

DARDNI

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

with the National Statistics Code of Practice and Protocols

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland (DARD) is responsible for collecting, compiling, processing, analysing, interpreting, and disseminating a wide range of statistics covering agriculture, food, animal health and welfare, fisheries and forestry.

Some of our statistics are designated as 'National Statistics' which means that they are produced in accordance with the arrangements set out in the [Framework for National Statistics](#) and in line with the principles set out in the [National Statistics Code of Practice](#) and its 12 supporting [Protocols](#)

A catalogue of all our data products, identifying those that have been designated as 'National Statistics', can be found [here](#).

As well as complying with the Code of Practice and its supporting Protocols, all of our National 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.

Data Management Policy

Publication Strategy

Statement on Releases Practices

Statement on Revisions, and Errors

Statement on Confidentiality and Access

Statement on Customer Service and Complaints

Data Management

Introduction

Our Data Management Policy is published in accordance with the requirements set out in the [Protocol on Data Management, Documentation and Preservation](#). It applies to all our National Statistics, whether obtained from administrative or statistical sources, and howsoever published. The policy also applies to any associated metadata or documentation.

Policy Implementation: Data Managers

Responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this Data Management policy and for the stewardship of each of our organisation's data holdings is vested in a number of trained, identifiable and accountable Data Managers who will work under the overall direction of the organisation's Head of Profession. See Annex 1 for names, area of responsibility and contact information.

Their responsibilities are to ensure that our organisation manages its data resources in accordance with the best practice principles and standards set out in the National 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. Our Data Managers are also responsible for:-

- guarding the integrity and security of their data holdings in accordance with the organisation's overall policies on security and business continuity, which is still under development; and
- archiving their resources in line with the organisation's overall policy on data retention, preservation, and destruction which is still under development.

Data Managers' duties will evolve to match the development of each of the systems and policies described above.

Publication

Introduction

Our Publication Strategy is issued in accordance with the requirements set out in the [National Statistics Protocol on Data Presentation, Dissemination and Pricing](#). Its aim is to make our National 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 is based on 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 will 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 customer enquiry arrangements.

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.

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 our products may appear on the DARD website before they become available in print. We will continue to provide products in other formats in line with our statutory obligations, and where there is sufficient demand.

Charging

All the information we publish on-line will be free at the point of use. Any charges we impose will conform to the rules and procedures set out in the Protocol.

Accessibility

We will make it easy for users to find and understand our published data by using adequate signposting and standard documentation procedures.

Release Practices

Introduction

This statement is issued in accordance with the requirements set out in the [National Statistics Code of Practice Protocol on Release Practices](#)

A full list of DARD National Statistics Releases are available at the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) [website](#). The Release Practices Protocol will apply in full to all National Statistics releases.

Number and types of releases

In the current year DARD expects to produce statistics releases under approximately 20 titles. The volume of output varies year on year.

The publications are released in electronic format or in hard copy, and sometimes in both formats. A number of these hard copy publications are available free of charge whilst others are charged for. Everything published on the internet can be downloaded free of charge. All statistical releases are made available on the DARD website. Printed agricultural statistics publications are available from Policy and Economics Division: Tel (028) 90524521.

DARD has no statistical outputs that are regarded as market sensitive.

Timing of Releases

Release dates for DARD and all other Northern Ireland Departmental statistical outputs are pre-announced on the [NISRA website](#) and via the Office for National Statistics Updates publication. The programme of releases is maintained and regularly updated for the coming year.

Statistical Press Releases (containing preliminary and summary results) are normally issued by DARD Press Office at 9.30 on the day of publication when they are also posted on the DARD website.

Format of Releases

DARD's Director of Policy and Economics maintains responsibility for the content, format and timing of all statistical outputs.

Releases will normally be in the form of a short summary of the key numbers, intended primarily to help the media in reporting the results. In some cases a Release providing 'headline' or key statistics, will be followed by a more detailed statistical bulletin.

Any statement about policy by a Minister is issued separately from the statistical release.

Typically, annual publications retain core, standard tabulations, but content may vary to reflect needs of users and to allow proper presentation and analysis of new or particularly interesting results.

