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**Director General for Regulation**

Ken Roy  
Head of Profession for Statistics (Defra group)  
Natural England  
[by email]

14 July 2016

Dear Ken

**United Kingdom Price, Volume and Composition of Milk – February 2016**

We have discussed with you and your colleagues at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the publication on 31 March 2016 of an estimate of milk prices that – because of the inclusion of an annual bonus payment – led to the suggestion that milk prices had increased between January and February 2016. A better estimate excluding these bonuses suggests instead that the average price decreased over that period. I welcome the engagement with your statisticians to enable us to understand the nature of the production process for these statistics.

Designation of official statistics as National Statistics shows that the statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. I consider that the presentation of the series including bonus payments was materially misleading. Accordingly, I have concluded that the February 2016 bulletin should not have National Statistics status. The same argument also applies to the February 2015 bulletin, published on 26 March 2015. I would therefore be grateful if you would remove the National Statistics logo from these bulletins and associated landing pages on the gov.uk website as soon as possible, and include a clear explanation for users of the reasons, including a link to this letter.

I am pleased that you have committed to engage with your key users and to improve the timeliness, prominence, and quality of the commentary on the impact of bonus payments. Our view is that every bulletin (not just those published in February) should explain the issues around the two series clearly. It is also important that the issues around the bonus are more clearly articulated in the datasets than at present. I would welcome a further update from you in due course as you consider what enhancements you will make to these statistics.

I am copying this letter to Ian Lonsdale at Defra, and to John Pullinger, the National Statistician.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson