
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Ian Lonsdale
Head of Profession for Statistics
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
(by email)

25 October 2022

Dear Ian

United Kingdom Food Security Report

We recently completed our compliance check of your [United Kingdom Food Security Report](#) against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). This will be a valuable source for the UK Government in building upon and monitoring progress towards the aims set out in the [Government food strategy](#). With the recent increases to cost of living generally there will be increasing focus on food security.

This is the first government statistical publication focussed on food security in over a decade and is a comprehensive and generally well-structured report that gives a good overview of all aspects of food security. Given the likely increasing public interest in food security, and that it is a potentially sensitive issue, means it is all the more important to have independently produced official statistics that are developed by analysts across government. Our review found a range of positive features demonstrating the trustworthiness, quality, and value of the statistics as they are currently published.

- The breadth of content means it should address the needs of a large number of users whose interests might focus on different aspects of food security. Splitting the report into five themes improves the accessibility by allowing users to more easily find the sections relevant to their needs.
- In relation to this, the consistent structure and section headings used throughout the report for each indicator and within each theme further supports the accessibility of the report and aids users in finding the information they seek.
- Listing all staff members and external academics who were involved in the publication and having chapters written by the most relevant government department highlights the collaboration involved in producing the report as well as demonstrating trustworthiness by showing the professional capabilities employed in the production.

In addition to identifying these strengths, we also identified ways in which the value of the statistics could be enhanced.

- While there is a consistent approach used for structuring of indicators throughout the report, there are some gaps in referencing sources for figures external to the

report. Some indicators provide sources for all figures used but others make reference to figures with no source provided. A full approach to referencing will enhance trustworthiness and add value by allowing users to investigate further as required.

- Given current concerns about cost of living the report's production was timely. However, there have already been major changes in the UK food security situation since the report was published. Consequently, it will be important to be responsive to these developments and transparent with users regarding how and when the report will be updated. To ensure the continued value of this report it is essential that users know what the future plans are, in relation to the data included as well as the report itself.
- While we acknowledge that there were time constraints in producing the first publication to meet the publication date set out in legislation it is unfortunate that wider user engagement was not carried out. As part of the future plans for this publication we would expect wider user engagement to be factored in. This wider user engagement could inform the best way to provide updated information whether this is via updating sections of the reports, producing interim publications or directing users to other publications and also whether more spatially granular data is needed.
- While the comprehensiveness of the report will be helpful to many, it is of a length that might put off less-expert users. Given the importance of the subject and the effort invested in producing it, to maximise value it would be worth exploring the possibility of producing a shorter more accessible summary.

I would like to thank you and your team for their positive engagement on this review and hope the above helps in the development of this publication. Our Transport, Environment and Climate Change Lead will continue to engage with you and your team on progress in the coming year. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter further.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead