
Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry

Three Year Work Plan 2002/03-2004/05

1. Summary

An Introduction to the Agriculture Fishing and Forestry (AFF) Theme

This theme brings together information and statistics across the UK about the 'Agriculture', 'Fishing', 'Food' and 'Forestry' sectors and also covers an important new dimension which involves bringing together information on rural areas on a wide range of economic, social and environmental issues. In particular the theme now covers statistics on:

- the economic impact of these sectors;
- the development of statistics relating to rural areas (working as appropriate with other Theme Working Groups TWGs);
- outputs and inputs of agriculture and the food industry;
- animal and plant health; and
- food safety (in association with other themes).

The UK Government is giving top priority to the development of a coherent set of agreed rural indicators, which are essential to enable the health of the rural economy to be monitored by government, business, agencies and other stakeholders.

Main Organisations Involved

The main government departments involved in the theme are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Forestry Commission (FC), Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD), Welsh Assembly Government, and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland (DARD). We will need to work closely with the ONS and other Government Departments (OGDs) on the rural agenda.

Examples of 'Flagship' Publications, Products and Services

- Agriculture in the UK (annual);
- June census outputs produced by the UK agricultural departments;
- EFS (annual) – produced jointly with ONS

- Forestry Commission Facts and Figures (annual);
- UK Sea Fisheries Statistics (annual);
- Economic report on Scottish Agriculture (annual);
- country level data produced by devolved authorities.

Some of the subject matters covered by this theme relate to others covered by the **Economy, Natural and Built Environment, Health and Care and Labour Market** themes.

Information on the main statistical sources is included on StatBase (the on-line database of government statistics). StatBase is available on the NS website and via Departmental websites (for addresses see section 7) and also in AFF publications. The main data collection flows are shown in Annex A.

Brief Overview of the Theme's Work Programme

This year's workplan has been drawn up against a background of tight resources across all the AFF Departments, the major impact of Foot and Mouth Diseases (FMD) during 2001 and continuing shortages of skilled statistical staff. FMD in particular has led to new demands for data and has meant that staff have been diverted from their normal duties. This has resulted in many of the tasks planned for 2001-02 being substantially delayed or postponed. The theme introduced a quarterly in-year monitoring system for the main 2001-02 tasks that enabled us to focus on the ongoing issues (e.g. those identified during quality reviews) and to provide advice to project leaders; this approach is expected to continue in 2002-03.

We are very grateful to all those who sent in comments on our consultation document http://www.defra.gov.uk/esg/m_consult.htm. The aim of the plan is to target the priority areas where users have indicated they have concerns about quality and/or coverage or where there is the opportunity to move resources into filling information gaps – notably on rural issues. In 2002-03 we will also be starting the first major NS Review/Better Quality Services (BQS) Review of the agricultural statistics surveys operation (including the June Census). This will provide the strategic platform for other theme reviews. The

NS review of horticulture statistics (currently in progress) is also expected to be completed in the first part of 2002-03.

Key Elements

Annex B summarises, for each year of the plan:

- the reviews taking place;
- the key developments that it is intended to take forward (subject to resources being made available); and
- the new outputs envisaged.

Five major themes run through the plan:

- increasing the use of electronic means for collecting data and disseminating statistical outputs;
- new outputs; development of a coherent set of agreed rural indicators; producing a rural trends publication from a wide range of sources (which will increase knowledge and accessibility of data for evidence based policy making); developing information sources on farm diversification and off-farm income, publishing information on farm practices which are critical to environmental issues;
- increasing consistency and accessibility of datasets across the UK (including further work on the integration of UK websites);
- taking forward work on identified data gaps, e.g. a better range of statistics on the food chain;
- development of the agricultural census, e.g. reducing the number of farms surveyed in England and Wales by increasing the use of sampling, increasing the use made of administrative data, investigating other options for collecting data, improving the contact we have with large businesses.

Cost Reductions

As a consequence of introducing the plan, we expect to reduce the compliance costs of our current regular surveys by up to 20% by 2005 (compared with 2000) and to reduce our operational costs by up to 10% over the same period. New procedures will be introduced for the ongoing monitoring of the compliance costs of

surveys that have been approved under the survey control procedures. Each Department produces an annual report on survey control that is presented to ministers.

