RESAS

Rural & Environmental Science and Analytical Services

Agricultural Statistics

Strategic and Business Planning

2018-2022

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The Agricultural Statistics team based in Edinburgh is part of the Scottish Governments RESAS Division. Our staff are skilled administrators, statisticians and economists that work to produce official statistics and economic analysis on the agricultural sector in Scotland.

This document sets out the aim and vision of the unit and the strategic objectives that support our work to realise them.

Our strategic aim is...

> **...to be a trusted and valued source for evidence and analysis of the agricultural sector in Scotland.**

Our vision for our future delivery is...

> **...using best practice to lead innovations and deliver high-quality statistics and analysis which is trusted.**

To achieve this aim and vision we have set out three strategic objectives that we will work towards to achieve success.

Our objectives are...

1. **Trusted Analysis**

2. **Influencing Policy**

3. **Vibrant Communication**

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Within each of these three objectives we will focus on a set of goals which staff will work towards in day-to-day work and will guide us in the business planning for the unit.

The goals for each objective are...

Trusted Analysis
- Provide our staff with training, support and space that allows them to experiment and innovate
- Modernise business practices that allow reactive and efficient responses to urgent requests
- Align analysis, appraisals and statistics to policy objectives and our legal obligations domestically and internationally
- Replicate best practice and utilise technical and academic expertise to ensure accuracy in analysis based on strong underpinnings

Influencing Policy
- Reflect current issues within key publications
- Provide expert analysis backed up from sound evidence and statistical practices
- Provide analysis to help develop transparent, objective, evidence-based appraisal and evaluation of proposals to inform decision making
- Pro-actively engage with policy colleagues at every opportunity to support better advice.

Vibrant Communication
- Promote our work through social media and business networks
- Use innovative practices to encourage interaction with statistics and analysis
- Tailor communications to audiences to deliver impactful insights
- Present ourselves as objective, professional experts with transparency and accuracy in all engagement to help build trust with users.

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🔍 Trusted Analysis

We must build users' trust in our analysis by demonstrating that we have the correct procedures, mentality and vision to support agricultural evidence now and in the future. By creating a solid foundation to produce accurate and reliable reports we should build a reputation that encourages that trust.

- **Provide our staff with training, support and space that allows them to experiment and innovate**

We will invest in staff training, our most important resource, to maximise their potential, improve conditions for innovation and a vibrant environment to work. Managers will support collaborative and innovative working. We will push for excellence, not be afraid of failure, learn from mistakes and champion success.

We will explore and develop data science capability and encourage our staff to explore new techniques in big data and data visualisation. We will aim to lead innovations in SG and adopt new techniques that will integrate with our daily work.

- **Modernise business practices that allow reactive and efficient responses to urgent requests**

We should continue to use project management techniques suitable to the work being delivered, to ensure that analysis is delivered within resource allocations, managing and preparing for risks to deliver outputs on time and within capacity.

Through an ethos of continual improvement we will target more efficient working practices that reduce the burden on data providers and analysts. For example we will continue to expand and improve our online data-capture, allowing immediate validation, reducing errors and the need for follow-up actions.

Policies such as the "Filing and Retention Policy" should be put in place to ensure that filing of reports and datasets are quickly retrievable to allow efficient analysis, whilst ensuring that we are compliant with all GDPR regulations

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🔍 Trusted Analysis

- **Align analysis, appraisals and statistics to policy objectives and our legal obligations domestically and internationally**

We will review statistical provision in Agricultural Statistics and ensure our work meets our policy obligations, supports further research and meets any legal obligations both domestically and internationally. We will be mindful of our internal Government users' needs and external stakeholders, for the benefit of agriculture.

Statistical and economic analysis should be aligned to support the evidence base for policy objectives in 'Programme for Government' and other relevant strategies such as the report from the Agricultural Champions.

- **Replicate best practice and utilise technical and academic expertise to ensure accuracy in analysis based on strong underpinnings**

By ensuring staff have the right skills and training and access to academic and professional advice where specialisms are required, we can create analysis and statistical techniques, based on sound methodology that produces reliable and accurate reports.

We will undertake methodological reviews when necessary to ensure that we have the best fundamental practices in place to provide reliable estimates and statistics. For example, in our Farm Business Survey, re-weighting of the survey sample is vital to ensuring that we accurately estimate the total output of the sub-sectors in Agriculture.

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🔎🐮 **Influencing Policy**

It is vital that our evidence is used to positively influence policy-making decisions that will benefit agriculture in Scotland and the wider public as well. This should be the main focus of what we do, but we must also be mindful that the analysis and data is re-used by the public, specialists and academics.

