

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Background

1. The core purpose of the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is to improve the current and future quality of life. Defra brings together the interests of farmers and the countryside; the environment and the rural economy; the food we eat, the air we breathe and the water we drink. We do this by integrating environmental, social and economic objectives – putting sustainable development into practice every day, and by championing sustainable development as the way forward for Government.

2. Defra is responsible for collecting, compiling, processing, analysing, interpreting, and disseminating a wide range of statistics. These provide the bedrock for Defra's economic, scientific and policy work and are used for the development, monitoring and evaluation of policy. The statistics are widely used outside the Department and are valued for the important insight they provide into how the environment, agriculture and rural life are developing.

Official Statistics / National Statistics

3. Defra, its Executive Agencies and certain of its Non-Departmental Public Bodies (those so designated under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007) produce a wide range of Official Statistics. Such statistics are produced in line with the Principles and Protocols set out in the Code of Practice.

4. National Statistics are the sub-set of Official Statistics that have been formally assessed by the UK Statistics Authority as being fully compliant with the Code of Practice.

5. Not all statistics products are currently National Statistics. Nevertheless, the principles set out in the Code of Practice and Protocols are adhered to as far as possible by those who prepare statistics not designated as National Statistics.

6. Knowledge of the Code of Practice and Protocols is made available across Defra and its agencies and NDPB's.

5. Where contractors (including Executive Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies) are involved in the production of Official Statistics, Defra will ensure that they understand and apply their responsibilities under the Code of Practice and Protocols and comply with the procedures set out in this statement.

Role of Head of Profession, Lead Statisticians and Defra Communications Division

6. The Head of Profession (HoP), in consultation with the National Statistician, has final responsibility for the content, format and timing of all Official Statistics releases. It is the responsibility of lead statisticians in the producer bodies, Defra Communications Directorate (CD) and all others involved in release of Official Statistics to follow the correct procedures and alert the HoP of any difficulties.

Statements and Policies

7. As well as complying with the Code of Practice and its supporting Protocols, all of our Official Statistics are also produced and published in accordance with the following statements and policies, each of which forms an integral part of this Compliance Statement:

Statement on Confidentiality and Access

Statement on Customer Service and Complaints

Data Management Policy

Publication Strategy

Statement on Releases Practices

STATEMENT ON CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS

This Statement sets out the arrangements we have put in place to:

- protect the security of our data holdings and uphold our guarantee that no statistics will be produced that are likely to identify an individual unless specifically agreed with them;

while at the same time:

- obtain maximum value from these micro-data, once obtained, by extending access to bona-fide and authorised third parties.

Defra also offers a **Public Service Guarantee on Data Handling**

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/corporate/policy/opengov/defra/your-info/handling-guarantee.htm>

to inform people of their rights under the Data Protection Act 1998 when they supply personal data to the Department or its Agencies.

Requests for information

We will deal with all requests for information in a timely manner. We will treat all requests fairly and without prejudice taking into account the public interest and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and new Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) which both came into force on 1 January 2005.

These clarify and extend the rights of access to environmental information that already existed under the Environmental Information Regulations 1992.

Arrangements for maintaining the security of confidential statistical data

Defra's IT systems do not yet comply with British Standard 7799 (BS7799)¹, but the Department has a programme of bringing critical systems to compliance. In the meantime Defra's IT provider (IBM) will be managing IT security in line with its own GSD331 guidelines that broadly map onto BS7799. All Official Statistics held by IBM on Defra's behalf will be maintained in accordance with these arrangements. Defra is authorised to connect to the Government Secure Intranet (GSI) and complies with the Community Security Policy; this may be superseded by compliance with the GSI Code of Connection.

Technical security

The Defra network is permitted to hold and carry RESTRICTED data. It is permitted to exchange RESTRICTED data with other GSI connected organisations. The Defra network has a limited number of connections to other networks, these are all known to the **National Infrastructure Security Co-ordination Centre (NISCC)**, who is satisfied as to the security of these connections.

Physical security

All staff working in this organisation and all visitors to its sites require a pass to access the premises. There is no public access to any part of the organisation where confidential statistical data may be held.

Organisational security

We use a combination of survey project managers, data custodians, and data management teams to protect and maintain our data.

Disclosure Security

We use a combination of data manipulation and/or statistical disclosure techniques to meet the confidentiality guarantee. These are reviewed periodically.

Arrangements for providing controlled access to micro-data

Controlled access to micro data is only allowed after careful consideration of the case and under very strictly controlled procedures. For the most part this relates to the Agricultural Census database.