2. Strategic Influences and Policy Drivers

(a) Rural and Environmental Policy Issues

- i. increased focus on rural policies and the statistics needed to support these (including the need to proof rural policies with regard to equality legislation in Northern Ireland) and the forestry strategies for England, Scotland and Wales;
- ii. development of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), including an increased focus on environmental issues. The UK cereals industry is now effectively operating at world price levels;
- iii. increasing awareness by consumers of food safety and environment issues and their impact on industry;
- iv. evolution of the food chain, from farming structures (increase in part-time farming, contracting, diversification, increased specialisation) to price setting in forward contracts and value added creation along the food chain;
- v. monitoring and supporting the recovery of the farming sector, which has been heavily affected by FMD and a sustained period of low incomes;
- vi. working with the EU to assemble better information on fish stocks and improve decision making under the Common Fisheries Policy;
- vi. the further development of pan-European indicators of Sustainable Forest Management and indicators reflecting the integration of the environment into EU agriculture policy.

(b) Efficiency/Operational/Quality Issues

- i. improving IT systems for data collection and processing in England and Wales;
- ii. reducing compliance costs, including greater use of administrative data;
- iii. improving access to, and the dissemination of, statistics including the creation of UK

- datasets and further development of departmental websites;
- iv. meeting the data/information needs of non-government users (including non-European Community (EC) led requirements). External expert users in industry organisations are in general primarily interested in the figures rather than the analysis;
- v. measurement and improvement of the quality of statistics;
- vi. extending the use of electronic capture and dissemination of fishing data, as recommended by an independent report on e-commerce in the fishing industry commissioned by the DEFRA Fisheries Directorate. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/fish/ecommerce/report.pdf>
- iii. developing statistics on food safety and food security in conjunction with the Food Standards Agency;
- iv. examine the results of a recent research project on farm business structures and consider (with the industry organisations) the production of a better range of statistics to meet users' needs;
- v. work will continue to support the policy response to FMD. Statisticians in DEFRA, SEERAD and NAW will be considering the lessons learnt. Discussions will be held with the epidemiologists and other customers to consider how information sources might be developed to improve disease modelling (existing census data was used extensively and successfully in monitoring the progress of the outbreak). A follow-up to the autumn 2001 telephone survey of farms affected by FMD will be considered. Additional detailed surveys may need to be undertaken to see how various farming sectors are responding;
- vi. consider production of an UK joined-up fishery activity database and the provision of clearer information on the sustainability of fish stocks;
- vii. development of statistical systems for indicators of sustainable forestry, including the collection of data relating to private sector woodlands.

3. Planned Developments (including key non-NS developments)

(a) Rural and Environmental Policy Issues

- i. a major drive is being undertaken to meet the demand for rural statistics (i.e. statistics relating to rural areas, rather than just agriculture), following requests from policy makers and a wide range of users. The recommendations from a scoping study of rural statistics (see **Developments to Sources** below) are expected to provide a firm base for this work. A review of the data sources available to monitor the impact of a crisis such as FMD on rural businesses, in particular on incomes from self-employment, as recommended by the Rural Task Force Report <http://www.defra.gov.uk/footandmouth/rural/taskforce/rtf.pdf> will also play a major role. Data are being established, in a special survey, on gender, age, religion, race, disability, dependants and marital status of farmers in Northern Ireland. Significant work on the development of rural statistics has already been carried out in Scotland;
- ii. improved availability of UK, in addition to individual country, figures to support economic analysis. Provision of data to facilitate CAP reform modelling work. Improved access to EU data and analysis of 2000 Structure Survey results. Development of a set of environmental accounts for agriculture;

(b) Efficiency/Operational/Quality Issues

- i. redevelopment of the Farm Survey System (England and Wales). Extension of the pilot on use of electronic forms in farming surveys;
- ii. ongoing drive to reduce impact on respondents, aided by improved access to administrative figures (IACS, animal tracing), e.g. via a data warehouse;
- iii. websites and web-based products will be developed to be more user-friendly, and to improve access and dissemination. Consideration will be given to providing one-stop shops for theme statistics. Plans are in place to develop more UK datasets;
- iv. commissioning of a survey of the main users of agricultural statistics to determine their information needs and how far these are

being met. Consideration will be given to improving links with users (particularly with the fishing industry);

