

Welsh Government

## Consultation – summary of responses

### The future of agricultural statistical data collection methods in Wales

July 2013



## Summary

A user consultation was conducted to ask for views on the future of agricultural statistical data collection methods in Wales.

The consultation was an opportunity to gather views from not only from our regular users in Welsh Government and the agricultural sector but also from a wider range of users.

These views are invaluable as they can demonstrate the opinions of end users, and not just the people who set up and design these collections.

A key driver for this consultation was the recent assessment by the UK Statistics Authority of the agricultural outputs. Their report has a number of requirements for changes to the outputs. The report can be found at this [link](#).

Further to this, the consultation document refers to the separate Welsh Review of Sheep numbers at December using the Sheep and Goats Inventory (SAG) data.

This statistical article has been published at the same time as this consultation response and can be found [here](#).

Readers may find it beneficial to read both documents in parallel in specific reference to Questions 7 to 10.

The consultation ran from **22nd March 2013** to **24th May 2013**.

There were a total of 6 (six) responses directly to the questionnaire and we would like to thank them all for taking time to give their views.

There was also one response in direct reply to a specific statement in the circulated consultation document which will be addressed within.

The body of this report summarises the responses and describes what action we will take over them.

The report below includes a summary of responses as well as some direct quotes where relevant.

As there were quite a number of responses to the questions, these have been annexed as appropriate towards the end of the document.

## Introduction

A summary of the background to the consultation is provided in this report.

The full background to the consultation (including the response form) is available in the [consultation document](#):

A consultation was held, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, to allow users to comment on the proposed changes.

The proposals in this consultation have already been agreed in principle by Welsh Government statistical and policy teams.

The consultation was open for a nine week period from 22nd March 2013 to 24th May 2013.

## Methodology

The background document explaining the consultation and the response form were accessible via the Welsh Government consultations website.

Responses were received in Excel response forms, as a PDF in one instance or as e-mailed comments, following the structure of the questions.

All recipients were given the opportunity to submit their views anonymously.

The questions used in the consultation are attached in the Annex 1.

## Results

Six responses to the consultation were received. Some were on the questionnaire; some were submitted as a direct response. Thank you to all who replied.

There was also one response in direct reply to a specific statement in the circulated consultation document, therefore the comment has been noted but not used in the analysis of these results.

The responses were provided by:

Organisation	Number of responses
Agricultural Unions	2
Other Agricultural organisations	2
Welsh Government Sponsored Body	1
Other	1

## Welsh Government response to the consultation

The responses to the consultation came from organisations in the agricultural sector. These are generally government, union and other sector bodies.

As per the results to our consultation into the [Review of Agricultural Statistics Outputs](#) the responses are largely from people who already know a lot about agriculture and want the latest figures to help them in their work. This is understandable with the nature of the consultation.

Again, what Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS) did not get in the responses were the non-agricultural users, direct comments from members of the general public etc.

However, the Farmers Union of Wales did comment that they had taken views both from their officials and also from their farming members; we welcome their pro-activity in these matters.

Therefore, we do not have any direct reactions from people who we might expect to actually fill in our forms – the farmers, owner/occupiers, etc of land in Wales. This has an effect as we also wish to demonstrate our plans and actions which will ultimately affect those primary users.

In reacting to the responses we need to keep in mind this potential bias, but KAS would actively encourage readers of this Summary of Responses to circulate it amongst those they represent and others so the message that we are trying to deliver the very best for our customers in Wales, gets out.

KAS cannot present decisions without end user engagement. The published [Review](#) into sheep administrative data from the Sheep and Goats Inventory and this response show how the Welsh Government wish to take any decisions forward with our customers and stakeholders – the level of detail and *external* customer engagement is paramount to making an informed decision.

KAS are aware of the [Working Smarter](#) programme into reducing the burden of red tape to farmers – KAS are actively engaging on all levels to achieve less paperwork for our customers and will happily have a dialogue with whomever if they require further information.

