

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on Pesticide Usage in Scotland

*(produced by Science and Advice for Scottish
Agriculture, a division of the Scottish Government)*

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About the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

The Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. It is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and good practice in relation to official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has two main functions:

1. oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority;
2. independent scrutiny (monitoring and assessment) of all official statistics produced in the UK.

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ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION

The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* gives the UK Statistics Authority a statutory power to assess sets of statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*.

Assessment will determine whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated as National Statistics.

Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics comply with the *Code of Practice*. The *Code* is wide-ranging. Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

Designation as National Statistics should not be interpreted to mean that the statistics are always correct. For example, whilst the *Code* requires statistics to be produced to a level of accuracy that meets users' needs, it also recognises that errors can occur – in which case it requires them to be corrected and publicised.

Assessment reports will not normally comment further on a set of statistics, for example on their validity as social or economic measures. However, reports may point to such questions if the Authority believes that further research would be desirable.

Assessment reports typically provide an overview of any noteworthy features of the methods used to produce the statistics, and will highlight substantial concerns about quality. Assessment reports also describe aspects of the ways in which the producer addresses the 'sound methods and assured quality' principle of the *Code*, but do not themselves constitute a review of the methods used to produce the statistics. However the *Code* requires producers to "seek to achieve continuous improvement in statistical processes by, for example, undertaking regular reviews".

The Authority may grant designation on condition that the producer body takes steps, within a stated timeframe, to fully meet the *Code's* requirements. This is to avoid public confusion and does not reduce the obligation to comply with the *Code*.

The Authority grants designation on the basis of three main sources of information:

- i. factual evidence and assurances by senior statisticians in the producer body;
- ii. the views of users who we contact, or who contact us, and;
- iii. our own review activity.

Should further information come to light subsequently which changes the Authority's analysis, it may withdraw the Assessment report and revise it as necessary.

It is a statutory requirement on the producer body to ensure that it continues to produce the set of statistics designated as National Statistics in compliance with the *Code of Practice*.

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1 Summary of findings

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This is one of a series of reports¹ prepared under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*². The Act allows an appropriate authority³ to request an assessment of official statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*⁴ in order for them to gain National Statistics status. This report is in response to such a request. The report covers the set of statistics reported in the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports⁵, produced by Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA), a division of the Scottish Government Agriculture, Food and Rural Communities Directorate.
- 1.1.2 Section 3 of this report adopts an ‘exception reporting’ approach – it includes text only to support the Requirements made to strengthen compliance with the *Code* and Suggestions made to improve confidence in the production, management and dissemination of these statistics. This abbreviated style of report reflects the Head of Assessment’s consideration of aspects of risk and materiality⁶. The Assessment team nonetheless assessed compliance with all parts of the *Code of Practice* and has commented on all those in respect of which some remedial action is recommended.
- 1.1.3 This report was prepared by the Authority’s Assessment team, and approved by the Assessment Committee on behalf of the Board of the Statistics Authority, based on the advice of the Head of Assessment.

1.2 Decision concerning designation as National Statistics

- 1.2.1 The Statistics Authority judges that the statistics covered by this report are readily accessible, produced according to sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest, subject to any points for action in this report. The Statistics Authority confirms that the statistics published in the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports can be designated as new National Statistics, subject to the Scottish Government implementing the Requirements listed in section 1.5 and reporting them to the Authority by September 2014.
- 1.2.2 SASA has informed the Assessment team that it has started to implement the Requirements listed in section 1.5. The Statistics Authority welcomes this.

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html>

² http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf

³ Subsection 12(7) of the Act defines ‘appropriate authority’ as Ministers of the Crown, Scottish Ministers, Welsh Ministers, Northern Ireland departments or the National Statistician

⁴ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

⁵ <http://www.sasa.gov.uk/pesticides/pesticide-usage>

⁶ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/guidance-about-assessment/criteria-for-deciding-upon-the-format-of-an-assessment-report.pdf>

1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

- 1.3.1 SASA has established good links with the known users of the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports statistics, including central government, agricultural research and advisory bodies, environmental quality bodies and academics. The Scottish pesticide usage statistics feed directly into the UK pesticide usage reports produced by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), adopting the same production method, and so are fully comparable with the equivalent UK and Northern Ireland statistics.
- 1.3.2 Since 2008 SASA has been a division of the Scottish Government Agriculture, Food and Rural Communities Directorate. During the course of this Assessment, SASA has endeavoured to work more closely with the Scottish Government statistician group, publishing key process documents including a bespoke revisions policy and user confidentiality document on SASA's website. However, the relationship between the statistics team at SASA and the Chief Statistician at the Scottish Government is not sufficiently transparent from either organisation's website, and SASA is currently not fully engaged with organisational processes, for example the media engagement process and capacity planning.
- 1.3.3 The format and commentary in the survey reports needs to be improved. SASA has not clearly presented the key points and does not present any analysis to explain whether changes in the statistics over time represent genuine changes in pesticide usage, or are simply the result of known limitations in the dataset. SASA does warn of statistical issues in the reports, but does not make the scale of the issues and consequences for user interpretation clear.

