

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on Monthly UK Sea Fisheries Landings

(produced by the Marine Management Organisation)

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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 *Monthly UK Sea Fisheries Landings*⁵ (*Monthly Landings*), produced by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO).
- 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 Director General for Regulation’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 Regulation Committee on behalf of the Board of the Statistics Authority, based on the advice of the Director General for Regulation.

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 *Monthly Landings* can be designated as new National Statistics products, subject to MMO implementing the Requirements listed in section 1.5 and reporting them to the Authority by April 2015.
- 1.2.2 MMO has informed the Assessment team that it has started to implement the Requirements listed in section 1.5. The Statistics Authority welcomes this.

1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

- 1.3.1 *Monthly Landings* is produced using administrative data from a single data source underpinned by European Regulation and supported by a comprehensive, if complex, operational infrastructure. Common practice is

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 <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/monthly-uk-sea-fisheries-statistics>

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

applied across the UK and Europe, supporting users' needs for comprehensive and comparable statistics.

- 1.3.2 The statistics report only on officially recorded landings of sea fish, and as well as the usual sources of error associated with any administrative data (such as misrecording due to human error at any point in the process) there are risks specific to these data. These include illegal activity and the financial incentives not to report catches, the recording of discards, and the recent introduction of electronic data recording by fishermen that MMO told us is taking time to bed in.
- 1.3.3 The need for strong assurance and audit arrangements is critical to the quality of these statistics and MMO has been able to demonstrate a range of processes that are in place. However, MMO could do more to communicate these arrangements for users of *Monthly Landings* and to illustrate the potential impact of any limitations in the data.
- 1.3.4 *Monthly Landings* is a relatively brief statistical report, with more comprehensive National Statistics published annually in *UK Sea Fisheries Statistics*. However, the reports could be improved in a number of simple ways to better help users interpret the statistics: better describing the coverage of the statistics; highlighting the key strengths and limitations; effectively signposting additional contextual information for users; presenting time series and information about typical revisions; and improving the accessibility of statistics for individual ports.

1.4 Detailed recommendations

- 1.4.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that MMO should improve the production and presentation of *Monthly Landings*. Those which are essential for MMO 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 MMO is required to make in respect of *Monthly Landings* in order to fully comply with the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, and to enable designation as National Statistics.

Finding	Requirement	
The coverage of the monthly landings statistics is affected by a time lag in	1	a) Clarify for users the revisions policy for <i>Monthly Landings</i> b) publish monthly time series in addition to

<p>validating the administrative data, leading to revisions. MMO does not publish any information about revisions in <i>Monthly Landings</i>. MMO should:</p>		<p>year-to-date statistics</p> <p>c) quantify any revisions to statistics for users at the time that they are published</p> <p>d) present for users an analysis of typical in-year revisions</p> <p>e) keep users updated on progress in reducing the lags in the validation process (para 3.3).</p>
<p>MMO does not publish sufficient information to assure users about the quality of the monthly landings statistics and to address concerns about undercoverage. MMO should:</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>a) Ensure that it has a good understanding of user concerns about the quality of the monthly landings statistics</p> <p>b) consider how it could most helpfully share the outcomes of audits with users of the statistics</p> <p>c) publish prominent information about the key strengths and limitations of the statistics</p> <p>d) publish comprehensive information about the audit and quality assurance arrangements for these statistics</p> <p>MMO should take into consideration the Authority's Report <i>Quality Assurance and Audit Arrangements for Administrative Data</i> and the National Statistician's <i>Interim Guidance</i> (para 3.6).</p>
<p>MMO has improved the commentary and presentation of <i>Monthly Landings</i> but could take further steps to aid user interpretation and accessibility. MMO should:</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>a) Improve the commentary in <i>Monthly Landings</i> by strengthening the links with <i>UK Sea Fisheries Statistics</i> and presenting better contextual information and analysis of trends</p> <p>b) improve the accessibility of the Excel tables and the data it makes available for individual ports and species (para 3.7).</p> <p>As part of meeting this requirement MMO should consider all of the points raised in paragraph 3.7 and also those detailed in annex 1 and annex 2.</p>

1.6 Suggestions for extracting maximum value from the statistics

1.6.1 This section includes some suggestions for improvement to MMO's *Monthly Landings*, 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 MMO:

1	Continue to build on the good foundations for ongoing user dialogue that it has put in place and consider a range of means of identifying and engaging users, drawing on examples of good practice from within the Government Statistical Service (para 3.1).
2	Review its statement that it follows Defra’s statistical policies to ensure that it does so in all respects, and where it does not, clarify any differences for users (para 3.3).