The responses are mainly positive. However, end users want to see the quality of the final product maintained and sustained and want to see administrative data used and improved. The reduction the burden of paperwork is key, but ultimately not at the expense of data quality.

In general, the responses of users concur with our proposals but one has to be mindful that one size doesn't fit all.

The desire to move to all online collection may come at the cost of those don't engage online but there is a drive with the [RPW Online Project](#) to make the Single Application Form (SAF) available online.

It would make sense for KAS to use the same process to collect information, rather than duplicate a new system but in a separate module from the SAF, i.e. the same login details.

We know from stakeholder engagement that there is no desire to add to the burden of the SAF form, online or otherwise and this is reflected in the responses for the consultation.

Therefore, that would still leave people who are not in the catchment of RPW Online and/or payments and they will receive paper forms for the June Survey of Agriculture.

Effectively, having login details for the RPW Online portal should ultimately end paper collections (for the main June 'returns') for those customers in the future.

KAS, however, appreciate the importance that the delivery of payments through RPW Online and do not wish to hinder or delay the project by insisting (or imposing) future development for statistical provision at such an advanced stage.

- **Therefore KAS will continue to use paper forms for all our customers and aim to have a 'statistical module' working and delivered through established online portals from a provisional date of 2017.**
- **This would end the paper collection for statistics for those whom claim via the SAF (as the login details would be the same) from 2017 onwards.**
- **If the changes are implemented, ending the paper collection of the annual June paper collection would mean that c.12,000 of our customers per annum would not longer need to fill in paper forms.**
- **This is dependent on a number of factors but paper forms will still be available in the interim. Ad-hoc surveys will still continue to be sent in a paper form to all.**
- **Those who do not claim the SAF would still get a paper form whilst future online provision for these customers will also be investigated.**

KAS will also look at the feasibility in regards to a:

- **Farm Practices Survey (FPS) for Wales;**
- **Liaising with other colleagues to assess the feasibility for using administrative data for land under environmental schemes;**
- **A release in regards to detailed 'Dairy Statistics for Wales;**
- **Articles publishing results of the current analysis of British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS) data by KAS.**

As for the December Survey of Agriculture, also in reference to the statistical article published today:

- **The December Survey of Agriculture paper collection exercise will end immediately, however, there will be still be a bulletin release for results of the December Survey of Agriculture using and referring to administrative data sources**
  - *Sheep data will come from the SAG Annual Inventory (subject to a number of caveats, including reviewing the questions);*
  - *Crops data will come from the Home Grown Cereals Authority (HGCA);*
  - *Cattle data will continue to come from BCMS;*
  - *A telephone survey for pig figures.*
- **Hay and silage will no longer be collected but KAS will investigate adding questions to a possible future Welsh Farm Practices Survey (FPS).**
- **Fertiliser information may also be scoped in the FPS as it is unlikely for Welsh Government to fund more provision for the British Survey of Fertiliser Practices (BSFP).**
- **A suggestion that non-commercially sensitive information from suppliers could form part of the collection of fertiliser data as undertaken by the BSFP will be investigated.**

## **Action plan (not exhaustive)**

**July/August/September 2013** – continue to investigate and analysis CTS data for publication in 2013 and 2014.

**August 2013** – investigate the possible use that non-commercially sensitive information from fertiliser suppliers forming part of the collection of fertiliser data as undertaken by the BSFP.

**September 2013** – Assess the feasibility of Farm Practices Survey (FPS) for Wales and liaise with other colleagues to investigate data for land under environmental schemes and evaluation it's currency.

**October 2013** – pilot project to compare Single Application Form (SAF) land/crop data and survey data will commence.

**December 2013** – December Survey of Agriculture is no longer run as a paper exercise. A telephone exercise will be done for pig keepers.

**January 2014** – Sheep and Goats Inventory data is used to produce results for the December Survey of Agriculture.

**February 2014** – results for December Survey of Agriculture published along statutory submission of figures to the European Union.

**May/June 2014** – release of sheep and goat inventory data at Welsh Agricultural Region level – no disclosive data will be released. KAS will liaise with mapping colleagues for making a full and comprehensive release.

