incomes. Agricultural accounts data, showing the performance of the whole of the agricultural industry, are published in *Total Income from Farming, United Kingdom (TIFF 1st and 2nd estimates)*. Regional agricultural accounts data are published in *Agriculture in the English regions (1st and 2nd estimates)*. The agricultural accounts bring together valuations of agricultural output, intermediate consumption, valuations of gross value added (GVA) and total income from farming activities. They form the European Commission Economic accounts for agriculture⁴⁶ (EAA) which is a satellite account to the European System of Accounts and the UK National Accounts. The provision of data to the EU is governed by *Council Regulation No 138/2004*⁴⁷.

⁴¹ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130315143000/http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/foodfarm/farmmanage/fbs/aboutfbs/datacollection/>

⁴² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:1965R0079:19951213:EN:PDF>

⁴³ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rica/index_en.cfm

⁴⁴ http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1947/pdf/ukpga_19470048_en.pdf

⁴⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/total-factor-productivity-of-the-agricultural-industry>

⁴⁶ [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Glossary:Economic_accounts_for_agriculture_\(EAA\)](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Glossary:Economic_accounts_for_agriculture_(EAA))

⁴⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32004R0138:EN:NOT>

- 2.7 Agricultural prices data are published as the monthly *Agricultural Price Index* accompanied by a series of commodity datasets. Farmers use the agricultural price index to help set prices for their output and monitor the price paid for inputs. Analysts in Government, industry and academia use the data to assess the impact that price changes have on industry and consumers. ONS uses the API data in the production of the Producer Price Index (PPI), which is one of the key measures of inflation. *National average wholesale prices for selected home-grown horticultural produce for England (National monthly average wholesale prices)* provides prices information for fruit, vegetables and selected flowers and plants.
- 2.8 The June Survey of Agriculture and Horticulture has taken place in England every year since 1866. The December Survey of Agriculture has taken place in England every year since 1992 to monitor the size of the agricultural sector and the types of winter production. Both the June Survey and December Survey are run under *EU Regulation No 1165/2008*⁴⁸ (cattle, pigs and sheep) and *EU Regulation No 543/2009*⁴⁹ (crops and land). The timing and contents of the June Survey and December Survey and data collection reflect the differences in farming practices, including the crops grown, in the summer and winter months. Results are published for the UK and England in the *Farming Statistics* series of reports: *Provisional arable crop areas June, England (Provisional Arable Crop Areas)*; *Livestock Populations December, UK and England*; *Final Crop Areas, Yields, Livestock Populations and Agricultural Workforce June, United Kingdom*; *Final Land Use, Livestock Populations and Agricultural Workforce June, England (Final Land Use)*; *Final Crop Areas and Cattle, Sheep and Pig Populations June, England*; *Provisional Crop Areas, Yields and Livestock Populations June, United Kingdom (Final Crop Areas, Yields Livestock Populations and Agricultural Workforce June)*; and *Diversification and Renewable Energy Production on Farms in England (Diversification and Renewable Energy)*. Every three years (2010, 2013, 2016 etc) the June Survey is extended to collect information on labour force and farming practices under the *EU Farm Structure Surveys Regulation No 1166/2008*⁵⁰. The census collects detailed information about arable and horticultural cropping activities, land usage, livestock populations and labour force figures in June. In 2010, a census year, the sample comprised farm holdings defined as having a commercial level⁵¹ of farming activity.
- 2.9 The Farm Practices Survey (FPS) is run twice each year (October and February) and provides information about how farming practices are affected by current agricultural and environmental issues. The survey content can vary to ensure coverage of topical agricultural and environmental issues, and to meet EU requirements. The February survey focuses on greenhouse gas topics and the focus of the October survey changes year on year, in response to user need. Summary results from the survey are published twice a year in the Farm Practices Survey England series.

⁴⁸ <http://www.europe.org.uk/europa/view/-/id/1386/>

⁴⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32009R0543:EN:NOT>

⁵⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:321:0014:0034:EN:PDF>

⁵¹ Commercial level is defined by *EU Regulation No 1166/2008* as any holding with more than 5 hectares of agricultural land, one hectare of orchards, 0.5 hectares of vegetables or 0.1 hectares of protected crops, or more than 10 cows, 50 pigs, 20 sheep, 20 goats or 1,000 poultry