- v. ongoing programme of NS Quality Reviews (involving quality assessment by external advisers). For 2002-3 we are planning a major review of the UK agricultural collection systems, linked to a BQS review. This will include taking account of the findings from the independent review of European agricultural statistics. Consideration will also be given to establishing a range of performance indicators, e.g. time gap between survey reference date (for example 1 June for the June Census) and publication of results;
- vi. the specific recommendations in the e-commerce report are being considered by Fisheries Departments in the UK, and industry views are being sought. Working groups have been set up to investigate the possibility of linking logbook and sales note data electronically. Funding is being sought for a feasibility study of e-logbooks. An authorisation scheme for sales agents is being considered, which will require agents to provide sales data in electronic form.

Developments to Outputs

- work is ongoing to establish a common set of definitions for rural areas for England and Wales. Separate studies are being taken forward by the DTLR and the statisticians in Northern Ireland, building on the work already done in Scotland;
- investigating the feasibility of bringing forward, during the planning period, publication of the results from the agricultural census, e.g. to see whether it is possible to publish total UK figures earlier. Progress should be possible with the introduction of enhanced IT facilities for collecting and processing the information;
- increasing the range of statistics on local areas (even below ward level). Work is ongoing to provide GIS information from the Agricultural Census and publish this on the websites. A database that will enable English census data to be presented in the form required under the five levels of the European regional classification system (Nomenclature for Units of Territorial Statistics (NUTS)) –

from Government Office Region down to ward level – is currently being developed;

- recent changes to the methodology used in the December Agricultural Census (Scotland) will enable the production of regional data within Scotland;
- although not within NS, the feasibility of publishing AFF administrative data (e.g. IACS) will be considered with the data owners;
- work begins to bring the 'flagship' publication 'Agriculture in the UK' into the scope of NS.

Developments to Sources

The creation of DEFRA has given a higher priority to **statistics on rural affairs** within the UK Government, and it remains an important area in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The comments from a wide range of users reinforced the urgent need to develop statistics to inform the wider rural agenda. The results of a scoping study by Imperial/Wye College to review the availability of rural statistics and recommend a core set of indicators, were received in the early part of 2002. Following this study, consideration will be given, with the Countryside Agency, the ONS and other stakeholders on how these recommendations can be taken forward, e.g. via the NS Neighbourhood Statistics initiative. An important consideration will be how data collection can be better integrated across Government. Further work will also be undertaken to bring together and develop the availability of figures on farm diversification and off-farm incomes. An initial study on the key drivers of development and exclusion in rural areas has also been commissioned. The results of a review of rural and urban definitions (commissioned by DTLR) were expected in Spring 2002. It will be important to reach agreement on two or three key definitions of "rural" to enable a consistent set of indicators to be produced. Rural statistics development is likely to focus mainly on England, Wales and Northern Ireland, as Scotland has already done significant work on this topic, but even there Neighbourhood Statistics is expected to have a major impact on the availability of statistics for rural Scotland.

Consideration will be given to the development of a **new rural trends publication** (on which work will start in 2002-03) which will help to bring together data from a number of sources. Each

country will be required to develop appropriate measures for the evaluation of its Rural Development Programme (RDP) in accordance with the European Commission guidelines. Indicators are needed to demonstrate, for example:

- how farming is changing;
- how rural areas are developing in a social and economic context; and
- how environmental resources are being protected.

We would expect NS to make a significant contribution to providing the information for these indicators. An interim evaluation of the effectiveness of the RDPs is required by 2003, followed by a final evaluation by 2007.

Use of Administrative Data

AFF statisticians are making increasing use of administrative information to help reduce the form-filling burdens on businesses, e.g. by taking data from IACS and the CTS and by drawing on environmental information from the Rural Development Service Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside Project <http://www.magic.gov.uk/>.

