



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

22nd July 2016

United Kingdom Milk Prices and Composition of Milk – February 2015

This is a re-issue of the statistical notice first published on 26th March 2015 without the National Statistics badge.

Following a complaint upheld by the United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) that the milk price for February 2016 was misleading, because of the inclusion of annual bonus payments. This led to the suggestion that milk prices had risen in February when a better estimate without bonuses would have shown a decrease in the average milk price. The National Statistics badge was removed from the February 2016 statistical notice and as the same argument applies to the February 2015 statistics notice the National Statistics badge is also removed from this publication. A link to the letter from the UKSA to Defra can be found here

<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/united-kingdom-price-volume-and-composition-of-milk-february-2016/>

The milk price for February 2015 without the bonus payment is 26.12ppl, 1.09ppl lower than the published figure. This average price excluding the bonus was published on 30th April 2015.

Defra have agreed with the UKSA to improve the prominence, timeliness and quality of commentary on the impact of annual bonuses on milk prices.

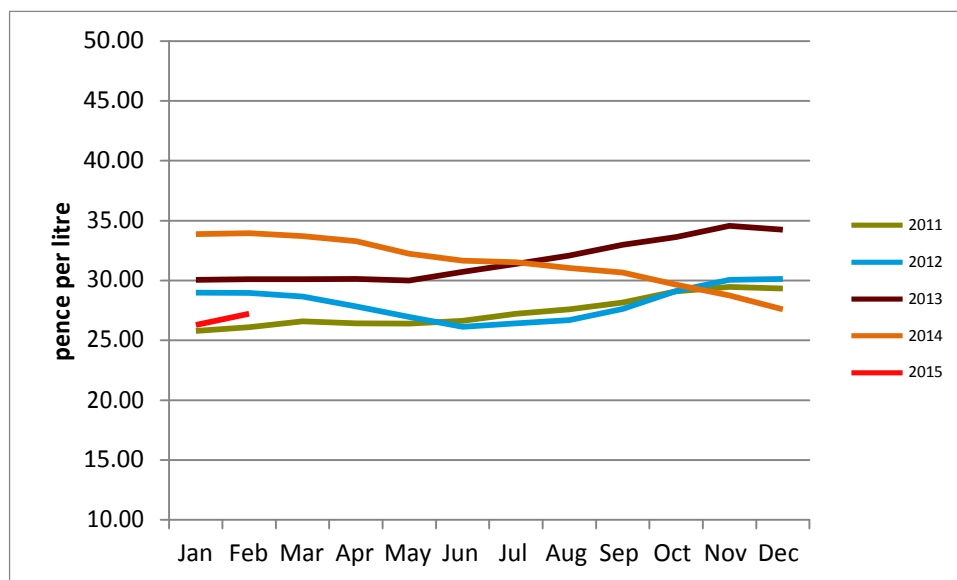
The notice as published on 26th March 2015 is on the following pages.

This release shows the latest information on average farm gate milk prices and the butterfat and protein content of UK produced milk.

Key point

For February 2015 there has been a 3.6% (0.94p per litre) increase in the UK average farm gate milk price since last month to 27.22p per litre. This represents a 19.8% decrease on the February 2014 price, but follows the seasonal pattern usually seen in prices at this time of year, as volumes fall ahead of the spring flush.

Figure 1: United Kingdom farm gate milk price (pence per litre)



Source: Defra statistics

This monthly notice will be updated at 09:30 on 30 April 2015. A full time series and dataset can be found at:

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

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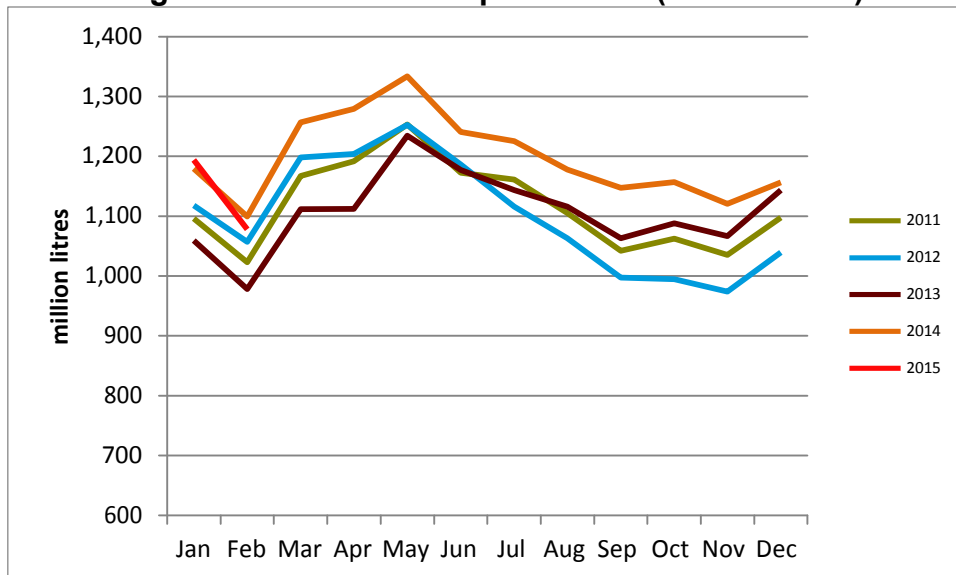
Commentary

In February 2015, UK milk production has dipped below last year's levels for the first time in the current milk year. This is due to lower farmgate prices giving producers less incentive to push for extra litres, combined with the year's reported variable silage quality.