- 2.10 *Organic Statistics; United Kingdom (Organic Statistics)* presents statistics on the organic farming sector, including information about: the number of producers; crop area; livestock areas; and crop type. The statistics are compiled from data collected through annual inspections of organic farms at various points throughout the calendar year by UK Certification Bodies⁵². The UK Certification Bodies send data to Defra on a standard form the following January for compilation. The list of organic producers and statistics are required under *EU Regulation No 834/2007*⁵³ and *EU Regulation No 889/2008*⁵⁴.
- 2.11 *Survey of Orchard Fruit; England and Wales (Orchard Fruit)* presents statistics on the area of orchards within England and Wales used to produce apples, pears, plums and other fruit. Orchard fruit survey data are collected every 5 years under *EU Directive 1337/2011*⁵⁵. Data were published annually between 2002 and 2004, and every two to three years since 2007. The estimates provided in the statistical report are based on a sample of agricultural holdings that in the June survey of agriculture and horticulture indicated having orchards.
- 2.12 *Basic Horticultural Statistics (BHS)* presents annual statistics on the area, production and value of horticulture crops in the UK from 1985 and imports and exports of horticulture crops from 1988. Around 55 of the main fruit and vegetable crops are covered separately in supplementary tables. A consultancy called ADAS⁵⁶ collects data on behalf of Defra using a combination of industry contacts and market analysis to obtain them.
- 2.13 *Mushroom Production Area; England* presents statistics from the Mushroom Survey including the number of mushroom growers, the area under production, production method, and the amount of compost used in production. Defra collects data from producers that grow mushrooms under cover. The Mushroom Survey runs when necessary for the EU Farm Structure Survey.
- 2.14 The agricultural statistics listed above are used for a range of purposes. Defra provides the statistics to Eurostat and the European Commission uses the statistics for making decisions on EU agricultural policy. The statistics play an important role in the design, implementation and monitoring of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and are also used in the evaluation of the impact of the CAP on the economic and financial situation of the agricultural community. Some statistics contribute to the EAA and Defra provide data to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to feed into the PPI; GVA and Index of Production. Cereal survey data are used by Defra to help inform and construct forecast balance sheets. The government draws on the information within *AUK* when considering policy issues and the provision of agricultural support. Trade associations and industry bodies use the statistics to monitor movements within their industry and to inform their dialogue with government. The government, the farming industry, banks and development agencies use statistics from the FBS to assess the economic state of the farming industry. In addition, Defra uses the FBS results to develop and evaluate farming policy, respond to

⁵² <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/growing/organic/standards/certbodies/approved.htm>

⁵³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:189:0001:0023:EN:PDF>

⁵⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:250:SOM:EN:HTML>

⁵⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:347:0007:0020:EN:PDF>

⁵⁶ <http://www.adas.co.uk/>

enquiries and to meet other legislative requirements for farming data. Farmers also use the data for benchmarking business performance and prices.

- 2.15 All of the reports are published in PDF files, with supplementary data tables published in Excel format, except *National average wholesale prices*, which currently is available only in Excel. This equates to a level two rating⁵⁷ under the Five Star Scheme proposed in the *Open Data White Paper: Unleashing the Potential*⁵⁸.
- 2.16 Defra estimated that the cost to Defra of compiling statistics from the agriculture surveys amounted to nearly £3.8 million for the financial year 2012-13 and the cost to Defra of producing the agriculture statistics from administrative data sources amounted to nearly £180,000 annually.

⁵⁷ Make data available as structured data

⁵⁸ http://data.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Open_data_White_Paper.pdf

3 Assessment findings

- 3.1 Defra is evaluating the current user engagement activities undertaken by its statistical teams, in order to develop a user engagement strategy for its statistical services as a whole. Currently, Defra engages with users through a variety of formal and informal mechanisms, but does not document well how the statistics are used. Both *API* and *Farm Rents* present a helpful summary of the ways in which farmers, the government and others use the statistics in the report. The reports where data are required by EU legislation clearly note the requirement. However, only *AUK* and *Diversification and Renewable Energy* provide good descriptions of how the statistics are used by the EU and provide links to reports which have used the statistics. *National average monthly wholesale prices for selected home-grown horticultural produce in England, BHS, Orchard Fruit* and *Organic Statistics* and the *Farming Statistics* series (except *Final Crop Areas, Yields, Livestock Populations and Agricultural Workforce June and Provisional Crop Areas, Yields and Livestock Populations*) provide no information about how the statistics are used. As part of the designation as National Statistics, Defra should document the needs of users, the use made of the statistics listed above and the types of decisions they inform⁵⁹ (Requirement 1). We suggest that Defra refer to the types of use put forward in the Statistics Authority's Monitoring Brief, *The Use Made of Official Statistics*⁶⁰ when documenting use.
- 3.2 Defra published a summary⁶¹ of unprompted user feedback about *Farming Statistics* reports, including action taken as a result of the feedback, during 2012. However, this includes only a selection of the agriculture statistics covered by this Assessment. Statistics not mentioned by the user feedback summary are statistics from the Farm Business Survey, from the *Farm practices survey England series, UK Milk Prices and Composition, Milk Availability and Usage* and *UK Slaughter Statistics*. As part of the designation as National Statistics, Defra should publish information about users' experiences of the statistics not already included in the published summary of unprompted user feedback, data quality and the format and timing of reports⁶² (Requirement 2).
- 3.3 When Defra updated the definition of types of farm in 2010, this was explained in the relevant Farm Business Survey reports, but the change was not pre-announced. As part of the designation as National Statistics, Defra should confirm that future changes to methods or classifications will be announced in advance⁶³ (Requirement 3).
- 3.4 Defra includes a generic statement explaining the revisions policy only in some of the statistical reports. Additionally, where revisions have been made, not all the reports indicate which statistics have been revised. For example, *UK Slaughter Statistics* states that 'revisions have been made for the reasons