Sustainable Development

As part of the cross-cutting work on indicators of Sustainable Development, the former Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF) published "Towards Sustainable Agriculture: A Pilot Set Of Indicators" in February 2000, following an extensive consultation. These indicators (which relate to either England or GB) are aimed at capturing information about the environmental, economic and social impacts of agriculture across the UK. It is intended to review them in 2003. FC are developing a set of indicators of sustainable forestry and have been consulting on these during 2001-02, with the aim of publishing during 2002. NS provide information for a number of sustainable development indicators. The Farm Practices Survey – introduced in 2001 – will provide information for several of these indicators.

Changes to Scope of the Theme Following Departmental Reorganisation

Whilst there has been no change to its title, the scope of the AFF theme has been extended to

reflect the key role of the member Departments in the development of rural statistics – reinforced by the setting up of DEFRA <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/aims/aimobjts.pdf>. No other changes are being made at present. However, consideration will be given to forging stronger links with the NBE Theme, so as to achieve a more integrated approach to the presentation of AFF statistics, rural and environmental statistics.

Report on the Theme Quality Review Programme

Documentation of Sources, Guidance Manuals

Quality Assurance templates (which include details of documentation, guidance manuals etc) have been completed for most NS surveys/series and lodged with the ONS Quality and Methods Directorate.

Current Reviews

NS Quality Assurance Reviews of Farm Business Statistics (FBS), cereals and labour statistics have all been delayed by the impact of FMD. The cereals and labour reviews are both now expected to be completed by Spring 2002. A number of improvements have already been made to the series. Work on the horticulture review (which will address users' concerns about data quality) started in September 2001 and is expected to be completed by June 2002. The review of forestry statistics was delayed by staff shortages and started early in 2002. All reviews will be quality assured by the TWG's external advisers (currently Hull University Applied Statistics Centre) and will take account of policies for openness and reducing burdens on businesses.

Future Theme Quality Reviews

The theme-wide review of the Census and major agricultural surveys is due to start in 2002-03. It will be run in parallel with a BQS review of the same work area. The FBS review will now be held over until 2003-04 to enable it to take account of any infrastructure or organisational recommendations arising from the review of major agricultural surveys. The planned reviews of farm accounts/agricultural income and prices will be combined with the FBS review.

Procedures for Dealing with Problems

Users are encouraged to make direct contact with the Statistician concerned (shown in most cases

on the relevant Statistical Notice) or, in cases of difficulty, with the AFF TWG Secretary. Should users still remain dissatisfied, they can approach the TWG Chair for assistance, or the appropriate Head of statistical Profession in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

Planned Quality Developments

There is an ongoing programme of work to improve quality. Development of IT systems is a major plank of this, with links to the administrative systems. We are keen to assess how far the recent changes have improved the quality of information from the Grain Fed to Livestock survey. Access to accurate and timely EU trade figures is essential for the preparation of the commodity balance sheets; this issue is being raised with the ONS. A start has been made on putting confidence markers on our statistics http://defraweb/esg/work_htm/Notices/june_eng.pdf and it is planned to develop this further over the planning period, together with giving users more information on quality aspects.

New Measures for Geographic Coherence

In addition to the TWG itself, issues of common interest are co-ordinated through meetings of senior representatives from AFF Departments that consider both economic and statistical issues, and by working level meetings. Concordats set out the arrangements agreed between DEFRA and SEERAD and DEFRA and Welsh Assembly Government for the collection, analysis and exchange of statistical and economic information. A similar concordat between DEFRA and DARD is in preparation.