February 2015 shows a fall in UK milk production of 9.7% on January 2015, and a 2.0% decrease compared to February 2014.

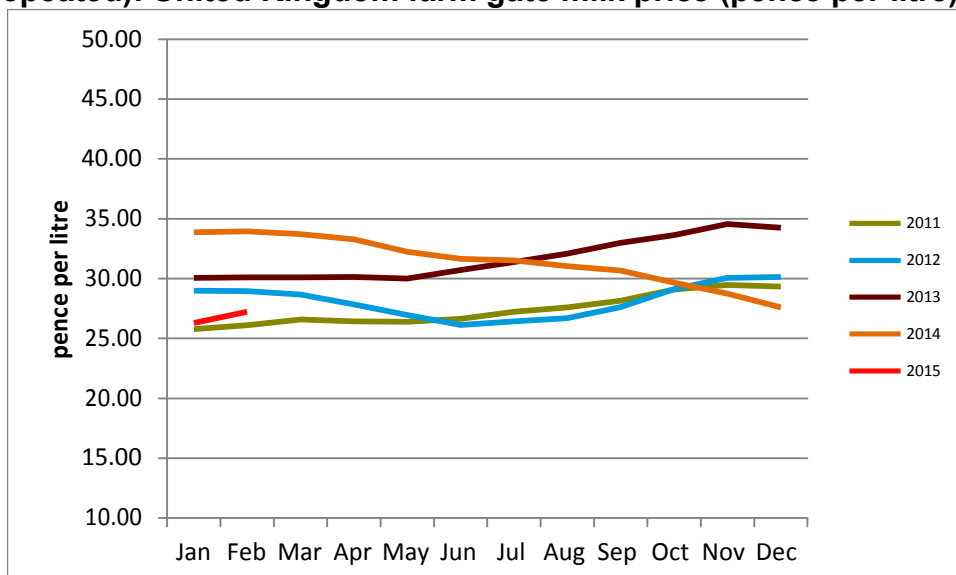
Figure 2 below, clearly shows the consecutive months of high domestic milk production over the past milk year. These have contributed to an abundance of supply in the market. This led to falls in the milk price, as shown in Figure 1 (repeated below for convenience). The effect of previously announced price falls by several large processors has been offset somewhat by the lower volumes for February 2015. However further price falls will continue to feed through in the coming months, and higher volumes will return with the start of the spring flush.

Figure 2: United Kingdom wholesale milk production (million litres)



Source: Rural Payments Agency milk quota data. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-wholesale-milk-production-figures>.

Figure 1 (repeated): United Kingdom farm gate milk price (pence per litre)



Source: Defra statistics

Section 1: United Kingdom farm gate milk price

Table 1 shows the monthly average farm gate milk prices for the last 13 months, along with historical annual averages (at actual prices). Monthly comparisons between years can be seen in Figure 1 on the front page and in the full timeseries on the website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-milk-prices-and-composition-of-milk>

Table 1: United Kingdom farm gate milk price

		pence per litre
2009 (a)		23.73
2010		24.67
2011		27.36
2012		28.08
2013*		31.64
2014*		31.52
2014*	Feb	33.95
	Mar	33.71
	Apr	33.28
	May	32.24
	Jun	31.66
	Jul	31.51
	Aug	31.03
	Sep	30.67
	Oct	29.66
	Nov	28.75
	Dec	27.59
2015*	Jan	26.28
	Feb	27.22

(*) provisional figures

(a) Milk prices during 2009 were affected by Dairy Farmers of Britain going into receivership. The annual average milk price for 2009 excluding milk purchased by DFoB was 24.00ppl.

Section 2: Composition of milk in the United Kingdom

Table 2 shows the average butterfat and protein content of milk. Butterfat content figures are sourced from published RPA figures and are presented here for reference only. Protein content figures are calculated from UK milk survey data.

