Scottish Government statistics

Pacioli – September 2016

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Agriculture statistics

- Data collections using paper surveys + administrative databases + electronic data capture. This services SG needs and EU regulations (CAP).

- Most of our work routes back to an EU regulation and most of our data is widely used.

- We survey over 35,000 individual farms every year (issuing 50,000+ survey forms).

- Returns go via UK lead or direct to EU. Crops, livestock, milk production, farm accounts (and so on). Some monthly returns.

- Member State requirements are with the UK, but Devolved Administrations are responsible/liable for compliance.

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FADN – Farm Accounts Survey (FAS)

- Survey/audit of 500 farm businesses.

- Farms are selected by ESU (economic size unit) >= €25,000 and Standard Labour Requirement of >0.5.

- Representative of ~12,000 larger "more economically active" farms in Scotland.

- Data collection and "data build" is conducted by a contractor. Similar for England and Wales, but Northern Ireland survey is in-house.

- Average cost per farm ~£2,000 – very high but data quality is very good, multiple validations and call-backs with farmers.

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FADN – Farm Accounts Survey (FAS)

- Stratified simple random sample and is effectively designed as a panel survey.

- Sample is stratified by 8 farm types and 3 size groups.

- Most farms stay in the panel, drop out rate is around 10%.

- Currently there has been no assessment of non-response bias in the FAS for Scotland.

- Local and EU policy uses (CAP, land reform).
- Farm business advice + Economic Accounts for Agriculture
- Research community use FAS widely.

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Challenges - 1

- (1) UK and Scottish budgets are under pressure.

- (2) Scotland's new tax & welfare powers mean re-organisation

UK EU referendum result

- (3) UK and Scotland's position with regard to EU and therefore European Statistical System and FADN.

- (4) Another Scottish independence referendum?

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Options for statistical systems.

- UK will need to agree what relationship it has with ESS. Do we/could we stay in the ESS?

- Do we follow the Norway model/Swiss model or some other variant?
- How much alignment with UN? Where does the UK want to position itself?

- There are other countries with good statistical systems.
- Where and how will statistics feature in the Brexit deal?

- Want to maintain international standards for the production of official statistics that allow valid inter-country comparisons
- In Scotland, ensure that our priorities to meet the needs of Ministers and wider stakeholders in Scotland are maintained.

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Challenges - 2

- We may have to work very hard to sell the benefits of FAS IF we are no longer aligned with the ESS.

- The overall cost of FAS is high compared with other countries
- Data sharing controls are prohibitive
- In the Brexit context, how do we keep response rates up.
- We will be "competing" for resources across government.

- How can we deliver the same quality for a reduced cost – is it possible?
- Will we accept lower quality for a lower average cost per farm?

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Opportunities

- Is this a chance to (re) design statistics/evidence needs.

- Could we be more innovative? Can data science help?

- **Change how we collect/produce statistics/maximise re-use.**

- **Work to collect/produce what SG & stakeholders really need.**

- Expand our involvement with other countries?

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Some examples/ideas - 1

Change *how* we collect/produce statistics/maximise re-use.

- We are building an electronic data capture function for the 2017 June census – could we expand this to FAS?

- Can we collect more data automatically from accounting packages? Will data sharing with HMRC help us?

- Could we bring elements of FAS in-house, using industry bodies to supply members' accounts? Would that bias our sample?

- Do we still need "everything" we currently have in FAS? Could we allow electronic data submission to produce "10 key financial indicators" instead of a full farm account?

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Some examples/ideas – 2

Work to collect/produce what SG & stakeholders really need.
- Full overhaul of our statistical outputs/products in 2017/18.

- Can we meet challenges on any evidence needed for new policies, for example, non-UK nationals working in agriculture?

- Review <u>how</u> we produce for users – can we move away from "glossy commentary" publications to shorter "notices" – what role does open data play here?

- We have an active statistics community but also want to maintain/increase collaboration with other countries.

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