2 Subject of the assessment

- 2.1 *Monthly UK Sea Fisheries Landings (Monthly Landings)* is produced by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), an executive non-departmental public body and arm's length body of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). MMO was established under the *Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009*⁷ with the primary purpose of contributing to sustainable development in the marine area and promoting clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas.
- 2.2 *Monthly Landings* is the second set of MMO's statistics to be assessed against the *Code. UK Sea Fisheries Statistics*⁸, an annual compendium publication that provides a broad picture of the UK fishing industry, was assessed in Assessment report 126⁹. At the time of that Assessment in July 2011, *Monthly Landings*, previously named *Monthly Return of Sea Fisheries Statistics*, was considered as a supplementary dataset of *UK Sea Fisheries Statistics* and not mature enough in its own right to seek National Statistics status. The subject matter covered by *Monthly Landings* is broadly comparable with that of the Landings chapter of *UK Sea Fisheries Statistics*.
- 2.3 MMO publishes two further sets of official statistics – *Effort Use*¹⁰ and *Quota Use*¹¹. MMO told us that for these statistics, it has focused on providing a series of outputs tailored to specific user needs that it then publishes, rather than on developing a regular statistical report with the equivalent investment of *Monthly Landings* or *UK Sea Fisheries Statistics*. MMO told us that it is not currently resourced to develop these outputs further and so they are outside the scope of this assessment.
- 2.4 *Monthly Landings* presents statistics about the weight and value of all recorded and validated landings of fish by UK vessels into the UK and abroad, and by foreign vessels into the UK. The statistics include breakdowns by fish species and for landings into the 20 major seaports in the four countries of the UK. As well as the latest monthly statistics, *Monthly Landings* presents the cumulative year to date figures, with comparisons with the same period the previous year. Supplementary datasets present data for all individual ports and species to support tailored analysis by users.
- 2.5 Landings statistics are produced using administrative data collected and processed by the UK fisheries administrations: MMO for England; Marine Scotland¹²; Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Northern Ireland¹³ (DARDNI); the Welsh Government¹⁴; and related departments in Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man. The Isle of Man's data collection became fully integrated into the UK system in 2011. *Council Regulation (EC)*

⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/23/contents>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-sea-fisheries-annual-statistics>

⁹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-126---statistics-on-uk-sea-fisheries.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/effort-use-statistics>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/quota-use-statistics>

¹² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/People/Directorates/marinescotland>

¹³ <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/>

¹⁴ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/fisheries/?lang=en>

No 1224/2009¹⁵ of 20 November 2009 established a European Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy. The Regulation requires the UK to report to the European Commission in respect of UK fishing vessels uptake against national quotas. Skippers are required to keep and submit logbooks, and to provide landing declarations and sales notes. The UK fisheries administrations can also require the master, owner or charterer of a licensed fishing vessel to provide statistical information under the *Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967*¹⁶ and the *Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992*¹⁷. The UK fleet of fishing vessels is defined as those vessels registered on the Register of Shipping and Seamen¹⁸ plus those registered with the Isle of Man and Channel Islands. The full details are published in MMO's UK Vessels List¹⁹ and recorded as part of the EU Community Fleet Register²⁰.

- 2.6 The fishing logbook is the primary method of data collection and captures fishing activity by individual vessels by trip, for each day of activity within a trip. Landing declarations also provide information on the weight and presentation of fish landed by species. All UK vessels over 10 metres in length must submit logbook and landing declaration data to the UK fisheries administrations within 48 hours, including for landings into foreign ports. The Registered Buyers and Sellers Scheme²¹ (RBS) also requires that registered buyers (or sellers in the case of auctions) submit sales notes within 48 hours in respect of first sales of fish. There is no statutory requirement for vessels that are 10 metres or less in length to declare their catches. Since September 2005, MMO has produced the statistics for these smaller vessels using the RBS sales notes, supplemented by logbook and landing declaration data that have historically been supplied by fishermen on a voluntary basis.
- 2.7 Since 1 July 2012, UK fisheries administrations have been enforcing the provision of logbook and landing declaration data electronically for UK fishing vessels over 15 metres in length. Requirements to submit data electronically for UK vessels over 12 metres are also being phased in by the European Commission. The UK fisheries administrations have established a joint Electronic Recording and Reporting of Fishing Activity Scheme²² (ERS) to provide a UK solution for electronic sales notes (eSales Notes) and electronic logbook (eLogbook) computer systems. Information supplied by fishermen in paper form is keyed into networked computers by government officials at the port offices. The data are transferred from the UK ERS Hub and port networks to a central iFISH landings database via two systems administered by Marine Scotland, for landings into Scotland by all UK vessels and landings abroad by Scottish-administered vessels, and by MMO for all other UK-related activity.
- 2.8 In addition to reporting every month to the European Commission on uptake against quotas, central government uses *Monthly Landings* to inform fisheries policy and to support the UK's negotiating position internationally on aspects of

¹⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32009R1224>

¹⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/84>

¹⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/60/contents>

¹⁸ <http://www.dft.gov.uk/mca/mcga07-home/shipsandcargoes/mcga-ukshipregister.htm>

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-vessel-lists>

²⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/fleet/index.cfm>

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/record-and-report-your-fishing-activity-and-submit-sales-notes#buying-and-selling-first-sale-marine-fish>

²² <https://www.gov.uk/record-and-report-your-fishing-activity-and-submit-sales-notes>

the policy including quotas. Officials use the statistics to assess and brief Ministers on issues such as the sustainability of stocks and the impact of changes in species quotas on the fishing fleet and the UK economy. Fishermen might also potentially use the statistics as part of the intelligence that informs where they plan to fish and land catches. Central government and academics also use the statistics as part of their broader research – for example, to estimate potential changes in landings if a fishing area is closed due to offshore wind farms and to comment on changes in fishing patterns over time. MPs and representative bodies also use the statistics to inform lobbying in relation to local constituents and the fishing industry.

- 2.9 The Scottish Government publishes provisional annual landings statistics for Scotland in spring²³ and final statistics in autumn²⁴ each year, using the Marine Scotland data supplemented by iFish data for the rest of the UK, where appropriate. These National Statistics were assessed in Assessment report 127²⁵ in 2011. DARDNI publishes annual summary landings statistics for Northern Ireland²⁶ based on its own analysis of iFish. The Welsh Government does not publish any statistics additional to those produced by MMO. MMO also supplies UK landings statistics to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) which publishes global time series²⁷.
- 2.10 MMO publishes *Monthly Landings* in PDF with supplementary tables and datasets published in Excel format. This is equates to a level of 2 stars under the Five Star Scheme that forms part of the Open Standards Principles proposed in the *Open Data White Paper: Unleashing the Potential*²⁸ and adopted as UK government policy in November 2012²⁹. Five stars represents the highest star rating within the Scheme.
- 2.11 MMO told us that the estimated annual cost of producing *Monthly Landings* is approximately £5,000.