⁵⁹ In relation to Principle 1, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

⁶⁰ www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-reviews/monitoring-brief-6-2010---the-use-made-of-official-statistics.pdf

⁶¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/188283/statspolicy-userfeedback-16apr13.pdf

⁶² In relation to Principle 1, Practice 5 of the *Code of Practice*

⁶³ In relation to Principle 2, Practice 4 of the *Code of Practice*

given in the revisions policy' and *AUK* notes 'revisions have been made ...as a result of revised data and updated methodology'. The Assessment team noted that three potential reasons for revising the statistics are given in the revisions policy, so it is unclear which has been applied and why. As part of the designation as National Statistics, Defra should ensure that all the agriculture statistics reports provide a statement explaining the nature and extent of revisions at the same time that they are released⁶⁴ (Requirement 4).

- 3.5 In line with many other government departments, Defra now publishes its statistics on the www.gov.uk website. Defra provides historical datasets in Excel spreadsheets, but the corresponding historic statistical reports (in PDF) are not actively linked from gov.uk and users commented to us that they would like to access these reports. The lack of easy access to these historic reports means that some stakeholders are not aware of previous revisions, helpful commentary or explanations about the correction of errors, for example, for *UK Egg Statistics* to assist their interpretation of the data. As part of the designation as National Statistics, Defra should publicise official statistics in ways that enable users to identify and access information relevant to their needs⁶⁵ (Requirement 5).
- 3.6 Defra publishes *Farm Business Income (provisional and final estimates)* each January. The title describes the statistics as provisional estimates, but the report describes them as forecasts, and it is not clear whether Defra uses the terms interchangeably, or whether the provisional estimates are also forecasts or put together by some other method. In October each year, *Farm Business Income final estimates* is published replacing the provisional estimates published in the preceding January. We suggest that Defra clarify the nature of the statistics contained within *Farm Business Income provisional estimates*. In doing so, Defra should consider referring to the Authority's monitoring review *Projections and forecasts as official statistics*⁶⁶.
- 3.7 The commentary in the quarterly, twice a year and annual reports is more fully developed than that in the monthly reports, which only provide key points. *Cereal Stocks* provides some good context around the latest statistics with explanations of how the weather will have affected stocks and levels of imported cereals as well as links to *Cereals Usage*. Similarly, *Farm Accounts in England* provides weather data and commentary around it to help users understand how this has affected production. The *Farming Statistics* reports and *BHS* provide good context and discuss potential reasons for the changes shown by the statistics. The monthly reports such as *UK Milk Prices and Composition* and *UK Slaughter Statistics* provide very little context and the only commentary provided is in a few key points. These reports present charts illustrating long-term trends, but there is no discussion about the changes over time or the relationships between different series. *Animal Feed Statistics* provides no explanation of the dissimilar seasonality of retail production of animal feed by sector and *UK Milk Prices and Composition* does not discuss why the farm gate price for milk decreased in the first six months of 2012 after increasing steadily for the previous 18 months. *Organic Statistics* and *Orchard*

⁶⁴ In relation to Principle 2, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

⁶⁵ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 4 of the *Code of Practice*

⁶⁶ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-reviews/monitoring-review-9-2012---projections-and-forecasts-as-official-statistics.pdf>

Fruit provide little context and discussion of the statistics. For example, there is no discussion of the regional differences in organic production, or why some apple varieties are in decline while others have shown increased production. Defra informed us that the statisticians are encouraged to use a standard format for statistical reports and that three statisticians have recently volunteered to take part in the Authority's commentary champions initiative to spread good practice⁶⁷ in statistical reporting. We suggest that Defra use this initiative to improve the commentary in all of its statistical reports to the same standard.

- 3.8 Currently, *National average monthly wholesale prices* is published as an Excel spreadsheet only with no commentary to support the analysis of the monthly statistics. Defra has informed us that a statistical report for these statistics is being developed to be published monthly from February 2014. As part of the designation as National Statistics, Defra should improve the commentary in *National Average wholesale prices* so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics⁶⁸ (Requirement 6). We suggest that in meeting this Requirement Defra should consider the points detailed in annex 2.
- 3.9 *UK Milk Prices and Composition, UK Slaughter Statistics and UK Poultry and Poultry Meat* use or refer to statistics collected by the Rural and Environmental Research and Analysis Directorate of the Scottish Government and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland, but no links to these statistics are provided and there is no discussion about the comparability, which could be useful to users. For the statistical reports that publish estimates about England only, Defra does not include any reference to other UK countries' comparable statistics. *BHS* does not provide enough information about the coherence of the statistics that are presented with those from other sources. As part of the designation as National Statistics, Defra should provide links to comparable statistics produced for Scotland and Northern Ireland⁶⁹ (Requirement 7). We suggest that in meeting this Requirement, Defra should provide an explanation of the comparability and coherence of the statistics for countries of the UK.
- 3.10 Following the publication of Assessment report 22, on 13 April 2010, the Chair of the Statistics Authority wrote⁷⁰ to the European Commission to clarify the use made of agriculture statistics, which institutions and organisations used them and the types of decisions that they informed. The Chair also requested information about the future development of agricultural statistics. Defra informed the Assessment team that the statistics teams within Defra have engaged with Eurostat to help develop more efficient approaches to obtaining the statistics. For example, under discussion are the level of detail of labour questions in the Farm Structure survey, the sample size requirements for the survey of farm production methods and the current requirement for the June census to be held every 10 years. Defra is currently working alongside the