Micro-data is provided to bona fide researchers working on Defra or government sponsored projects and to Eurostat under various EU directives. Data may be released under arrangements described in a Service Level Agreement, a Concordat, contracts, and confidentiality declarations that protect the confidentiality and use of the information. It is anonymised where appropriate.

¹ The British Standard for Information Security which was re-issued in 1999 in two parts. Part 1 is the Code of Practice for Information Security Management and Part 2 specifies the requirements for implementing Information Security in compliance with the Code of Practice. In October 2000, BS 7799 was elevated to become an International Standards Organisation (ISO) standard - ISO 17799.

We also provide contact details, under strict conditions, for researchers if it is necessary for *ad hoc* surveys to be conducted or other contact to be made as part of the research.

Release of micro data from the agricultural census database is considered for non-statistical purposes where this is allowed under the Agricultural Statistics Act. In every case a prospective customer must make an application for release to: Farming Statistics, Defra, Room 301, Foss House, Peasholme Green, York YO1 7PX. Tel 01904-455323
Email: farming-statistics@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Auditing of beneficiaries of access

All beneficiaries of access are required to agree to audits of organisational, technical and physical security. The standards must be those to which the beneficiary agreed in the data access agreement.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)/Environmental Information Regulations (EIR)

While we will treat requests under the FOIA and EIR on a case-by-case basis, our presumption is that requests for individual statistical records will be rejected. Both pieces of legislation contain exemptions and processes that protect confidential information. Applications for release of individual statistical records will only be considered under the long-standing provisions of the Agricultural Statistics Act.

Use of Contractors (including Executive Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies)

Where contractors are involved in the production of Official Statistics, Defra will require them to understand and apply their responsibilities under the Code of Practice and associated protocols and to comply with the requirements set out above.

STATEMENT ON CUSTOMER SERVICE AND COMPLAINTS

Customer Service

Defra is a customer focused organisation dedicated to delivering a very high quality and professional service. The standards of customer service we are aiming to meet include:

Service to Data Suppliers

We will endeavour to operate efficiently by placing the minimum load necessary on data providers and by integrating our statistical work across government. We will take good care of all the information provided to us and we will respect the confidentiality of all identifying information in accordance with the accompanying Statement on Confidentiality

Service to Users

We will maintain the relevance of all our statistical activities so that they meet, where practicable, the needs of all our users, and where possible, make sure that the information we provide is equally accessible to the whole community. We will maintain a list of all formal consultations on our statistics on the Defra website, and encourage participation of a diverse set of respondents in such consultations.

We welcome constructive comments on everything we do because that will help us to improve our service. The appropriate business units providing the figures or service welcome any comments and feedback.

Service Standards

If you get in touch with us, we will be polite, approachable and helpful, and identify ourselves. We will make every reasonable effort to ensure that you are provided with information that is timely, relevant and accurate, and we will endeavour to meet the following targets.

- We will endeavour to respond to customer correspondence, whether in paper or electronic form or by telephone, within 15 working days commencing from the date when we receive your correspondence.
- Where this is not possible, we will let you know when you can expect a response and who will be responding.
- We will return person-to-person customers' calls as quickly as possible, keeping the customer informed of how the issue was being handled.

Sometimes, our service delivery standards will be affected by circumstances beyond our control. Occasionally we may make mistakes. When this happens we will apologise and do everything we can to put things right

If you do decide to make a formal complaint, then please follow our Complaints Procedure, details of which are given below.

Copies of the Department's leaflet on service standards can be obtained from the Defra helpline 08459 33 55 77 or email to helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Complaints

This guide tells you how to make a formal complaint about our administration or service and what you can do if you are unhappy with our response.

Our commitment

Defra is committed to providing a high quality and efficient service to customers. We recognise that sometimes things can go wrong. When this happens, we will do our best to put matters right quickly.

We will listen to your complaint and

- treat it seriously, and in confidence;
- investigate it thoroughly and fairly;
- resolve it promptly, and informally whenever possible ;
- wherever possible find a remedy and ;
- learn from complaints to improve our services.

If you have a concern about the quality of our service, or the treatment you have received from us, you should first approach the person or unit with whom you have been dealing. If you still remain dissatisfied, we would encourage you to contact the lead or Chief Statistician responsible about the complaint, to see if it can be resolved.

The Department's Head of Profession for Statistics, Peter Helm, is willing to assist in the issue if this would be helpful. He can be contacted at:

Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Room 201
Foss House
1-2 Peasholme Green
York
Y01 7PX
Tel 01904 455240

Email peter.helm@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Our Data Management Policy applies to all our Official Statistics, whether obtained from administrative or statistical sources, and howsoever published. The policy also applies to any associated metadata or documentation.

