

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

1. Background information

Name of Statistical Output (including weblink to the relevant output or 'landing page')

Cereals usage by Millers, Brewers, Distillers and Maltsters
UK - June 2016
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cereal-usage>

Name of Producer Organisation

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

Name and contact details of the statistical Head of Profession (Lead Official in an Arm's Length Body) submitting this report, and date of report

Ken Roy, Head of Profession for Statistics, Defra.
Tel: 07900 608 258 Email: ken.roy@naturalengland.org.uk
4th August 2016

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 (Release Practices), Practice 4 "Issue statistical releases at the standard time of 09:30 on a weekday, to maintain consistency and to permit time for users to understand and respond to the information during normal working hours"

Date of occurrence

4th August 2016

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

The UK Cereal Usage statistics are published monthly. It is a National Statistic. This latest release was due to be published at 09:30 on Thursday 4 August 2016. A delay in the publication process resulted in this release not being available on the GOV.UK

website until 10.06 on the same day.

There has been one other breach for this release, on 8 January 2015

<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/cereal-usage-by-millers-brewers-distillers-and-maltsters-uk-department-for-environment-food-and-rural-affairs/>

Reasons for breach

There are 2 stages to the publication of statistics releases – ‘preparation’ and ‘approval’. Each stage is handled by different members of the publishing team.

The Cereal Usage statistics release had been ‘prepared’ for publication. The second stage requires another publisher, who must have editorial rights, to ‘approve’ by ‘second eyes’.

Due to staff reductions, the pool of publishers with editorial rights has been significantly reduced. The local team of publishers has reduced since early 2016 from 5 to 2. Three additional people have received publishing training but the website manager has not agreed to grant them editorial rights despite the need being made clear.

The request for second eyes approval was not picked up in time for the scheduled release at 09.30. When the error was noticed, action was taken and the publication was duly approved and released.

3. Reactions and impact (both within the producer body and outside)

- When a member of the team responsible for the statistical release noticed at around 09.40 that the release had not been published they instigated checks to find what had gone wrong.
- An external user (a cereal trader) contacted the department at 09:40 to say that the Cereal Usage statistics had not been published.
- A member of the publishing team discovered the issue and took action to resolve the error.
- The Cereal Usage statistical publication was correctly published at 10.06.
- The cereal trader was contacted and informed the publication was available on-line
- The Head of Profession (HoP) was not available on 4 August. The breach was discussed with a member of his team. The HoP will be advised on his return on 9 August.
- At the time of writing this report, no further communications or complaints have been received.

4. Corrective actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of such a breach (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

- The publication procedures have been honed over time and usually work very well.
- The need to grant editorial rights to the additional publishers will be raised again with the website manager.
- We will approach our central ecomms publishing team to request additional back-up over the holiday period.
- It is possible for publishers with editorial rights to force publish releases, instead of submitting for approval. The document can then be checked retrospectively by a

colleague. We will suggest that this procedure is adopted temporarily (during the busy holiday period) and for regular, low profile release only.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

A short statement was placed on the website alerting users to the delay in publication:

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

6. Any other relevant supporting material

None