⁶⁷ <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/national-statistician/national-statisticians-office/the-good-practice-team/>

⁶⁸ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

⁶⁹ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 4 of the *Code of Practice*

⁷⁰ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-sir-michael-scholar-to-dacian-ciolos.pdf>

European Commission on changes to data requirements resulting from the review⁷¹ of the CAP.

⁷¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/common-agricultural-policy-how-will-it-affect-you>

Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to Defra's Statistics on Agriculture, in the interest of the public good. These are not formally required for designation, but the Assessment team considers that their implementation will improve public confidence in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Suggestion 1 | Refer to the types of use put forward in the Statistics Authority's Monitoring Brief, <i>The Use Made of Official Statistics</i> when documenting use (para 3.1). |
| Suggestion 2 | Clarify the nature of the statistics contained within <i>Farm Business Income provisional estimates</i> . In doing so, Defra should consider referring to the Authority's monitoring review <i>Projections and forecasts as official statistics</i> (para 3.6). |
| Suggestion 3 | Defra should use the commentary champions initiative to improve the commentary in all of its statistical reports to the same standard. (para 3.7). |
| Suggestion 4 | Consider the points detailed in annex 2, in seeking to improve the statistical reports (para 3.8). |
| Suggestion 5 | Provide an explanation of the comparability and coherence of the statistics for countries of the UK (para 3.9). |

Annex 2: Compliance with Standards for Statistical Reports

- A2.1 In November 2012, the Statistics Authority issued a statement on *Standards for Statistical Reports*⁷². While this is not part of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, the Statistics Authority regards it as advice that will promote both understanding and compliance with the *Code*. In relation to the statistical reports associated with Defra's agricultural statistics, this annex comments on compliance with the statement on standards.
- A2.2 In implementing any Requirements of this report (at paragraph 1.5) which relate to the content of statistical reports, we encourage the producer body to apply the standards as fully as possible.

Include an impartial narrative in plain English that draws out the main messages from the statistics

- A2.3 The monthly reports on topics such as *UK Milk Prices and Composition* and *UK Slaughter Statistics* provide very little context and the commentary provided is only a few key points. These reports present charts illustrating long-term trends but includes no discussion about the changes over time, or the relationships between different series. Additionally, *Animal Feed Statistics* provides no explanation of the dissimilar seasonality of retail production of animal feed by sector and *UK Milk Prices and Composition* does not discuss why the farm gate price for milk decreased in the first six months of 2012 after increasing steadily for the previous 18 months. *National average monthly wholesale prices* does not provide any commentary or discussion about the trends shown by the monthly statistics.
- A2.4 The commentary in the quarterly, twice a year and annual reports is more fully developed than that in the monthly reports. *AUK* provides some helpful commentary with information about factors which may have impacted upon the statistics. *Cereal Stocks* provides some good context around the latest statistics with explanations of how the weather will have affected stocks and levels of imported cereals as well as links to statistics on cereal use. Similarly, *Farm Accounts in England* provides weather data and commentary around it to help users understand how this has affected production. The *Farming Statistics* reports and *BHS* provide good context and discuss potential reasons for the changes shown by the statistics. *Agriculture in the English Regions* (1st and 2nd estimates) present the total income from farming for each of the English regions, alongside agriculture as a percentage of the region's GVA, but there is no discussion of the regional disparities, or the relationship between the two measures. *Organic Statistics* and *Orchard Fruit* provide little context and discussion of the statistics. For example, there is no discussion of the regional differences in organic production, or why some apple varieties are in decline while others have shown increased production. *TFP* (1st and 2nd estimates) present a good analysis of long term trends, but more information about why

⁷² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/standards-for-statistical-reports.html>

the volume of outputs remained the same while the volume of inputs and labour used in production fell would be useful.

- A2.5 The language used in all of the reports is generally straightforward, although some include technical terms that aren't defined. For example, in *Farm Rents* the definitions section explains that rents are shown for three different types of tenancies, but does not explain what each tenancy type is or how they differ from each other. Other examples of terms requiring definitions include, 'Integrated Poultry Unit', 'Cereal Incorporation Rate', 'Placings and Eggs Set', 'Less-Favoured Areas' and 'Standard Gross Margins'. *Farming Statistics – Livestock Populations December, UK and England* uses acronyms (ADHB and HGCA) without explanation.