Principles of Information Management

The Department's main principles of information management are:

1. Information is a corporate resource. It does not belong to any individual or group. (Note: Unless specified when collected, information collected for statistical purposes is only used for statistical purposes)
2. Everybody is responsible for the effective management of the information they create or use.
3. We will make information accessible to others in Defra, except where there are specific reasons not to.
4. We will adopt a consistent approach to managing information across Defra.
5. We will share information across the wider Defra family, except where there is a specific reason not to.
6. We will retain details of all the business activities we undertake on behalf of Defra.
7. We will ensure that the information we create is accurate and fit for purpose.
8. In managing our information we will comply with the relevant statutory and regulatory requirements.

Implementing Data Management

Responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this Data Management policy is vested in the individual statistical units; they are accountable to the senior statisticians operating under the overall direction of the Head of the Statistics Profession.

The units' responsibilities are to ensure that our organisation manages its data resources in accordance with the best practice principles and standards set out in the Official Statistics Code of Practice and its supporting Protocols; with the Statements and Policies which form part of this Compliance Statement; and in accordance with the organisation's statutory obligations.

Major IT developments are taking place with the development of major corporate systems and storage arrangements. The data management arrangements will be developed in the light of this.

PUBLICATION STRATEGY

The aim of our Publication Strategy is to make our Official Statistics accessible to the widest possible community and to maximise the use of our statistical information in all

walks of life – subject to the need to comply with legal, ethical and confidentiality constraints. It comprises the following key principles:

Knowing our customers

The content of our resources and products, and the supporting information we provide will be informed by an understanding of our customers' needs - obtained through a combination of market research, analysis of demand, networking and consultation.

Informing our users

We shall help customers and users to understand and make the best possible use of our products by publishing supporting, background, or educational information and material, and by encouraging users to make use of our enquiry services.

A common identity

We will make it easier to identify which of our products have been branded as 'National Statistics' by using a common logo and by following standard practices and procedures, alongside the Departmental identity.

We will actively publish and release information. We will maintain a Publication Scheme – please see

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/corporate/policy/opengov/defra/available/pubscheme/index.htm> as required by the FOIA, which sets out commitments to publish certain categories of information.

Web focus

In order to promote widespread access and informed public debate, we will use the Web as our main channel for the dissemination of statistics. This means that all our published statistics will appear on the Defra area of the GOV.UK website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about/statistics>

We shall continue to provide a choice of formats for users of our statistics, whenever possible or where it is particularly appropriate, to meet our statutory obligations, and where there is sufficient demand. We shall keep this under review, taking account of changing means of delivery and changing user expectations.

Defra's Official Statistics Year Ahead Programme

Release dates for all the Department's Official Statistics releases are pre-announced in a 12 month forward schedule on the Defra area of the GOV.UK website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements>

Charging

It is Defra's policy to make as much statistical data as possible, via the website, free of charge. However, charges may be made, in line with legislation or Government policy, for example under the FOIA and EIR:

- to cover the costs of any non standard outputs, where extra resources may be required
- to cover the costs of publications and distributions

Accessibility

We shall make it easy for users to find and understand our published data by using

adequate signposting and standard documentation procedures, including cross-referencing and linking related material on the web. Please see also our **Statement on Confidentiality and Access**

STATEMENT ON RELEASE PRACTICES

It is the responsibility of all those involved in the release of Official Statistics to follow the correct procedures and alert the HoP of any difficulties.

Pre- announcement and Accessibility

Release dates for all the Department's Official Statistics releases are pre-announced in a 12 month forward schedule on the GOV.UK website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements>

The schedule is updated at the end of each month. The aim is to announce the month of the expected release at least six months in advance. The exact dates and times will be provided as soon as possible but no less than 4 weeks before release. Any alteration to release dates will be made public as soon as possible with an explanation. Where it does prove necessary to alter planned release dates, the reason for the alteration will be shown on the forward schedule. The schedule will also show the actual release date achieved.

All the statistical releases are made available on the Defra area of the GOV.UK website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about/statistics>

Date and Timing of Release

The date and timing of each statistical release will be decided in advance by the relevant lead statistician and pre-announced at least four weeks ahead of publication. Weekly figures are updated on the website as soon they are available. Monthly or less frequent statistics are issued at 9:30am.

With the approval of the National Statistician and Head of Profession, **embargoed releases** (i.e. releases allowed to be seen before publication by, for example, sections of the media, but not to be reported upon before publication) will be allowed for complex reports or compendia publications. The covering letter to recipients will include the standard wording given at Annex A.