4. Key Changes from last year's Plan

- the programme of reviews has been updated to reflect current priorities and resources;
- work on the development of rural statistics is being brought forward in line with the increasing importance of this topic. Additional resources to undertake this work are being sought;
- forestry ministers in England, Scotland and Wales approved the inclusion of a range of forestry statistics within the scope of NS from August 2001; <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/newsrele.nsf/eb27e1861700047b80256a0a0045d347/f355b9d58f448e3e80256aae0041fbbd!OpenDocument>

- the future programme of work will be heavily influenced by the conclusions from the major NS Review of Agricultural statistics in 2002/3;

5. International Considerations

The majority of our statistics are compiled to agreed EU definitions and as a result we have a high degree of international comparability. AFF representatives regularly attend Eurostat working groups and representation from across the theme is co-ordinated. Papers are presented at international meetings and bilateral arrangements have been developed with other countries, e.g. DEFRA and France, DARD and Moldavia. A successful bid for funds from the European Commission's 2001 Technical Action Plan for improving Agricultural Statistics to undertake work on cereal balance sheets, cattle forecasts (using CTS data), indicators of how agriculture is impacting on the environment and environmental accounts, resulted in the allocation of 152,000 Euros to the UK. On UK advice, the Commission is currently undertaking a wide-ranging review of its statistical services.

6. Costs

For a full explanation of National Statistics costs, see Appendix B.

Theme specific expenditure is as follows:

'Projected' Resource Costs:

2002/03	£13.6m
2003/04	£13.9m

These annual estimates of 'projected' expenditure include the following expenditure on **significant developments** (i.e. over £50k):

New Farm Survey IT system	2002/03	£1m
	2003/04	£500k
Review of Agricultural and Food Statistics Implementation of Review of Agricultural and Food Statistics	2002/03	£100k
	2003/04	£100k
Rural Statistics	2002/03	£300k
	2003/04	£1m

Review of Farm Business
Statistics 2003/04 £100k

Stuart Neil
Welsh Assembly Government

Please note, these figures represent **significant** developments only and will not match the total expenditure on statistical developments for the theme shown in Table 1 in Appendix B.

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7. Contacts and further information

Websites

Further information on statistics covered by this Theme can be found at the following websites:

National Statistics
www.statistics.gov.uk

Department for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs
www.defra.gov.uk

Department of Agriculture and Rural
Development, Northern Ireland
www.dani.gov.uk/econs/stats.htm

National Assembly for Wales
www.wales.gov.uk/keypubstatisticsforwales/index.htm

Forestry Commission
www.forestry.gov.uk/statistics

Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department
www.scotland.gov.uk/who/dept_rural.asp

Theme Group Members

This Theme plan was developed by the following people:

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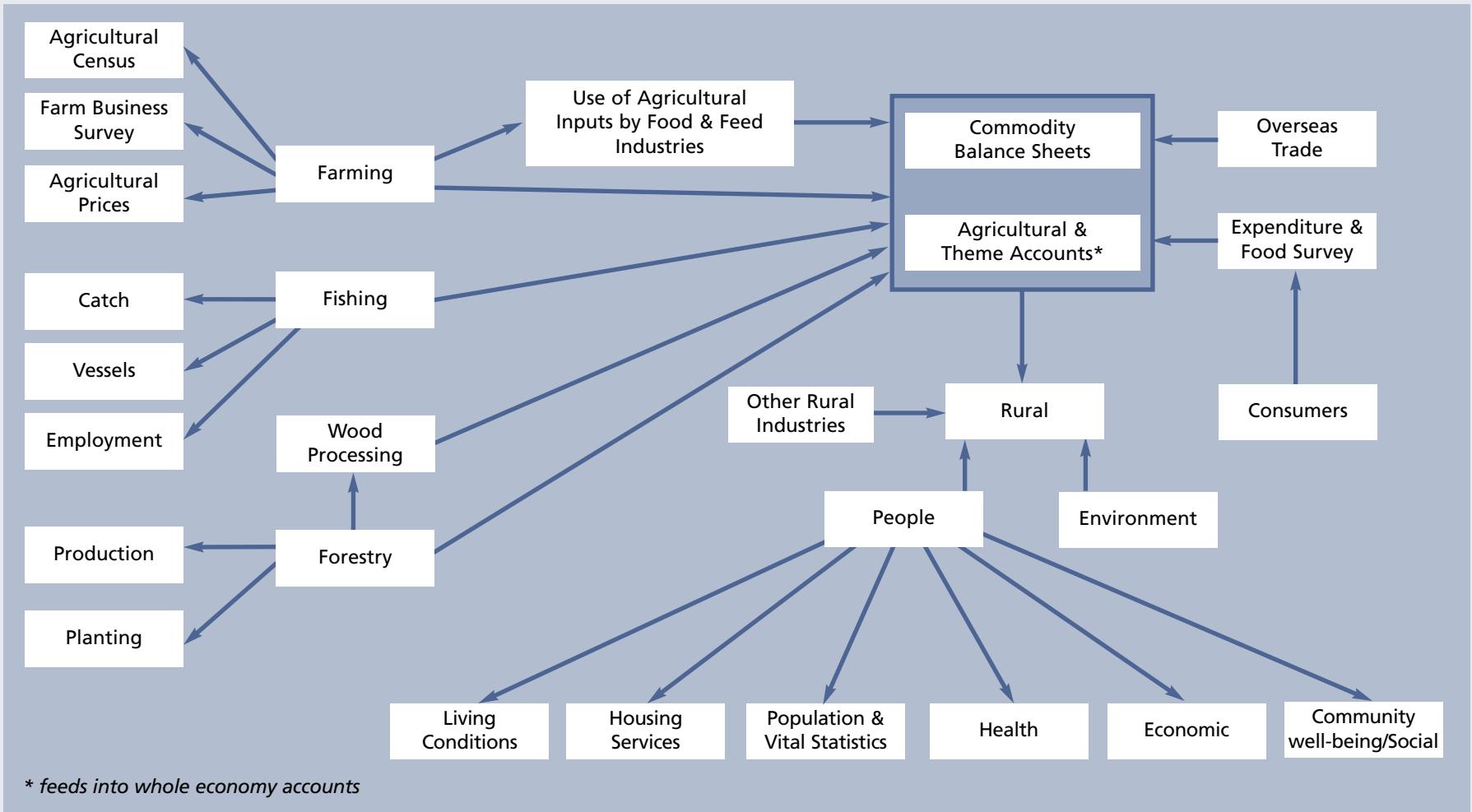
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Theme address