Include information about the context and likely uses of the statistics

- A2.6 *API* and *Farm Rents* present a helpful summary of the ways in which farmers, government and others use the statistics in the report. Many of the reports present a standard paragraph stating that the statistics are used by government and the EU for policy making and assessing market conditions, and by other users including the farming industry, academia and the general public.
- A2.7 *AUK* and *Diversification and Renewable Energy* provide good descriptions of how the statistics are used by the EU and provide links to reports which have used the statistics. *Farm Rents* also provides a clear summary of how the statistics are used by government and by farmers. *Farm Accounts*, *TIFF* (1st and 2nd estimates) and *Agriculture in the English regions* (1st and 2nd estimates) could usefully provide more detailed information about the types of policy decisions the statistics inform and which stakeholders are monitoring the performance of the agricultural industry and for what purpose. *National average monthly wholesale prices*, *BHS*, *Orchard Fruit*, *Organic Statistics* and the *Farming Statistics* series (except *Final Crop Areas*, *Yields*, *Livestock Populations* and *Agricultural Workforce June* and *Provisional Crop Areas*, *Yields* and *Livestock Populations*) provide no information about how the statistics are used.

Include information about the strengths and limitations of the statistics in relation to their potential use

- A2.8 Defra includes a generic statement explaining the revisions policy only in some of the statistical reports. However, with the exception of *Cereals Usage June*, Defra provides no indication of which statistics have been finalised within a statistical report. Not all reports include a link to the revisions policy; however, even where the policy is included, it is not always helpful. For example, *UK Slaughter Statistics*, states that 'minor revisions have been made for the reasons given in the revisions policy', but the Assessment team noted that there are three potential reasons for revising statistics given in the revisions policy. *TIFF* (1st and 2nd estimates) provides a thorough explanation of the revisions made to capital consumption of equipment and buildings in an annex, complete with charts illustrating the impact the revisions have had on the statistics. *TIFF* (1st and 2nd estimates, *Agriculture in the English regions* (1st and

2nd estimates) and *TFP*(1st and 2nd estimates) present revisions to early estimates as a means of measuring accuracy and reliability.

- A2.9 With the exception of one caveat in *Farm Accounts*, the strengths and limitations of the statistics are not discussed in the commentary of any of the reports being assessed. A link to a summary quality report is provided in *TFP*, *TIFF* and *Agriculture in the English regions*. While the summary quality report provides some useful information, such as the amount of data available at different stages of the publication process, it does not explicitly discuss the strengths and limitations of the statistics in relation to potential uses. *BHS* discusses some limitations of the statistics but this is not comprehensive or detailed.
- A2.10 *Farm Rents* presents confidence intervals for some of the statistics within the report, with a clear explanation of how to interpret them in relation to individual estimates. The report also discusses how the confidence intervals around estimates by region are 'higher' than for estimates by farm type. The report claims that 'This suggests that rent is closely linked to farm type' without further analysis to justify this claim. *Final Land Use* and *Provisional Arable Crop Areas* present confidence intervals around the estimates and confidence indicators based on relative standard errors in the form of ticks and crosses and a brief explanation about how to interpret them. It is not clear from the presentation of these indicators whether they relate to the current estimates or the year-on-year change, although the methodology section of the report indicates that the indicators relate to current estimates. The reports note that these indicators give an indication of sampling error.
- A2.11 Two reports present totals where some or all of the components are missing, without explaining why or how this might affect the interpretation of the statistics. In *UK Egg Statistics*, table 2.3 presents average prices paid by UK packers to producers. The statistics for barn and organic eggs for 2012 and the first two quarters of 2013 are not available due to 'confidentiality'. The report does not explain why the statistics are considered to be confidential. The table presents an average price for all eggs and a percentage change on the previous year but the commentary does not explain if the barn and organic egg data are included in the calculation of these figures. Similarly in *Agriculture in the English regions*, each region's GVA is presented alongside figures for the workforce, farmed area and livestock numbers. In the version reviewed, the most recent figures for GVA are from 2011, and for workforce, farmed area and livestock the most recent figures are from 2010. The report does not provide any commentary around these statistics, or useful guidance about how the figures relate to each other, or how they should be interpreted.
- A2.12 Where the statistics are produced from surveys, information about the quality of the statistics, such as confidence intervals and response rates is provided. However, apart from *Farm Rents*, Defra includes insufficient information about non-sampling errors and bias. *UK Slaughter Statistics* and the *Farming Statistics* reports incorporate data from administrative sources, but the reports do not provide any information about the quality of these data or their appropriateness for use in the statistics.