In a small number of cases, it may not be possible to meet the published pre-announced dates. For example, unexpected operational difficulties (relating only to production of statistics) may be experienced, or certain aspects of the data may require further checking. In such circumstances the lead statistician will consider if any components can be released (if not the whole) and will set a new date for the full release. A full explanation will be given in the statistical notice.

Statistics will not be commented on in advance of publication.

However, Ministers may indicate that a release is forthcoming (but not the content) during the discussion of relevant policy issues.

Format of Releases

In general, statistical releases are prepared to a standard format. The presentation and layout of the release is decided by the lead statistician in consultation with senior statistical colleagues in the department and (where appropriate) with Defra Communications Division (who should be consulted on the best way of presenting this to fully inform the users).

Typically, releases will retain a core of standard tabulations, but content may vary to reflect

the needs of users and allow proper presentation and analysis of any new or particularly interesting results. Users will be informed in advance of any significant changes in format for regular publications.

Privileged Pre-Access Release to Ministers for Briefing Purposes

Routine statistical releases are issued without any pre – access for policy briefing of Ministers and/or officials. However, for certain statistical releases, Ministers and officials are provided with early access for the sole purpose of being able to respond completely when questions arise at the time of release.

In line with the Release Practices Protocol, early pre-access is provided **no earlier than 24 hours before release**. The covering letter to recipients of pre-access release material will include the standard wording given at Annex A.

A record of people outside the statistical areas receiving pre-access copies of statistical releases for briefing purposes is maintained for each release or group of releases and is available on request. **The number of individuals receiving pre-access copies is strictly limited.**

Early Release for Quality Assurance

A number of people are given pre-release access in order to help quality assure the outputs and processes. In such cases, the team producing the statistics will keep an accurate audit trail of the distribution, including what is sent, to whom, when and where. The covering letter to recipients will include the standard wording given at Annex A.

Accidental and Wrongful Release

Accidental or wrongful release includes providing any indication of the content of the release, including suggestions of the size or direction of any change or a substantive description, as in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable'

Any accidental or wrongful release must be reported to the lead statistician immediately and may lead to an enquiry. The lead statistician will, after consulting the HoP on what remedial action to take, inform the National Statistician. A record of all accidental or wrongful releases will be supplied to NSO for inclusion in the National Statistician's Annual Report.

Availability of Detailed Results

As much detailed information will be made available as is reliable or practicable, subject to legal and confidentiality considerations. Standard tables are updated on the website; as yet it is not possible to pre-announce their availability, although this is the aim. Every effort will be made to meet requests for special tabulations, subject to staff availability. However, charges may be made, in line with legislation or Government policy, for example under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR), to meet any specific costs that are associated with the required work.

FOIA and EIR Considerations

Statistics which are made available under Privileged Pre-Access Release to Ministers for Briefing Purposes, Early Release for Quality Assurance or Embargoed Release Procedures will be published at the date and time of the official release. This information cannot be made available under the FOIA or the EIR as it is still in the course of completion.

Advice Notes to be included in Covering Letters for Early Access for Briefing Purposes, Quality Assurance or Embargoed Release

Privileged Release to Ministers for Briefing Purposes

“RESTRICTED - STATISTICS

You are reminded that these are Official Statistics to which you have privileged access in advance of release.

Any accidental or wrongful release should be reported immediately to the appropriate lead statistician. Wrongful release includes indications of the content, including descriptions such as “favourable” or “unfavourable”.

Please prevent inappropriate use by treating this information as **Restricted**.

This information cannot be made available under the Freedom of Information Act or the Environmental Information Regulations, as it is still in the course of completion.”

Early Release for Quality Assurance

“RESTRICTED - STATISTICS

Please accept our thanks for agreeing to review the attached statistics. As they are not yet officially released, access to them needs to be carefully managed.

Any accidental or wrongful release should be reported immediately to the appropriate lead statistician. Wrongful release includes indications of the content, including descriptions such as “favourable” or “unfavourable”.

Please prevent inappropriate use by treating this information as **Restricted**.

This information cannot be made available under the Freedom of Information Act or the Environmental Information Regulations, as it is still in the course of completion.”

Embargoed Release

“RESTRICTED - STATISTICS

You are reminded that these are Official Statistics to which you have privileged access in advance of release. You are not to release these figures to anyone else or to report upon them until they have been officially released at [*time*] on [*date*].

Any accidental or wrongful release should be reported immediately to the appropriate lead statistician. Wrongful release includes indications of the content, including descriptions such as “favourable” or “unfavourable”.

Please prevent inappropriate use by treating this information as **Restricted**. This information cannot be made available under the Freedom of Information Act or the Environmental Information Regulations, as it is still in the course of completion.”