1.4 Detailed recommendations

- 1.4.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that SASA should improve the production and presentation of the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports statistics. Those which are essential for SASA to address in order to strengthen its compliance with the *Code* and to enable designation as National Statistics are listed – as Requirements – in section 1.5, alongside a short summary of the key findings that led to each Requirement being made. Other recommended changes, which the Assessment team considers would improve the statistics and the service provided to users but which are not formally required for their designation as National Statistics, are listed – as Suggestions – in section 1.6.

1.5 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

- 1.5.1 This section includes those improvements that SASA is required to make in respect of its Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports statistics in order to fully comply with the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, and to enable designation as National Statistics.

Finding	Requirement	
The <i>Pesticide Usage in Scotland</i> reports and supplementary methods guide do not sufficiently explain the limitations of the statistics and the impact for user interpretation of trends. SASA should:	1	Provide more, and clearer, information about the data limitations, particularly with regard to small sample sizes and changes in collection method, so that users can determine the impact of these data limitations on trend information in the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports (para 3.3).
The commentary in <i>Pesticide Usage in Scotland</i> is limited, describing rises and falls without discussing the likely reasons underlying the trends. SASA should:	2	Provide a clearer narrative about pesticide usage and improve the presentation of the statistics in all the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) clarifying the key messages for known uses b) providing further explanatory information c) ensuring that all of the charts are clearly presented to aid user interpretation (para 3.5). As part of meeting this requirement SASA should consider the points detailed in annex 1 and annex 2.
The pesticide usage statistics are not consistently available in an open, non-proprietary format. SASA should:	3	Publish the data associated with the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports in an open format that equates to at least a three star level under the Five Star Scheme (para 3.6).

1.6 Suggestions for extracting maximum value from the statistics

1.6.1 This section includes some suggestions for improvement to SASA's pesticide usage statistics, in the interest of the public good. These are not formally required for designation, but the Assessment team considers that their implementation will improve public confidence in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics.

We suggest that SASA:

1	Include links to the document of uses of the Pesticide Usage Dataset, and the summary of users' feedback document, in future Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports (para 3.1).
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2	Document the relationship between itself, the Scottish Government statistician group and BLOSS, including explaining who is responsible and accountable for decisions about the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports (para 3.2).
3	Engage with the Scottish Government so that the statistics section of the Scottish Government's website refers to SASA and to the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports (para 3.2).
4	Include information in the covering letters to respondents of the pesticide usage survey to explain how the confidentiality of the data is protected (para 3.4).

2 Subject of the assessment

- 2.1 Official surveys of pesticide usage on a variety of agricultural and horticultural crops began in 1965 in England and Wales, in 1975 in Scotland and in 1989 in Northern Ireland. The monitoring of pesticide use became a legal requirement in the UK under the *Food and Environment Protection Act 1985*⁷. Since 2009, the UK has been required to collect pesticide usage data and submit annual returns to the European Commission under *Regulation (EC) No. 1185/2009*⁸. The regulation states that the data should be supplied for every five-year period, therefore the first set of UK data is due to be published in 2015. The Food and Environment Research Agency⁹ (FERA) is the Executive Agency of Defra responsible for producing the UK pesticide usage statistics¹⁰. Production of these statistics is overseen by the Chemicals Regulation Directorate¹¹ (CRD), which is the statutory body established in 1985 to advise on all matters relating to the control of pesticides.
- 2.2 Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA) collects and publishes information about the use of pesticides in Scotland. SASA is a division of the Scottish Government Agriculture, Food and Rural Communities Directorate. The Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports statistics feed directly into the UK pesticide usage reports produced by FERA along with the Northern Ireland statistics, produced by Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute¹² (AFBI). SASA also publishes the statistics separately in the series of Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports. Both the Defra and AFBI pesticide usage statistics have previously been assessed¹³ and are already designated as National Statistics. They are not within the scope of this assessment.
- 2.3 The Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports is a series of annual reports, each of which presents information about the amount and types of pesticides used on a different crop. The statistics are based on an annual survey of farmers. The surveys follow a 4-year cycle covering different crops, with arable, soft fruit, vegetable and protected edible crops being surveyed every two years and grass and fodder crops surveyed every four years. Unlike the other UK producers, SASA also produces reports on rodenticide usage in Scotland. These are published alongside the arable and fodder surveys. SASA also publishes an interactive database Scottish Pesticide Surveys Database¹⁴ (SCOPES) which enables users to access information about the estimated active ingredient use of pesticides on arable crops in Scotland.
- 2.4 FERA directly advises SASA on the survey cycle to fit with the requirements of the legislation. Biomathematics and Statistics Scotland (BIOSS), an academic contractor, then supports SASA in developing and stratifying the Scottish survey sample each year. BLOSS also provides general statistical support during the production of the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports. The

⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/48>

⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32009R1185:EN:NOT>

⁹ <http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk/>

¹⁰ <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/pusstats/>

¹¹ <http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/guidance/industries/pesticides>

¹² <http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/services/services-specialist-advice/pesticide-usage.htm>

¹³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-239---statistics-on-pesticide-usage-in-the-uk-and-fertiliser-usage-in-gb.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.sasa.gov.uk/pesticides/pesticide-usage/scottish-pesticide-surveys-database-scopes>

survey for the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports is undertaken between October and April each year. SASA provides FERA with the raw data at the end of April, and the UK report is published in August. The Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports are then published in October.

- 2.5 SASA told us that it costs approximately £140,500 each year to produce the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports. This includes £128,000 on data collection and £12,500 on producing and publishing the reports.
- 2.6 The statistics from the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports are used by:
- UK Government and its Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP) to inform policy decisions relating to pesticide approval
 - Scottish Government to inform and support decision making in the agriculture sector, for example, they were used to inform the debate on EU restrictions placed on neonicotinoids in 2013
 - agriculture research and advisory bodies, such as Scotland's Rural College and the James Hutton Institute, to assess environmental implications of pesticide usage
 - environmental quality bodies, such as the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, to inform and prioritise their monitoring strategies
 - universities and schools to inform research projects, such as epidemiology studies looking at correlations between pesticide use and childhood cancers and Parkinson's disease
- 2.7 The Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports are published in PDF on SASA's and the Scottish Government's websites, with HTML versions also available on the Scottish Government's website. The tables within the reports are not published in any other format, although some data are available via the SCOPES database. This equates to a level of between one and three stars under the Five Star Scheme that forms part of the Open Standards Principles proposed in the *Open Data White Paper: Unleashing the Potential*¹⁵ and adopted as government policy in November 2012¹⁶. Five stars represent the highest star rating within the Scheme.

¹⁵ http://data.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Open_data_White_Paper.pdf

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-standards-principles/open-standards-principles>

3 Assessment findings

- 3.1 The statistics team at SASA told the Assessment team that it has built up good relationships with the main users of these statistics. SASA has documented the main users and uses of the data¹⁷, including some specific examples of how the statistics have been used by different stakeholders. SASA also attempts to collect information about users' needs in several ways, including inviting feedback from users via an online feedback survey¹⁸, proactively chasing feedback from these questionnaires, and meeting with key policy stakeholders. SASA has published both a document on the uses of the Pesticide Usage Dataset¹⁹, and a summary of users' feedback²⁰ on its website but does not refer to these in the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports. We suggest that SASA include links to the document of uses of the Pesticide Usage Dataset, and the summary of users' feedback document, in future Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports.
- 3.2 SASA has produced the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports since they began in 1975. In 2008 SASA was merged into the Scottish Government as a Division of the Agriculture, Food and Rural Communities Directorate, with the Scottish Government's Chief Statistician becoming responsible for ensuring that those involved in the production of the statistics are protected from any political pressures that might arise, and for deciding on the statistical methods and the content and timing of releases. The statistics team at SASA told us that it works closely with the statisticians in the Agriculture Food and Rural Communities Directorate within the Scottish Government, who provide advice on producing official statistics according to the *Code of Practice*. The SASA statisticians told us that they feel that they have sufficient statistical support and access to Scottish Government statistical training. SASA is responsible for the sampling and all statistical analysis in the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports, with statistical support provided by BLOSS. The relative roles of the Scottish Government and BLOSS are not sufficiently clear in the statistical support process. Neither SASA nor the Scottish Government make it clear that the Scottish Government's Chief Statistician is responsible for these statistics. Being clearer about this responsibility could offer further reassurance around the quality of the statistics. We suggest that SASA document the relationship between itself, the Scottish Government statistician group and BLOSS, including explaining who is responsible and accountable for decisions about the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports. Furthermore, although SASA publishes its survey reports on the Scottish Government's website, the statistics section of the Scottish Government's website does not refer to SASA. We also suggest that SASA engage with the Scottish Government so that the statistics section of the Scottish Government's website refers to SASA and to the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports.
- 3.3 Each of the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports contains a brief description of the survey and some information about data quality and the main