²³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Agriculture-Fisheries/provisionalfishstats>

²⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Agriculture-Fisheries/PubFisheries>

²⁵ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-127---statistics-on-scottish-sea-fisheries.pdf>

²⁶ <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/fisheries/licensing-and-days-at-sea/fish-landings-into-ni.htm>

²⁷ <http://www.fao.org/fishery/statistics/en>

²⁸ http://data.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Open_data_White_Paper.pdf

²⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-standards-principles/open-standards-principles>

3 Assessment findings

3.1 In January 2014, MMO consulted users about their experiences of *Monthly Landings*. This consultation formed part of a wider review of the statistics by MMO that included a quality assessment, the development of plans for statistical commentary, and a review of the processes used for producing the statistics. The review was the first undertaken for ten years. A range of users responded to the consultation including the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science³⁰ (CEFAS), SEAFISH³¹, New Under Ten Fishermens Association³² (NUTFA), industry users such as the British Ports Association³³ and the Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities³⁴ (IFCA). MMO published the outcomes of the review and user consultation alongside the statistics in June 2014³⁵, including information about how the statistics are used, a summary of user feedback and actions taken or planned in response to that feedback. MMO also reviewed its planned improvements with a group of key users, and reported that they had responded positively. One of the recommended actions from the review was to continue engagement with this key user group. MMO told the Assessment team that prior to this consultation, it had maintained a list of users but any engagement was usually in direct response to specific queries raised. We suggest that MMO continue to build on the good foundations for ongoing user dialogue that it has put in place and consider a range of means of identifying and engaging users, drawing on examples of good practice from within the Government Statistical Service.

3.2 MMO states on its website that, for *Monthly Landings*, it follows all of the same statistical policies as Defra³⁶. This includes a revisions policy³⁷ that sets out the ‘intention to be open and transparent about any revisions we make to our statistics and to ensure that users have easy access to comprehensive information about those revisions’. However, the picture presented in *Monthly Landings* is potentially confusing for users. The latest monthly statistical report and associated supplementary tables present:

- The quantity, value and price per tonne of landings for the latest month – for example, May 2014
- The quantity, value and price per tonne of landings for the year to date – for example, January to May 2014
- The quantity, value and price per tonne of landings for the same months the previous year as presented for the ‘year to date’ – for example, January to May 2013

³⁰ <http://www.cefass.defra.gov.uk/home.aspx>

³¹ <http://www.seafish.org/>

³² <http://www.nutfa.org/>

³³ <http://www.britishports.org.uk/>

³⁴ <http://www.association-ifca.org.uk/>

³⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-monthly-statistics-2014>

³⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about/statistics#corporate-procedures-and-standards>

³⁷ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/172885/Statement_on_Revisions_and_Errors.pdf

The year-to-date figures are updated each time that they are published to include the latest month (May), and to account for any revisions to earlier months (January to April).

- 3.3 The statistical report states that the statistics presented are the latest currently available based on fully validated data and cautions users that the latest year-to-date statistics are less complete than for the previous year due to time lags in the validation process. As a rough guide, MMO states that percentage changes between the two years could be impacted by up to five percentage points, with the potential effect varying by species. However, the individual months are not restated and MMO does not quantify the revisions for users. It is difficult to get a sense of typical revision patterns or when users might be able to consider statistics for a month as near final – do revisions patterns indicate that the data for January are usually almost complete for January by March or June or later? Also, *Monthly Landings* suggests that statistics for the previous year should be considered final following the publication of the annual *UK Sea Fisheries Statistics* but this is inconsistent with revisions policy detailed in Appendix 5 of the annual statistical report. As part of the designation as National Statistics, MMO should a) clarify for users the revisions policy for Monthly Landings; b) publish monthly time series in addition to year-to-date statistics; c) quantify any revisions to statistics for users at the time that they are published; d) present for users an analysis of typical in-year revisions and e) keep users updated on progress in reducing the lags in the validation process³⁸ (Requirement 1). We suggest that MMO review its statement that it follows Defra’s statistical policies to ensure that it does so in all respects, and where it does not, clarify any differences for users.
- 3.4 MMO publishes details of the methods used to produce *Monthly Landings* in a guide³⁹ that sits alongside the statistics on its website. The guide explains how the administrative data are collected and processed, and provides some high level information about the limitations of the statistics, mainly relating to undercoverage due to undeclared catches and discards. The potential impact on the statistics is not discussed. As part of the Assessment, users told us that they have continuing concerns about the coverage and accuracy of the statistics that go beyond those detailed by MMO. Also, MMO told us that the phasing in of electronic data capture is impacting the quality of the statistics, with inspectors diverted to assisting fishermen with recording data. MMO does not describe the impact of this transition for users.
- 3.5 The fishing industry is highly regulated with extensive enforcement activity and international audit arrangements. As part of this Assessment, MMO shared with us an example of a European Commission audit report. The regular audits by the Commission explore different aspects of the UK’s fisheries operations and the associated controls and identify strengths, weaknesses, related Commission infringement procedures, and recommended follow up actions. MMO also shared with us the report that it prepared in response to the audit findings for its own Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, outlining lessons learned and its proposed action plans. These regular audits and MMO’s responses represent a strength in terms of assuring the official statistics. However, the Assessment team considers that the findings, and the resulting