**Currently to 2017** – liaise with colleagues in RPW in view to implementing a statistics module into the RPW Online emulation.



## Question 1

**Do you agree with a proposal to continue as before with paper based collections?**

YES	NO	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
2	3	1	6

The 'No Response' was strictly being unable to come to a consensus between YES and NO.

The overall response was that the principle of KAS working proactively with stakeholders and others towards reducing the burdens associated with data collection was welcomed. This is also in line with the ['Working Smarter'](#) project.

Whilst many parties agreed that online data collection was the most expedient method for data capture, they should be done not in isolation to paper forms.

The same response came from parties who believed that paper forms were the best way to collect such information but provision should be made for online completion.

The issue of duplication is also a valid point – administrative data maybe available from other sources and KAS are also committed to the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#) - Protocol Three - in the scoping of (any) administrative data.

Some of the parties who responded also commented that collecting additional information from the Single Application Form (SAF) form would not be a workable solution and only information on the SAF should be used and nothing should be added in.

KAS concur - as a part of the Rural Payments Wales (RPW) Stakeholders meetings (of which some attending parties may have responded to this consultation), they may be familiar with KAS scoping the possibility of providing online statistical provision through the future RPW Online Project but as a separate module i.e. separate from SAF.

KAS believe this is a workable solution, but not at the expense of the delivery of the RPW Online project. To that end, KAS will work with colleagues in RPW in view to scope the delivery of an online module within the RPW Online portal but only once the main RPW Online project has been delivered.

Subject to further discussions, KAS will be looking to work with RPW to pilot a potential online statistics option from 2017 onwards. However, there should initially be an 'opt in' to alternative methods of collection. Paper collections will still continue. NB there will be a pilot for KAS to compare SAF land data and survey data in 2013.

There was a comment regarding online coverage in a full 'census' year, i.e. a year ending in '0' to everyone. It is useful to note that even in 'census' year, KAS still sample a proportionally representative sample – not everyone gets selected. Our [June Survey of Agriculture 2010 results](#) explains this in more detail.

The overall response is giving the choice to our customers and working with them to deliver our statutory obligations for data collection.

## Question 2

**Do you think that that ad-hoc surveys are best undertaken via a paper based collection?**

YES	NO	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
2	2	2	6

Very much for the reasons listed against Question 1 – the responses were very similar and the actions that KAS will take forward will be the same.

In the interim, data paper collection will continue until a choice for either online provision and/or a paper collection is made available.

## Question 3

**Do you think that we should make the annual Surveys available online?**

YES	NO	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
5		1	6

The 'No Response' was strictly being unable to come to a consensus between YES and NO. Many of the items have been covered in in response to Question 1.

The consensus is that making the annual Surveys available online (with the caveat of having an option of a collection method) is preferable.

The common thread is that people find it easier and quicker to respond to online forms and that a better response means more robust data – a core principle of any data collection exercise.

## Question 4

**Do use any data from our outputs?**

YES	NO	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
5		1	6

The majority of respondents engaged with KAS to use the outputs, therefore KAS can be confident that the responses will be from end users with an objective interest.

## Question 5

These forms supply most of the information published in our Statistical Releases, headlines, publications and bulletins. Not having a collection could potentially affect these outputs. What impact would this have on you and your work?

The responses to this open question has been detailed more thoroughly in Annex 1

## Question 6

Is there any data that is not collected that you would like to see collected?

YES	NO	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
3	1	2	6

If yes, please provide reasons and uses?

These open comments received have been listed in the Annexes.

Of the 3 'YES' responses, only two had open comments which KAS will respond to point to point:

- 1. The dairy sector would find more detailed farm practice data useful to contribute to the Welsh Dairy Road Map. E.g. land under environmental schemes by sector. In addition, more detail on the spread of the dairy herd would be useful e.g. age profile.***

KAS and the Welsh Government work closely with both DairyCo and the Welsh Government Food Policy and Strategy Unit- in terms of the [Welsh Dairy Road Map](#) and have also held talks with DairyCo representatives only very recently.