¹⁷ <http://www.sasa.gov.uk/sites/default/files/PSU%20-20Examples%20of%20Uses%20of%20the%20PSU%20dataset.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://www.sasa.gov.uk/forms/pesticide-usage-report-feedback-survey>

¹⁹ <http://www.sasa.gov.uk/document-library/examples-uses-pesticide-usage-dataset>

²⁰ <http://www.sasa.gov.uk/sites/default/files/PSU%20-%20User%20Feedback.pdf>

sources of bias. SASA has published a methods and quality assurance document²¹. However none of the reports or the document contain sufficient information to explain whether the changes shown by the statistics are statistically significant or how users should interpret the data given limitations including the margin of error in the survey, particularly for regions and crop types with small sample sizes. SASA does not clearly present the impact of these methodological decisions on the final results to aid user interpretation. For example, in the notes section of *Pesticide Usage in Scotland: Arable Crops and Potato Stores 2012*²², SASA warns that ‘trends in crop area between 2010 and 2012 may not solely represent changes in land use, but may also reflect differences in the way crop data has been collected and reported’. However, the key points in the report comment on trend changes without estimating the scale of this statistical bias within the results. As part of the designation as National Statistics, SASA should provide more, and clearer, information about the data limitations, particularly with regard to small sample sizes and changes in collection method, so that users can determine the impact of these data limitations on trend information in the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports²³ (Requirement 1).

- 3.4 The covering letters that SASA sends to farmers asking them to take part in the survey explain that the confidentiality of the data will be protected, but SASA does not explain the arrangements which are in place to reassure respondents. During the course of this Assessment, SASA developed and published a new confidentiality policy²⁴, but SASA hasn’t proactively alerted farmers to it. We suggest that SASA include information in the covering letters to those farmers included in the pesticide usage surveys to explain how the confidentiality of the data is protected.
- 3.5 The commentary in the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports is limited to describing rises and falls without discussing the likely reasons underlying the trends. SASA does not include a general narrative about pesticide usage to inform users of the overall picture and offer possible explanations for trends. The survey reports do not include sufficient context, for example about policies and practices that might influence the trends. Some of the presentation of the statistics is in three-dimensional charts, which is not good practice, and in some cases could lead to misinterpretation of the statistics. The summary section of each report contains a large number of statistics, making it difficult to identify the key messages. As part of the designation as National Statistics, SASA should provide a clearer narrative about pesticide usage and improve the presentation of the statistics in all the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports by: a) clarifying the key messages for known uses; b) providing further explanatory information; and c) ensuring that all of the charts are clearly presented to aid user interpretation²⁵ (Requirement 2). As part of meeting this requirement SASA should consider the points detailed in annex 1 and annex 2.
- 3.6 The reports are published in PDF and HTML formats but the tables are not available in any other format, reducing the capacity for analysis and re-use of

²¹ <http://www.sasa.gov.uk/document-library/pesticide-survey-unit-methods-and-quality-assurance>

²² <http://www.sasa.gov.uk/document-library/arable-crops-and-potato-stores-2012>

²³ In relation to Principle 4, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

²⁴ <http://www.sasa.gov.uk/document-library/confidentiality-policy>

²⁵ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

the data. SASA told the Assessment team that it intends to publish the data in CSV format from summer 2014, or as soon as possible thereafter, which would result in at least a three star level under the Five Star Scheme. As part of the designation as National Statistics, SASA should publish the data associated with the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports in an open format that equates to at least a three Star level under the Five Star Scheme²⁶ (Requirement 3).

²⁶ In relation to Principle 8, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

Annex 1: Compliance with Standards for Statistical Reports

- A1.1 In November 2012, the Statistics Authority issued a statement on *Standards for Statistical Reports*²⁷. While this is not part of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, the Authority regards it as advice that will promote both understanding and compliance with the *Code*. In relation to the statistical reports associated with pesticide usage in Scotland statistics, this annex comments on compliance with the statement on standards.
- A1.2 In implementing any Requirements of this report (at paragraph 1.5) which relate to the content of statistical reports, we encourage the producer body to apply the standards as fully as possible.