Be professionally sound

- A2.13 In general, the commentary is demonstrably consistent with the statistics. However, there is insufficient in-depth commentary which would assist the user to interpret the long-term trends presented in monthly statistics, since the monthly fluctuations can mask the changes shown over long time periods. *Farm Rents* warns users inconsistently about wide confidence intervals (CIs) around estimates. For example, the wide CIs around the estimates of Farm Business Tenancy (FBT) rent by region are highlighted and users are warned to treat these with a degree of caution; however, the estimate for FBT rent for General Cropping Farms also has a wide CI, but this estimate is presented without caution: in fact the commentary states 'All categories have shown a rise in rent with general cropping farms showing the largest increase (24 per cent) to £309 per hectare'.
- A2.14 The reports present statistics in graphs and charts to aid user interpretation, but some do not conform to good practice standards for clarity. For example, the x-axis on charts in *UK Poultry and Poultry Meat* do not start at zero and some charts in *Farm Accounts in England* and the time series in *API* are not clear in black and white. Furthermore, the commentary in *API* states that the base year for the indices is 2010, so in the chart the both series should be 100 for 2010; however, in the chart, the series lines do not intersect the 100 gridline at the 2010 point. *TFP 1st Estimate* presents statistics in tables, but these are labelled poorly. The report refers to table 4 but there is no table 4 in the report; however, there are two tables labelled table 2.

Include, or link to, appropriate metadata

- A2.15 *Agriculture in the English Regions 1st Estimate*, does not adequately describe that the statistics presented are the total income from farming at the regional level. *API* is a monthly report requiring a change of title each month. The title may benefit from a redraft so that the month the statistics relate to become a subheading, rather than being incorporated into the full title. The reports provide a statement about the frequency of their release and the timing of the next publication.
- A2.16 *UK Milk Prices and Composition*, *UK Slaughter Statistics* and *Poultry and Poultry Meat* use or refer to statistics collected by the Rural and Environmental Research and Analysis Directorate of the Scottish Government and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland, but no links to these statistics are provided and there is no discussion about the comparability, which could be useful to users. For the statistical reports that publish estimates about England only, Defra does not include any reference to other UK countries' comparable statistics. *BHS* does not provide enough information about the coherence of the statistics that are presented with those from other sources.

Annex 3: Summary of assessment process and users' views

- A3.1 This assessment was conducted from August 2013 to January 2014.
- A3.2 The Assessment team – Caroline Jones and Rachel Beardsmore – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of Defra in August. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 23 August. The Assessment team subsequently met Defra during October to review compliance with the *Code of Practice*, taking account of the written evidence provided and other relevant sources of evidence.

Summary of users contacted, and issues raised

- A3.3 Part of the assessment process involves our consideration of the views of users. We approach some known and potential users of the set of statistics, and we invite comments via an open note on the Statistics Authority's website. This process is not a statistical survey, but it enables us to gain some insights about the extent to which the statistics meet users' needs and the extent to which users feel that the producers of those statistics engage with them. We are aware that responses from users may not be representative of wider views, and we take account of this in the way that we prepare Assessment reports.
- A3.4 The Assessment team received 23 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

Central government	7
Eurostat	1
Academic/research organisation	5
Industry organisation	8
Supplier	2

- A3.5 Users who responded said that the statistics are very important or crucial to their work. The statistics are used for assessing specific sector markets, developing forecasts and inform budgets and work plans. Users are generally happy with the quality of the statistics and recognise that there are limitations (for example – sample size, resource) which restrict the level of detail and frequency of the statistics. There was mixed feedback about the commentary: some users were satisfied with the commentary, while others commented that the commentary was too short, or did not explain the drivers behind the changes shown. Some users commented that the statistics can be difficult to find on the web and others commented on the reduced resources/staff levels. Some users noted improvements since the previous assessment. All users noted that the statistical teams in Defra are helpful and responsive.

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

Annex 4: Summary of Requirements from Assessment Reports 22, 72, 150 and 154

A4.1 The purpose of this annex is to be able to readily compare the Requirements made in earlier assessments covering the same statistics with those in this Assessment report. Where the same Requirement has been given in this report as in an earlier Assessment in relation to the same set of statistics, a detailed account will be given about why the same Requirement is being made. In some cases, the same or similarly worded Requirements will be given, but these relate to different sets of statistics within each of the Assessment reports; these will not be considered further in this annex.

Assessment Report 22

A4.2 Nine of the sets of statistics in this assessment were assessed in Assessment report 22, published in December 2009⁷³. They have been re-assessed because of the amount of time that has elapsed since the initial assessment:

- *Agriculture in the United Kingdom*
- *Cereals Usage by Millers, Brewers, Distillers and Maltsters in the UK*
- *Animal Feed Statistics for Great Britain*
- *Cereal Stocks UK, England and Wales*
- *United Kingdom Milk Prices and Composition of Milk*
- *Availability and usage of milk by dairies in England and Wales*
- *United Kingdom Slaughter Statistics*
- *United Kingdom Egg Statistics*
- *United Kingdom Poultry and Poultry Meat Statistics*

A4.3 Assessment report 22 identified the following Requirements in relation to the statistics being re-assessed:

Requirement 1	Document the needs of users, and the types of decisions these statistics inform.
Requirement 2	Provide a statement explaining the nature and extent of revisions at the same time that they are released.
Requirement 3	Publish information on the methods adopted in the collection and production of these statistics, including citation of data sources.