Table 2: Average butterfat and protein content of United Kingdom produced milk

	Butterfat %				Protein %			
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14*	2014/15*	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14*	2014/15*
Apr	4.02	4.06	4.10	4.01	3.22	3.27	3.21	3.27
May	3.90	3.97	3.91	3.90	3.24	3.24	3.22	3.25
Jun	3.94	3.93	3.84	3.84	3.23	3.22	3.21	3.24
Jul	3.92	3.94	3.82	3.84	3.23	3.20	3.19	3.23
Aug	4.00	4.00	3.92	3.92	3.26	3.22	3.23	3.27
Sep	4.10	4.11	4.06	3.97	3.31	3.29	3.33	3.33
Oct	4.13	4.19	4.08	4.08	3.32	3.33	3.32	3.34
Nov	4.18	4.20	4.18	4.11	3.33	3.34	3.35	3.33
Dec	4.20	4.18	4.12	4.10	3.31	3.30	3.33	3.31
Jan	4.14	4.11	4.07	4.07	3.27	3.23	3.29	3.28
Feb	4.13	4.13	4.07	4.09	3.26	3.23	3.27	3.27
Mar	4.10	4.13	4.06		3.24	3.23	3.26	
Average	4.06	4.07	4.02		3.27	3.26	3.27	

(*) provisional

Source: RPA (butterfat), Defra (protein)

Section 3: Data users, methodology, notes and revisions policy

Data users

1. Users of the milk prices data include the EU Commission where the milk price statistics are required monthly under Regulation no. 479/2010 Article 2 (3)(a). Detailed information on this legislation and successive amendments are available at: [European Commission legislation](#) European level statistics on the milk industry are available at: [European Commission statistics](#)
2. The milk price statistics accompany another Defra monthly publication on milk utilisation by dairies (this is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/milk-utilisation-by-dairies> and provides more detailed statistics on the volumes of raw milk which are processed into other products e.g. liquid milk, butter, cheese etc.). This data, alongside the milk prices, gives a comprehensive overview of the UK milk market and is used heavily by the dairy industry, in particular the division of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) known as DairyCo (who represent milk producers) and Dairy UK (who represent milk processors). DairyCo consider the price and utilisation statistics vital for assessing market trends and to carry out further analysis on how changing prices affect the sector. Milk utilisation data provides insight into market characteristics and to monitor where milk is being used for domestic production. It provides insight to how production of products (such as butter, cheese etc.) changes in response to changes in global demand and market conditions.
3. The information in this notice is also used by the UK government as evidence for assessing market conditions and evaluating agricultural policy. Other users include academia and the general public.
4. Contact details are available on the front page of this notice, for you to send feedback or ask questions about the information provided.

Methodology

5. Farm gate milk prices: Defra runs a compulsory monthly survey of dairies in England and Wales to collect information on the volume, value and protein content of milk purchased from farms in England and Wales. All major dairies purchasing over 2 million litres of milk a year (32 in England and Wales) take part in the survey.
6. Similar surveys are run by the Rural & Environment Research and Analysis Directorate (RERAD) for Scotland and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) for Northern Ireland. Scottish milk price and production statistics are available in the Economic Report on Scottish Agriculture at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Agriculture-Fisheries/PubEconomicReport> (Section 5.25). This website also contains contact details and more information. Northern Ireland results are available at <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/statistics/agricultural-and-market-prices/statistics-milk-price-and-production-statistics.htm>.
7. UK average prices are calculated using the EU weighted results from the Defra, RERAD and DARD NI surveys.
8. The total volume of milk recorded by the surveys is compared with information from the Rural Payments Agency on the volume of milk delivered to dairies (information which is collected under milk quota regulations). The milk prices surveys cover approximately 90 per cent of milk purchased from farms in the UK.
9. The published farm gate prices are weighted according to the volume of milk purchased by dairies. The averages are strongly influenced by the larger milk purchasers, and smaller purchasers have little influence on the UK weighted average. The farm gate price is the average price paid to producers, net of delivery charges. No deduction is made for superlevy.

Some purchasers pay bonuses retrospectively to producers and these are included in the figures.

10. Composition of milk: The Rural Payment Agency collects information on the butterfat content of milk delivered to dairies under the milk quota regulations. The information is published on the RPA website (www.rpa.gov.uk) and is repeated here for convenience. The RPA also collects information on the average protein content of milk, but only from larger purchasers. This information is supplemented with information from the milk prices surveys to obtain a UK average. In the same way as for the average prices, the average butterfat and protein contents are weighted according to the volume of milk purchased.
11. The data are subject to a variety of validation checks which identify inconsistencies in the data. All data are cleaned prior to publication in discussion with the survey respondents.

Revisions policy

12. Figures in this notice are provisional and subject to revision. We will provide information about any revisions we make to previously published information in this statistics notice, and the associated datasets. Revisions could occur for various reasons, including:
 - a. if we have not received survey data from respondents we make an estimate based on their previous returns. These estimates are replaced with actual figures when they are received.
 - b. survey respondents occasionally supply amended figures for previous periods.
 - c. receipt of amended data from Scotland and Northern Ireland.
 - d. payment of retrospective bonuses which affect the previously supplied price data.
13. **This month there are minor revisions to previously published figures for January 2015 due to revised survey data from Scotland. For example, the January 2015 UK milk price has decreased by 0.02 pence to 26.28ppl.**