

17/06/2019

Statistics and Analytical Services
Branch
Room 812, Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3SB
Telephone: 028 9037 8346

Dear Mark,

Compliance check of statistics from the Northern Ireland June Agricultural Census

Thank you for your letter of 28 March 2019 regarding the compliance check of statistics from the Northern Ireland June Agricultural Census and for confirming the publications' continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics.

DAERA Statisticians have found the recent engagement with the OSR team to be extremely valuable in highlighting the strengths and areas of improvement for the main June Census publication, and the associated results releases. The DAERA Statistics Charter, our rich historical data, and our commitment to the ongoing documentation of quality assurance processes were demonstrated as strengths, as outlined in your letter.

We would like to thank the OSR team for taking the time to review the publications in detail, as well as providing advice on request.

The compliance check letter recommended a number of improvements and as a result, DAERA statisticians have prepared an action plan (see attached), which sets out how we intend to implement these recommendations. In doing so, we will ensure that the releases associated with the June Agricultural Census meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, as well as maximising the accessibility,

A living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.



relevance, clarity and insight of the statistics. Again, I'd like to express my thanks for this impartial and constructive review of the one of the Department's key data collections.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further detail with regards to the response provided.

Yours sincerely,



Máire Brolly

Statistics and Analytical Services Branch

CC Dr Seamus McErlean
Dr Norman Fulton
Siobhan Carey

A living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.



Action Plan to address requirements set out in Office for Statistics Regulation's compliance check of the Northern Ireland June Agricultural Census

Requirements	Action plan/Undertaken
<p>1. To maximise the use of available administrative data sources, we suggest sharing insight and best practice with the Welsh Government and Scottish Government, who are also working on administrative data quality reports for their June Agricultural Censuses.</p>	<p>A quality report for the APHIS administrative data source, using the QAAD Toolkit, is being developed.</p> <p>Currently there is regular engagement with statisticians from DEFRA. A biannual meeting of UK agricultural statisticians took place in June 2019. All UK jurisdictions were represented, and sharing of best practice was discussed. The next meeting is scheduled for December 2019. We will continue to develop links with statisticians in Wales and Scotland in order to learn from their experience.</p>
<p>2. We would encourage a move away from lengthy, descriptive commentary and consider how to provide more effective insights for users.</p>	<p>DAERA will consider the redesign of the report to meet user needs. DAERA will continue to liaise with policy colleagues, industry and other stakeholders in order to identify what works well, and what could be improved in terms of content. This will be facilitated through both the DAERA Statistics User Group, and the biannual agricultural statisticians meetings in June and December 2019.</p> <p>Where there is a clear link, we will refer to policy context to explain changes in trends, where appropriate, and elaborate on the policies informed by the statistics. For the full analysis report (due to be published in January 2020), we will review commentary, with a view to emphasising key findings at the beginning of the publication, and increasing accessibility to non-statistical audiences.</p> <p>DAERA has liaised with the GSS Good Practice Team for advice on developing potential data visualisations, and advice on enhancing the structure, design and accessibility of the bulletin. Feedback from the GPT is expected by late June 2019.</p> <p>We will explore the possibility of providing the data in separate Excel tables in order to encourage re-use of the data.</p>
<p>3. We urge the team to consider the value of the preliminary results and final results bulletins.</p>	<p>The preliminary and final results bulletins are produced in order to provide NI-specific information for UK-wide data collections by DEFRA. Following consultation with statisticians from the devolved administrations, and the GPT, DAERA will no longer publish the preliminary results bulletin.</p> <p>DAERA will liaise with statisticians from the other devolved administrations at the biannual agricultural</p>

	<p>statistics meetings in June and December 2019 in order to share best practice on how these statistics are disseminated.</p> <p>We will revisit the online location of these publications for the 2019 Agricultural Census releases, in order to improve accessibility.</p>
<p>4. We think that there is scope to publish the main report earlier. We encourage the team to review the processes involved in preparing the bulletin and improve efficiency by minimising the need for manual copying and validation.</p>	<p>The Farm Surveys team has undergone significant staffing changes within the last year. New team members will need to thoroughly familiarise themselves with existing processes and data validation procedures before these can be reviewed effectively.</p> <p>It will be difficult to publish the final June 2019 report in advance of January 2020, due to the large number of validation checks required on the main dataset and additional geographical indicators to be added.</p> <p>DAERA will plan a review of the processes involved in data validation by the end of 2019 for the 2020 Agricultural Census data collection.</p>
<p>5. We encourage your team to provide information on the calculation of estimates from the survey data and imputation, and to discuss their limitations. It would also be helpful to include a description of the survey design and how survey data are quality assured.</p>	<p>We will include a summary of the calculation of estimates and imputation and their limitations, and a description of the survey design in future releases.</p> <p>In terms of quality assurance, the work on the APHIS quality report, once completed, will provide useful information on how data from this administrative source is quality assured.</p>
<p>6. We encourage your team to continue to collaborate with, and seek input from, statisticians in the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and DEFRA, to ensure a consistent and coherent approach to producing statistics from the Agricultural Census across the UK.</p>	<p>As in Point 2, we will continue to develop collaborative relationships with statisticians in the other devolved administrations, in order to facilitate the sharing of best practice and to enhance the comparability and coherence of the bulletin across UK jurisdictions.</p> <p>We will liaise with, and seek feedback from Departmental and industry stakeholders on the Census publication through the DAERA Statistics User Group on the publication content and ease of use.</p>