⁷³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-22---assessment-of-agriculture-in-the-uk-and-selected-crop-and-livestock-statistics.pdf>

- Requirement 4** Ensure all respondents are informed of how confidentiality will be protected.
- Requirement 5** Prepare and disseminate appropriate commentary for all statistics.
- Requirement 6** Provide information on the quality and reliability of all the statistics in relation to the range of potential uses.
- Requirement 7** Include the name and contact details of the responsible statistician in all statistical releases.

A4.4 The Statistics Authority confirmed the National Statistics designation of these statistics in a letter to Defra on 26 May 2010⁷⁴.

A4.5 One Requirement within this report relates to aspects of *Code* compliance that resulted in Requirements in Assessment report 22. This is:

- Requirement 4** Ensure that all the agriculture statistics reports provide a statement explaining the nature and extent of revisions at the same time that they are released (para 3.4).

A4.6 Requirement 2 in Assessment report 22 resulted from the need to ensure that an explanation is provided when data marked as ‘provisional’ are revised. In meeting this Requirement, Defra committed to adding a general revisions policy statement to each statistical report, explaining the usual reasons for revisions, and including a comment specifying what information had been revised since the previous publication. With the exception of *Cereals Usage*, Defra has not provided an indication of the nature and extent of any revision in the other statistical reports listed in paragraph A4.2, leading to Requirement 4 in this report.

⁷⁴ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/confirmation-of-designation-letters/letter-of-confirmation-as-national-statistics---assessment-report-22.pdf>

Assessment Report 72

A4.7 Twelve of the sets of statistics in this assessment were assessed in Assessment report 72, published in December 2010⁷⁵. They have been re-assessed because of the amount of time that has elapsed since the initial assessment:

- *Farm Accounts in England – Results from the Farm Business Survey*
- *Farm Rents in England*
- *Farm Household Income and Household Composition – Results from the Farm Business Survey England*
- *Farm Business Income by type of farm in England*
- *Total factor productivity of the UK agricultural industry - 1st and 2nd estimates*
- *Total Income from Farming - 1st and 2nd estimates*
- *Agriculture in the English regions - 1st and 2nd estimates*
- *Agricultural Price Index*
- *National average monthly wholesale prices for selected home-grown horticultural produce in England*

A4.8 Assessment report 72 identified the following Requirements in relation to the statistics being re-assessed:

Requirement 1	Take steps to develop a greater understanding of the use made of agricultural accounts and agricultural prices statistics; publish the relevant information and assumptions and use them to better support the use of the statistics.
Requirement 2	Publish more details of the methods used for agricultural accounts and agricultural prices data.
Requirement 3	Publish quality guidelines setting out in particular how quality is assured and monitored.
Requirement 4	Prepare and disseminate appropriate commentary for agricultural accounts and agricultural prices statistics to aid interpretation and understanding.
Requirement 5	Provide information on the quality and reliability of agricultural accounts and agricultural prices statistics in relation to the range of potential uses.

⁷⁵ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-72---agricultural-accounts--agricultural-prices-and-farm-business-statistics.pdf>

- Requirement 6** Publish the name of the responsible statistician in all publications.
- A4.9 The Statistics Authority confirmed the National Statistics designation of these statistics in a letter to Defra on 3 October 2011⁷⁶.
- A4.10 Three Requirement(s) within this report relate to aspects of *Code* compliance that resulted in Requirements in Assessment report 72. These are:
- Requirement 1** Document the needs of users, the use made of agriculture statistics and the types of decisions they inform for the statistical reports listed in paragraph 3.1 (para 3.1).
- Requirement 2** Publish information about users' experiences of agricultural statistics, data quality and the format and timing of reports, relating to the agricultural statistics not included in the published summary of unprompted user feedback (para 3.2).
- Requirement 6** Improve the commentary in *National average monthly wholesale prices* so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics (para 3.7).
- A4.11 Requirement 1 in Assessment report 72 resulted from a need to develop greater understanding of the use made of agricultural accounts and agricultural prices statistics and publish the relevant information. In meeting this Requirement, Defra engaged with users of agricultural accounts statistics to understand their needs, but has not published detailed information about how the statistics are used by the EU. Also, as noted in paragraph 3.2, the summary of user feedback that Defra has published covers only a selection of the agriculture statistics that it publishes, leading to Requirements 1 and 2 in this report.
- A4.12 Requirement 4 in Assessment report 72 resulted from a need to improve commentary in the monthly and weekly prices series. In meeting this Requirement, Defra published a monthly brief, titled *Food and Farming Brief*. As mentioned in paragraph 3.7, *National Average wholesale prices* does not provide any information about why the data are collected or who uses the statistics; nor does it provide any commentary or discussion about trends shown by the statistics, leading to Requirement 6 in this report.