³⁸ In relation to Principle 2, Practice 6 and Principle 8, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

³⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/fishing-activity-and-landings-data-collection-and-processing>

action plans and outcomes, offer an important insight into the strengths and limitations of the statistics that MMO should share with users in a transparent and helpful way.

- 3.6 In addition to audits and inspections, Regulation requires various cross checks to be performed on the data. These arrangements are not sufficiently described for users. MMO told the Assessment team that following a reorganisation of its functions, the team producing the statistics now also has responsibility for overseeing the capture of the administrative data. The team told us that it will be establishing a development programme to continuously improve the quality of the input data, and that as part of this, it plans in the immediate future to provide better and more detailed information for users about its audit and quality assurance arrangements. As part of the designation as National Statistics, MMO should a) ensure that it has a good understanding of users concerns about the quality of the monthly landings statistics; b) consider how it could most helpfully share the outcomes of audits with users of the statistics; c) publish prominent information about the key strengths and limitations of the statistics and d) publish comprehensive information about the audit and quality assurance arrangements for these statistics. MMO should take into consideration the Authority's Report *Quality Assurance and Audit Arrangements for Administrative Data*⁴⁰ and the National Statistician's *Interim Guidance*^{41 42} (Requirement 2).
- 3.7 When MMO published *Monthly Landings* for January 2014⁴³, it presented a series of pdf tables with no commentary and limited technical notes. Since then MMO has made a series of iterative improvements to the statistical report, taking into account the findings of its review and user consultation. These include: beginning the report with some key points to aid users' interpretation of the statistics; adding maps to help users visualise activity at 20 of the UK's major ports and to support easy comparison across them; extending the explanatory notes to provide links to related websites; including the contact details for the responsible statistician; and inviting user engagement. MMO has also reviewed the content and structure of the supplementary tables, and importantly, now makes them available in Excel format. The Authority welcomes these improvements and the clear evidence that MMO is listening, and seeking to respond to, users' needs. Improvements that the Assessment team considers would further help users understanding and use of the statistics are:
- MMO needs to make the coverage of the statistics clearer for users. MMO might even consider changing the title of the statistical report to make it clear that these are 'reported' landings and not all landings. MMO could also provide better context for the monthly statistics, for example setting them in the context of any targets and quotas
 - MMO should strengthen the links between *Monthly Landings* and *UK Sea Fisheries Statistics* and explain for users how the two statistical reports complement each other. For example, *Monthly Landings* presents

⁴⁰ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/administrative-data-and-official-statistics/quality-assurance-and-audit-arrangements-for-administrative-data---exposure-draft.pdf>

⁴¹ <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Interim-Admin-Data-guidance.pdf>

⁴² In relation to Principle 4, Practices 1, 2 and 3 and Protocol 3 Practice 5 of the *Code of Practice*

⁴³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/monthly-sea-fisheries-statistics-january-2014>

information about landings abroad by UK vessels and landings in the UK by foreign vessels but the annual statistical report offers users much more in respect of international comparisons. MMO might helpfully signpost this analysis for users, and also inform users about the availability of equivalent monthly statistics for other countries