Pre-release Access to Statistics

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.

Data Managers maintain a record, available for public scrutiny, of those individuals or posts who have pre-release access and the purpose of that access for each release. Any such access is in line with the Protocol. This includes those with access for management, briefing and/or quality assurance purposes.

For non-market sensitive statistics (all DARD statistics) privileged early access is provided no earlier than 5 working days ahead of publication (in line with the Protocol).

Availability of Detailed Results

DARD statistical publications cover a wide range of information. As much detailed information is made available as is reliable or practicable, subject to legal and confidentiality considerations. 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.

Revisions

This Statement is issued in accordance with the requirements set out in the [Protocol on Revisions](#) and sets out our intention to be open and transparent about any revisions we make to National Statistics and to ensure that users of our statistics have easy access to comprehensive information about those revisions.

We endeavour to produce the best figures we can in light of the available information and resources. Improvements and consequential revisions can result, as we continually strive to improve the methods and sources.

Some series are more subject to revisions, for example, when early or provisional estimates are produced. In such cases we will make it clear which National Statistics are provisional and subject to a scheduled pattern of revision. Our methods will be kept under review to minimise the scale of revisions.

Where a substantial methodological change is planned we will announce our intentions before the release of the statistics based on the new methods. For any key National Statistics we will provide background information and an explanation about the changes.

Errors

Many of the revisions we make are a normal, unremarkable and inevitable feature of statistical life and users are able to absorb and plan for those revisions accordingly. They reflect the receipt of fuller and more complete information.

However, some revisions are 'avoidable' in the sense that they are the consequence of errors or weaknesses in procedures or systems, or are the result errors in source material. Regardless of whether the responsibility is ours or others, we will follow the procedures described below.

Announcement of impending corrections

We will be open and transparent about the need for any unscheduled corrections. Once we ascertain the need for a correction that warrants customer notification, we will announce our intention to issue corrections, and the planned date of issue.

Dissemination of corrections

Decisions relating to the dissemination of unscheduled corrections will be made by Head of Profession. In general terms:

Web versions of releases/publications/tables/articles/etc

As soon as possible after we ascertain that a correction is necessary and warranted, we will amend all current electronic versions of any release, publication, table, article etc which contains the affected statistics or text, and repopulate the website as soon as possible with those amended versions. If the correction is minor or insignificant in the sense of being inconsequential and hardly noticeable, we will insert the necessary changes without alerting anyone. Alternatively, we may accumulate minor corrections and make an update at the time of the next scheduled web publication to avoid making too many frequent but minor changes.

Paper versions of releases/publications/tables

Unless there are compelling reasons, we will not attempt to recall/re-issue any paper versions of any release, publication or table etc. that contains the affected statistics or text if it has already been distributed. We will, of course, ensure that when we issue further paper copies, they will include any corrections that have been incorporated in the electronic versions.

However, if the error is substantial or significant, we will, where practicable, notify the recipients of paper versions by telephone or e-mail, and point them to the revised version available on the web. If the release or publication has a long shelf-life, we will consider re-issuing a revised paper version.

Confidentiality and Access

This Statement is issued in conformance with the requirements set out in the [Protocol on Data Access and Confidentiality](#). It 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.

Requests for information

We 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 Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations. Guidance on the Freedom of Information Act can be found at the [DARD website](#)

Arrangements for maintaining the confidentiality of statistical data

DARD has its own information security management systems that are subject to regular internal audit. In general:

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.

Technical security

No confidential statistical data are held on laptops or any other portable devices or kept on unprotected portable storage media. All transmission of micro-data is conducted within the government information network or on encrypted e-mail or password protected CDs.

Organisational security

We use a combination of survey project managers and data managers 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.

Arrangements for providing controlled access to micro-data

Controlled access to micro data is only allowed in a limited number of circumstances and after careful consideration of the case. For the most part this

relates to the Agricultural Census database, which is governed by conditions set out in the Agricultural Statistics (Northern Ireland) Order 2004.