⁷⁶ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/confirmation-of-designation-letters/letter-of-confirmation-as-national-statistics---assessment-report-72.pdf>

Assessment Report 150

A4.13 Twelve of the sets of statistics in this assessment were assessed in Assessment report 150, published in November 2011⁷⁷. They have been re-assessed because of the amount of time that has elapsed since the initial assessment:

- *Farming Statistics provisional arable crop areas June, England*
- *Farming Statistics Livestock Populations December, UK and England*
- *Farming Statistics Provisional Crop Areas, Yields and Livestock Populations June, United Kingdom*
- *Farming Statistics Final Crop Areas, Yields, Livestock Populations and Agricultural Workforce June, United Kingdom*
- *Farming Statistics Final Land Use, Livestock Populations and Agricultural Workforce June, England*
- *Farming Statistics Final Crop Areas and Cattle, Sheep and Pig Populations June, England*
- *Farming Statistics Diversification and Renewable Energy Production on Farms in England*
- *Summary results from the Farm Practices Survey England*
- *Organic Statistics United Kingdom*
- *Survey of Orchard Fruit England and Wales*
- *Basic Horticultural Statistics*
- *Mushroom Production Area England*

A4.14 Assessment report 150 identified the following Requirements in relation to the statistics being re-assessed here:

Requirement 1	Engage more widely with users of the statistics; publish the relevant information and assumptions and use them to better support the use of the statistics.
Requirement 2	Provide a statement of the nature and extent of revisions at the same time that the revised statistics are released.
Requirement 3	Alert key stakeholders promptly to the correction of errors.

⁷⁷ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-150---statistics-on-agriculture-in-the-uk-and-england.pdf>

Requirement 4	Publish full details about the methods used to compile statistics on crops, cereals stocks, orchard fruit, organic produce, horticulture, and mushroom area, including explanations of why particular choices were made.
Requirement 5	Publish more comprehensive details about the quality and reliability of its agriculture statistics and ensure that users are informed of all main sources of error and bias.
Requirement 6	Seek authorisation from the National Statistician for an exemption to the principle of confidentiality for the circumstances described in the <i>Agricultural Statistics Act 1979</i> , and publish the details of this authorisation.
Requirement 7	Improve the commentary in the statistical releases so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics.
Requirement 8	Publish information on the strengths and limitations of the agriculture statistics in relation to particular uses.
Requirement 9	Disseminate orchard fruit and mushroom area statistics in forms that enable and encourage re-use.
Requirement 10	Ensure that all agriculture statistical releases are available through the National Statistics Publication Hub.
Requirement 11	Include the name of the responsible statistician in all statistical releases.
Requirement 12	Ensure that all administrative data sources used to produce the agriculture statistics are included in its Statement of Administrative Sources.

A4.15 The Statistics Authority confirmed the National Statistics designation of these statistics in a letter to Defra on 3 June 2013⁷⁸.

A4.16 No Requirements within this report relate to aspects of *Code* compliance that resulted in Requirements in Assessment report 150.

⁷⁸ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/confirmation-of-designation-letters/letter-of-confirmation-as-national-statistics---assessment-report-150.pdf>

Assessment Report 154

A4.17 Three of the sets of statistics in this assessment were assessed in Assessment report 154, published in November 2011⁷⁹. They have been re-assessed because of the amount of time that has elapsed since the initial assessment:

- *Business Management Practices on Farm, England*
- *Farm Countryside Maintenance and Management in England - Results from the Farm Business Survey*
- *Farm Energy Use - Results from the Farm Business Survey: England*

A4.18 Assessment report 154 identified the following Requirements in relation to the statistics being re-assessed here:

Requirement 1	Take steps to develop a greater understanding of the use made of the statistics, including use by non-government users, publish the relevant information and assumptions and use them to better support the use of the statistics.
Requirement 2	Adopt systematic and transparent statistical planning arrangements for the FBS rotating modules.
Requirement 3	Provide details of any methods specific to the FBS modules and link to relevant FBS methods information.
Requirement 4	Provide more information about quality and reliability of the statistics from the FBS modules.
Requirement 5	Improve the commentary in the releases by providing more contextual information about the statistics, references to supporting evidence where appropriate, glossaries of terms, and time series where appropriate.
Requirement 6	Publish tables in a format that encourages analysis and re-use.

A4.19 The Statistics Authority confirmed the National Statistics designation of these statistics in a letter to Defra on 2 April 2012⁸⁰.

⁷⁹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-154---statistics-from-the-farm-business-survey-rotating-modules.pdf>

⁸⁰ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/confirmation-of-designation-letters/letter-of-confirmation-as-national-statistics---assessment-report-154.pdf>

A4.20 No Requirements within this report relate to aspects of *Code* compliance found in the outputs assessed that resulted in the Requirements in Assessment Report 154.