- **Reflect current issues within key publications**

Over the coming years, agriculture will face unparalleled challenges from global pressures such as food security, Brexit, environmental and climate change concerns and an interconnected financial sector. Our analysis must reflect on these issues and provide the evidence, whether good or bad, that shows the effects on agriculture and its role in these issues.

- **Provide expert analysis backed up from sound evidence and statistical practices**

Our analytical evidence, facts and statistics will help us to provide options that help policy formation and adhere to the principles of good governance, whether through analysis that meets HM Treasury Green Book and other guidance or Best Value.

We must also be ready to challenge assertions, supported by evidence, and be prepared to make our arguments strong and loud. Our analysis should also lead to offering suggestions and alternative options based on facts that are clearly supported from accurate, reliable and objective analysis.

Influencing Policy

- **Provide analysis and advice to help develop transparent, objective, evidence-based appraisal and evaluation of proposals to inform decision making**

Our analysis will provide objective and transparent assessment of policy proposals based on peer-reviewed guidance and well-established appraisal techniques to support and steer decision-making with evidence-based advice.

In line with Green Book guidance, analysis should provide decision-makers with an understanding of the overall effects and trade-offs of policy proposals and their impacts on Scotland and society as a whole.

- **Pro-actively engage with policy colleagues at every opportunity to support high-quality, evidenced-backed advice.**

Statisticians and economists are encouraged to consult with policy colleagues at all stages of analytical research and development to prioritise their requirements. Managers will facilitate meetings and provide support based on their experience of delivering analysis with impact.

Political acuity is crucial to making analysis relevant to any policy development, so analysts will be expected to make themselves aware of political issues and they will be briefed regularly on emerging topics. Sensitive topics will be treated with care but we will not shy away from promoting evidence that emerges from any analysis or statistics.

🔍 Vibrant Communication

It is vital that our communication is easily understood by everyone we engage with. Our frontline staff will provide courteous and professional assistance. To accommodate wide ranging skills in interpreting economic and statistical analysis, our analysts will strive to present data in a clear manner that engages and informs our consumers.

- **Promote our work through social media and business networks**

The use of social media to promote the work done daily by RESAS and Agricultural Statistics is vital to improving the understanding of the statistics and to stay engaged with the industry experts and the general public. Analysts will be encouraged to use social media to promote their work and to improve the reach of our analysis

- **Use innovative practices to encourage interaction with statistics and analysis**

Economic and statistical analysis can be a minefield for the lay-user to navigate and interpret for themselves. Whilst it is right that our analysts should use their expertise to highlight issues and results for further decision making, we should also present results so that anyone researching our data and analysis can draw their own conclusions.

For web-accessed data, interactive visualisations that allow users to examine the results will improve the transparency of our analysis and help to build trust with our audiences. In non-interactive and static publications, analysis and results will be presented in a visually clear manner and we will use plain English to explain complex terminology.

Vibrant Communication

- **Tailor communications to audiences to deliver impactful insights**

Our teams will attend high profile external events such as the Royal Highland Show and Rural Parliament to engage with our key audiences and understand for themselves what issues that matter to them. We will engage in other consultations and regularly review feedback from our survey work to listen to the comments and react to improve our products

Official Statistic publications have begun trialling a new format that takes readers quicker to the analysis and key statistics, helping to de-jargon agricultural and statistical terminology. This process will be rolled out to all future publications and a continual improvement process is in place to ensure it meets the audience's needs. This will help us deliver our analysis with more impact and greater reach.

- **Present ourselves as professional experts with transparency and accuracy in all engagement to help build trust with users.**

Our census operations staff who diligently work to gather the data from farmers and other agricultural professionals will continue to help and assist them to provide the vital information that is requested of them. We will continue to support improvements to those requests and make it easier for them to provide us with data that is both convenient and less burdensome.

We will improve access to our methods and methodology allowing researchers to scrutinise our data quality and process methods at the same time as making our data more open and transparent where possible. We will continue to provide datasets at no-cost and in formats that are easily read by non-proprietary software for re-use.

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Other Relevant Strategies

A Future Strategy for Agriculture; Scottish Government
https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/05/4376

Best Value audit in Central Government; Audit Scotland
http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/corp/2009/bv_audit_best_value_central_gov.pdf

Better Statistics, Better Decisions; Office of National Statistics
https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Better-Statistics-Better-Decisions.pdf

Code of Practice for Statistics; UK Statistics Authority
https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/

Green Book Guidance for Evaluation and Appraisal; HM Treasury
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685903/The_Green_Book.pdf

Open Data Strategy; Scottish Government
https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00472007.pdf

Programme for Government; Scottish Government
https://beta.gov.scot/news/programme-for-government-1/