- *Monthly Landings* does not present any analysis of trends over time beyond year-on-year comparisons. *UK Sea Fisheries Statistics* examines trends over a five-year period using annual statistics that would help contextualise the latest monthly statistics. While MMO produces monthly statistics, as discussed in paragraph 3.2, MMO does not present an updated monthly time series anywhere. This means that while *UK Sea Fisheries Statistics* presents broad trends, there is no examination in either statistical report of in-year patterns and seasonality. MMO could helpfully consider how to fill this gap
- *UK Sea Fisheries Statistics* also includes detailed information about other aspects of the fishing industry and about the methods, strengths and limitations of the landings statistics that would be helpful for users of *Monthly Landings* if it were better signposted – a good example of this is in regard to understanding the potential impact of illegal activity where the annual report provides some estimates and access to a related detailed study⁴⁴
- In addition to signposting users to the outcomes of its consultation, *Monthly Landings* should include a summary of the key uses of the monthly statistics and in particular, explain how the information helps to fulfil the UKs European reporting requirements. MMO could also do more to contextualise the statistics for users by drawing in key related information, for example, around European quotas
- *Monthly Landings* presents statistics for the UK and for the 20 major UK ports. As part of the Assessment, users told us that they are unable to examine landings for specific species for their district, as only one port is included in the statistical report. MMO does publish a dataset alongside the statistical report with data by port and by species. However, it does not make this obvious to users and it could be easily missed. Also, MMO could make the dataset more helpful for users with some simple enhancements – for example, by presenting some simple cross-tabulations in addition to the raw data, to demonstrate the consistency with the UK totals, and by considering adding intermediate geographical coding between country and port
- MMO could also implement some simple enhancements to aid the accessibility of the statistics in other ways including: providing a prominent link to the archived monthly landings statistics; including a table of contents with the Excel tables; and signposting clearly for users of the Excel tables where they can locate longer time series

As part of the designation as National Statistics, MMO should a) improve the commentary in *Monthly Landings* by strengthening the links with *UK Sea*

⁴⁴ Agnew DJ, Pearce J, Pramod G, Peatman T, Watson R, et al. (2009) Estimating the Worldwide Extent of Illegal Fishing. PLoS ONE 4(2):e4570

Fisheries Statistics and presenting better contextual information and analysis of trends; and b) improve the accessibility of the Excel tables and the data it makes available for individual ports and species⁴⁵ (Requirement 3). As part of meeting this Requirement, MMO should consider all of the points raised in paragraph 3.7 and also those detailed in annex 1 and annex 2.

⁴⁵ In relation to Principle 4 Practice 6 and Principle 8 Practices 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 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*⁴⁶. 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 MMO's *Monthly Landings*, this annex comments on compliance with the statement on standards. The comments included in this annex are based on a review of *Monthly Landings May 2014*⁴⁷.
- 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 *Monthly Landings* presents the main messages from the statistics as key points at the start of the report. These key points, together with maps, data tables and brief explanatory notes make up the statistical report. The key points focus on comparing the year to date, for example January to May 2014, with the same period the previous year. As well as describing the changes, MMO sometimes offers some explanation, for example, in the March report⁴⁸ it discussed the impact of extreme weather during early 2014 on the South Coast of England. The maps present a picture of landings that aids easy comparison between the major UK ports. No international comparisons are presented and the statistics are not placed in the context of targets, for example, quotas.
- A1.4 *Monthly Landings* presents statistics for the latest month and year to date, and comparisons with the same periods the previous year. No analysis of trends over time is presented. MMO explains that the final figures for the year will be presented in its annual *UK Sea Fisheries Statistics* but it does not explain that users seeking analyses of trends should refer to the annual statistical report.
- A1.5 The language used in the statistical report is straightforward, and clear information is provided about inclusions, exclusions and calculations. The separate note about methods is easy to understand and while MMO does not provide a glossary of terms, it presents tables that explain how the species of fish are grouped. MMO also includes links to some of the contextual information that it describes, for example, the Registration of Buyer and Sellers Scheme.