Include an impartial narrative in plain English that draws out the main messages from the statistics

- A1.3 The commentary in all the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports is impartial, with lots of numbers, and an indication of whether these have risen or fallen since the last survey, but it is not clear what the key messages are and where changes over time are significant. For example, *Pesticide Usage in Scotland: Soft Fruit Crops 2012*²⁸ shows a decrease of 34 per cent in the total estimated area of raspberries grown outdoors or under temporary protection between 2010 and 2012, but does not explain the reasons for this drop or the impact it may have had on the statistics.
- A1.4 The statistics in the summary are taken from tables within the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports, but there is no referencing to allow the reader to easily refer from the commentary to the relevant tables. It may improve interpretation of the statistics if the commentary in the summary is next to the tables they refer to.
- A1.5 Due to the nature of the topic area, some of the language used in the reports is technical, so it isn't very accessible to a non-expert audience. The statistical reports explain some of the technical terms in lists of 'definitions', but these could be expanded to include more definitions, such as 'active ingredient' and 'protected area'. The main terms should be explained clearly when they are first used. All of the reports could include more explanation about the different pesticides: for example, to explain what they are used for, whether more than one type can be applied and other attributes that might help interpret trends in their use.

Include information about the context and likely uses of the statistics

- A1.6 The Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports do not contain sufficient information about why the statistics are important, to whom they are important, and for what they are (known and likely to be) used for, including descriptions of the types of decisions made based on the statistics, and by whom.
- A1.7 Pesticide usage is measured in several different ways, such as area, weight, active ingredient. It is not clear what the relevance of each of these different measures is and when, and what, they should be used for.

²⁷ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/standards-for-statistical-reports.html>

²⁸ <http://www.sasa.gov.uk/document-library/soft-fruit-2012>

Include information about the strengths and limitations of the statistics in relation to their potential use

- A1.8 The reports make some attempt to explain the limitations of the data, for example, highlighting changes in definitions which may affect trends, however it is not clear what the implications of these limitations are and the impact they have on the data or trends shown by the statistics.
- A1.9 Some, but not all, of the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports include standard errors but not confidence intervals or supplementary commentary, which would enable users to more easily gauge the reliability of the estimates. The explanation of how the standard errors are calculated is technical and likely to be confusing for non-statisticians, and there is not a sufficient explanation on how to use or interpret the standard errors.

Be professionally sound

- A1.10 The figures in the commentary are not rounded, either to the nearest 10 or 100, which may imply a higher level of accuracy and give the impression of over-precision.
- A1.11 The Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports present some of the statistics in three-dimensional pie charts, which can be difficult to interpret.

Include, or link to, appropriate metadata

- A1.12 The Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports include a brief description of the background to the surveys, such as the UK and EU legislation requirements, the survey cycle, and how the Scottish data feeds into the UK statistical reports, including a link to FERA's website where the UK reports are published.
- A1.13 Throughout the process of this assessment SASA has published several useful documents on its website, such as a revisions policy, confidentiality policy, methods and quality assurance document, and information about uses and users. It may be useful to include links to these documents in the next set of Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports to inform users.

Annex 2: Summary of assessment process and users' views

A2.1 This assessment was conducted from February to May 2014.

A2.2 The Assessment team – Donna Hosie and Russell Whyte – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of SASA in February. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 24 March. The Assessment team subsequently met SASA during April to review compliance with the *Code of Practice*, taking account of the written evidence provided and other relevant sources of evidence.

Summary of users contacted, and issues raised

A2.3 Part of the assessment process involves our consideration of the views of users. We approach some known and potential users of the set of statistics, and we invite comments via an open note on the Authority's website. This process is not a statistical survey, but it enables us to gain some insights about the extent to which the statistics meet users' needs and the extent to which users feel that the producers of those statistics engage with them. We are aware that responses from users may not be representative of wider views, and we take account of this in the way that we prepare Assessment reports.

A2.4 The Assessment team received 10 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

Government department	6
Research and academia	3
Specialist media	1

A2.5 The users of the Pesticide Usage in Scotland survey reports told us that they found these statistics very useful and that they were happy with the level of engagement with the statisticians at SASA, who were very helpful and informative when users sought advice or additional information about the pesticides data.

A2.6 While most users told us they were happy with the level of detail available in both the reports and on the SCOPES database, some said that they would like more detail, or different breakdowns, such as lower geographies, although they recognised that the scope for producing this information was restricted due to small sample sizes. One user would also like more frequent reports for the grass and fodder crops reports, which are currently only every four years.

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

