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**Mary Gregory, Deputy Director for Regulation**

Johanna Hutchinson  
Head of Data and Data Science  
Joint Biosecurity Centre  
(by email)

27 July 2021

Dear Johanna

**Statistics informing quarantine requirements for arrivals to England**

I am writing to you about data to support the recent decision on quarantine requirements for fully vaccinated arrivals from France to England.

On 16 July, [Government announced](#) that the quarantine requirements for France were changed “following the persistent presence of cases in France of the Beta variant, which was first identified in South Africa”. It is our expectation that statistics and data which support decisions should be made available in an accessible form alongside, or as soon as possible after, any statement. In this case, while the data were publicly available, we do not consider that they were easy to find or clear.

[Methodology information](#) published by the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) stated examples of publicly available information used as green and red indicators, including the Global Initiative on Sharing Avian Influenza Data (GISAIID). However, it did not make clear which data informed specific decisions such as the decision for France. It was not clear where these data could be found, or what analysis had been undertaken by JBC before data were used to inform decisions.

JBC has since clarified to us that the source of Beta variant data is the [international data](#) published by GISAIID and that it considered French overseas territories separately to mainland France, in line with the approach taken by GISAIID. It is not straightforward to find the data used by JBC on the GISAIID website and the need to acquire a log in adds further complications. This makes it challenging for users to verify the data referred to by Government. By not making the data and sources clear there was also confusion about how the data were analysed – for example, whether JBC undertook

any additional analysis using the published data and whether cases from overseas territories had been excluded for France.

We appreciate that decisions are being made at pace and it may not always be possible to publish the data at the time a decision is announced, but in future we would like to see key information clearly signposted and published more promptly.

OSR has [previously raised concerns](#) about a lack of data to support changes to international travel. There have been improvements, such as the release of [weekly Test and Trace \(England\) statistics](#) being better aligned with policy decisions on international travel and the [data informing international travel risk assessments](#) published by JBC. However, the lack of clear signposting to data sources, level of difficulty for a user to access the underlying data and the limited information on analytical choices fall short of our expectations on transparency.

We are pleased that JBC plans to update the [risk assessment methodology to inform international travel traffic light system](#) to more clearly reference relevant data and provide additional information on analysis undertaken on the data. Such improvements will help increase the transparency of the data used in travel restriction decisions going forward and should help minimise confusion in media reporting.

It is the collective responsibility of all of Government to ensure transparency of data and analysis. Therefore, I have also copied this letter to Ian Knowles, Head of Profession for Statistics at the Department for Transport.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Gregory". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mary Gregory  
Deputy Director for Regulation