Include information about the context and likely uses of the statistics

- A1.6 The statistical report does not describe the users and uses of the statistics. However, a link is provided alongside *Monthly Landings* on MMO's website to the outcomes of a user consultation that MMO ran in January 2014 about the structure and content of *Monthly Landings*. The report on the consultation identifies a range of users and their experiences of using the statistics.

⁴⁶ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/standards-for-statistical-reports.html>

⁴⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/monthly-sea-fisheries-statistics-may-2014>

⁴⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/monthly-sea-fisheries-statistics-march-2014>

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

- A1.7 Quantities are presented rounded to the nearest tonne and values to the nearest thousand pounds. The statistical report begins by explaining that the statistics are based on validated data and that lags in recording and processing data will mean that landings for the latest period will be under-recorded. The explanatory notes quantify the likely impact on the year-on-year percentage changes for the year-to-date series as being up to five percentage points.
- A1.8 Beyond this, *Monthly Landings* does not discuss the strengths and limitations of the statistics. However, a separate note detailing the data collection and processing methods describes some potential sources of error – for example, misrecording by fishermen – and what MMO does to minimise such errors. It also provides important information to aid users' interpretation of the statistics, for example, around unreported activity and discarded fish.

Be professionally sound

- A1.9 The descriptive statements in *Monthly Landings* are broadly consistent with the statistics. However, some statements are presented about numbers of landings, for which no relevant data are provided. The data tables and maps present quantity (tonnes), value and price.
- A1.10 The data tables are clearly presented and the statistical report includes two good maps about landings into the top 20 UK ports that are very good at helping the user visualise where the greatest volume and value of landings are coming in. *Monthly Landings* does not present any charts.

Include, or link to, appropriate metadata

- A1.11 The title of *Monthly Landings* clearly describes the coverage and frequency of the statistics but could make it clearer that these are 'reported' landings. MMO displays prominently the name of the producer body and also includes the name and contact details of the responsible statistician. The statistical report does not make it clear that these are official statistics but the webpage for the monthly statistics prominently describes them as such.
- A1.12 The report includes a 'revisions policy' section that explains that 'revisions to previously published figures for individual months are not provided in this release'. It is not immediately clear though that the year to date figures have been revised to account for the latest data available for these months. Revisions are not quantified.
- A1.13 *Monthly Landings* includes only brief explanatory notes but provides links to a separate note detailing the data collection and processing methods, including information about recent changes to those methods, and to more information about the ports included in the statistical report. The statistical report could help users by cross-referencing information from *UK Sea Fisheries Statistics*, in particular Appendix 4: UK fisheries statistics methodology which presents more detailed information about the methods for producing the statistics, including about European legislation and reporting requirements.
- A1.14 The statistical report includes a list of useful related websites, including international sites, but does not provide any information about the availability of

comparable landings statistics. Again, more information is included in *UK Sea Fisheries Statistics* that MMO could helpfully signpost from *Monthly Landings*.

A1.15 *Monthly Landings* presents data tables, with a clear contents list. The statistical report clearly explains that the tables are also available as Excel data tables, and they are positioned directly alongside the report on MMO's website. The Excel workbook would benefit from a table of contents. MMO also presents a dataset alongside the statistical report broken down by month of landing, the port of landing and the length group of the vessel.

Annex 2: Summary of assessment process and users' views

- A2.1 This assessment was conducted from May to August 2014.
- A2.2 The Assessment team – Donna Livesey – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of MMO in May. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 10 June 2014. The Assessment team subsequently met MMO during July 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 6 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

Central government	2
Commercial	1
Industry representative body	1
Industry regulator	1
International	1

A2.5 Only a small number of users responded to this consultation, and they were broadly content with the quality, presentation and accessibility of the statistics. Users were particularly positive about the helpfulness and expertise of the statisticians. Users raised some concerns around the accuracy and coverage of the landings statistics, and there were mixed views about whether MMO provides sufficient information about their strengths and limitations. The three main concerns raised were: undercoverage of ports and fishing areas; undercoverage of landings for certain species; and misclassifications of landings.

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