If you have any comments on this Theme plan, or suggestions for future programmes, please email us at:
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Annex A Main Data Flows



Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry National Statistics (NS) Workplan Summary 2002-3 to 2004-5**Revised January 2002**

	Reviews	Developments	New Outputs
2002-2003	BQS/NS Review of Agriculture & Food Statistics (UK) Fisheries Statistics (UK) Horticulture (1) – to include the need for improved NI statistics on Horticulture and Mushrooms (UK) Forestry Statistics (1) (UK)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Setting up new datasets and series on rural statistics (England) 2. Developing more integrated UK datasets 3. Fuller use of CTS and IACS data (England) 4. Continue development of Farm Survey System (FSS) (England and Wales) 5. Development of outputs to monitor recovery from FMD (GB) 6. Continue investigation into linking of logbook and sales note fishing data electronically (England and Wales) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rural Trends Publication (2) (England) 2. Publish Farm Business level data (England) 3. More composite Agricultural statistics notices and website improvements (UK)
2003-2004	Farm Business Accounts and Price Statistics (3) (UK)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comparison of Agricultural Census with Countryside Survey (England) 2. Further extension of electronic forms in farming surveys (England) 3. Improve contact with large farming businesses on Census (England) 4. Continue rural statistics developments (England) 5. Introduce new methods of working for June Agricultural Census (from FSS redevelopment) (England and Wales) 6. Implement BQS/NS Review of Agriculture and Food Statistics (UK) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved accessibility to agricultural census database by provision on interactive anonymised datasets (UK)
2004-2005	Environment Statistics (UK) Pesticides Statistics (UK) Economic and Statistical Advice (UK) Other Surveys (UK)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyse and extend range of rural data reports (England) 2. Implement BQS/NS Review (continued) 3. Europe-wide Ground Use Survey – assessment of implications for existing data collection systems (UK) 4. Introduce Customer Survey on agricultural statistics (England) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Administrative data to be included in Data warehouse (England) – allowing regional data to be provided by scheme

Notes:

(1) Carried forward from 2001-2

(2) A proposed new publication, which will involve the collection and bringing together of data from a number of sources

(3) This review may be combined with the Farm Business Statistics Review