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Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation
UK Statistics Authority
[by email]

Date: 31 March 2017

Dear Ed,

Temporary Suspension of National Statistics designation for Defra's Usage of milk by dairies in England and Wales statistical notice

I am writing following recent discussions between my staff and Job De Roij regarding the potential temporary suspension of the National Statistics badging for Usage of milk by dairies in England and Wales.

Defra has collected and published data on milk utilisation for a number of years. We collect and publish data on a monthly basis. The UK Statistics Authority last assessed the Usage of milk by dairies in England and Wales in 2014 (Assessment Report 271).

We have noticed, and it has been noted by stakeholders, that we are making an increased number of revisions to our data. Although, the data published is provisional and so open to change we noted on investigation that some of these revisions are due to errors. On further investigation, we identified that the methodology and process for completing the statistical notice assisted rather than minimised the chance of errors entering the statistical notice.

We have informed our stakeholders that we are undertaking a review, which we think will take around 8 weeks to complete. We will also place a note on the landing page explaining that we are undergoing a review of the methodology. As we produce monthly statistics, we expect the next two notices will be produced under the old system.

Although the previous statistics were designated as National Statistics it is my assessment that given the concerns over the methodology and process that the most appropriate course of action would be to seek temporary de-designation of the Usage of milk by dairies in England and Wales until the review is complete.

Section 14 of the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 states that we are unable to de-designate our own outputs from National Statistics without the UK Statistics Authority determining that the statistics do not comply with the Code.

We remain confident that the difficulties faced should be resolved going forward. We will allocate sufficient time to quality assure our review and processes before implementation. When we are satisfied with our methodology and processes, I will write a further letter asking for the temporary suspension of the National Statistics badging to end.

I would be happy to discuss any of these matters further if you would like more details.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Roy', is centered on a light blue rectangular background.

Ken

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