Data may be released under arrangements described in a Service Level Agreement, a Concordat, contracts, and confidentiality declarations. It is normally made anonymous before release.

Occasionally, we provide contact details, under strict conditions, for researchers if it is necessary for *ad hoc* surveys to be conducted or other contact made as part of research activities supported by DARD.

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 treat requests under 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 provisions of the Agricultural Statistics (Northern Ireland) Order 2004.

Customer Service

This Statement is issued in accordance with the requirements set out in the [Protocol on Customer Service and User Consultation](#). It describes our intention to provide a high level of service to all our customers. More specifically we aim to meet the following standards of customer service:

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 DARD and other NICS departments. 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 the needs of all our users, and where possible, make sure that the information we provide is equally accessible to the whole community.

We welcome constructive comments on everything we do because that will help us to improve our service.

Service Standards

If you get in touch with us, you can expect us to be polite, approachable and helpful, and to readily 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, within 10 working days commencing from the date when we receive your correspondence.
- Our response will either be an answer to the issue you have raised, or a notification that the correspondence is being dealt with, but noting that the reply may take longer than the initial 10 day period.
- Our holding reply will either contain a date by which we intend to provide a full response, or a date by when we will contact you with a progress update.

Sometimes, our service delivery standards will be affected by circumstances beyond our control. And occasionally we make mistakes. When this happens we will apologise and do everything we can to put things right. If you have a concern about the quality of our service, or the treatment you have received from us and you

cannot resolve the problem with the person you have been dealing with, you can make a formal complaint.

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

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

We aim to deliver a high quality service but 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.

What to do if you have a formal complaint

You can complain in writing, by fax, by e-mail, by telephone or in person (by appointment please). Please provide as much relevant information as possible so that we can deal with your case promptly.

If you know which part of our organisation is relevant to your complaint or the name, or title of the appropriate member of staff, please make your complaint direct to them (referring to this complaints procedure would be helpful).

If you do not have this information, please telephone our public enquiry point on 028 90524521 who will put you in touch with the most appropriate person.

If direct contact is not possible, or if having done this you remain dissatisfied, you should write to:

DARD Statistical Complaints Officer
Policy and Economics Division
Room 811A
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast BT4 3SB

All complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt, giving the name of the member of staff dealing with it. We aim to issue a full response to your complaint within 10 working days of receiving it. If we cannot, we will tell you why and let you know when you can expect to get a full reply. It will help us deal with your complaint if you can provide as much background information as possible.

Not satisfied

If you are not satisfied with the initial response you receive, or the way in which your complaint has been handled by the DARD Statistical Complaints Officer, you can ask for your complaint to be referred to the Director of Policy and Economics. You should write to:

Director of Policy and Economics
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
Room 649A
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast BT4 3SB

As a final resort if you are still not satisfied, you can ask a Member of Parliament to request that the Independent Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (the Ombudsman), investigate your complaint and how it has been handled. The Ombudsman will only investigate after any internal review has been completed. If the Ombudsman is satisfied that your complaint has been dealt with fairly, he will close your case.

Annex 1: Responsibilities of the Head of Profession and Data Managers involved in the Production of National Statistics in DARDNI

Head of Profession (HoP)

Norman Fulton, DARD Director of Policy and Economics.

Tel: 028 90524655

Email: norman.fulton@dardni.gov.uk

The HoP, in consultation with the Chief Executive of NISRA, has final responsibility for the content, format and timing of all National Statistics releases. In particular, the HoP is responsible for:

- a) Setting the policy framework for release of National Statistics by Data Managers (see below).
- b) Advising Ministers on particular issues.
- c) Monitoring compliance with the protocol.

Data Managers

Agricultural Economy, Commodities and Prices

Data Manager – Seamus McErlean

Tel: 028 90524675

Email: seamus.mcerlean@dardni.gov.uk

Farming, Food and Farm Business Performance Statistics

Data Manager – Paul Caskie

Tel: 028 90524427

Email: paul.caskie@dardni.gov.uk

Food and Drink Processing Business Performance

Data Manager – Hazel Quinn

Tel: 028 9025010

Email: hazel.quinn@dardni.gov.uk