KAS are also keen to make data available where possible and when the data is robust enough to do so – as the cattle data is now sourced from the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS), KAS can look to potentially publish age level information as an article, in the near future.

This was already mooted with DairyCo in terms of possible future dialogues, on the lines of a 'Dairy Statistics for Wales' biennial release for researchers but the issue is indeed the disparity of data and disaggregated data at a Welsh level.

This consultation is to help us have a mandate to take forward these points– there is no point doing a collection when people don't want or need the data nor should we be collecting data when it is not being used – this will help us have a steer for future development.

There is also some analysis work ongoing about heifers in Wales using CTS data – a facet that BCMS data doesn't currently describe in much detail through in-depth analysis if the datasets on an individual animal basis.

KAS understand there is interest in such an analysis from meat industry bodies and researchers as well as policy colleagues.

In terms of land under environmental schemes, KAS will have to liaise with other colleagues who hold and maintain that data, to see if that is possible.

Farm Practice Survey (FPS) data is another subject which KAS have also broached recently. KAS are aware that there has been interest in having a Welsh dataset as the same survey has been produced by DEFRA in England. Researchers and policy colleagues (including DEFRA staff) are interested in a Welsh FPS to make a full E&W dataset for analytical purposes.

Wales has collected similar data (in part) from the Survey of Agricultural Productions Methods Survey (SAPM) in 2010 – a part of the 2010 EU Farm Structure Survey. Unfortunately, the data was not robust enough to publish. The next SAPM is due either in 2016 or 2017.

KAS believe a Wales FPS maybe possible if all the following conditions are met:

- There is evidence that it is required;
- There are sufficient funds made available to run the direct and indirect costs of the survey (to include the analysis and publication of the results);
- It can be agreed as to what is asked on the Survey in terms of content as DEFRA undertake a number of different FPS surveys with different content ;
- There is an evaluation to see if the FPS would need to be undertaken on an annual basis or less/more frequent. If this isn't done, there could be an inherent risk that a Welsh FPS is done ad-hoc and another evaluation may need to be done again;
- Acknowledgement that there is a very good chance that the survey will have a poor response rate unless there is a concerted effort to inform our customers of the merits and need for the completion of the Survey and acknowledgement of the work by KAS in terms of sampling the right customers;
- The Working Smarter project and speaking to the project board and stakeholders as a prerequisite prior to inception;
- There is appropriate survey approval from the Rural Affairs Statistician.

**2. For the sheep sector, NSA CYMRU/WALES would hugely value data on whether a farmer is a pedigree breeder or runs commercial sheep, or both. This would give NSA and others a far greater appreciation of farm types, as simply classifying them as upland or lowland hides a great deal of detail.**

**Asking sheep farmers what breed of sheep they have would also be useful, as currently a survey of sheep breeds is only conducted every 10 years and does not generate a massive amount of response.**

**Having a more detailed and up-to-date picture of sheep breeds and their regional spread would greatly aid the work of NSA and NSA CYMRU/WALES, as well as other organisations. Such information during a disease outbreak would also be vital, as some breeds that are only found in specific geographical areas are at high risk if a cull is ordered.**

KAS, through dialogues with policy colleagues and others and membership of stakeholder working groups, are aware that there is a distinct and clear policy that our customers shouldn't be burdened with unnecessary extra questions in any context.

However, a balance should be struck in utilising existing methods of contact to the best of their abilities and the worth of such a collection.

KAS believe there are already sufficient sources of information, such as breed societies that can give contact information if someone is a pedigree breeder or not, many of which are listed on their own websites, therefore are already in the public domain. However, we acknowledge this cannot be complete (otherwise NSA Cymru/Wales would be using it).

From published work by KAS – Welsh Agricultural Statistics 2011:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/agriculture2013/welsh-agricultural-statistics-2011/?lang=en>

especially in terms of farms structure and livestock and holdings, it is fairly easy to establish the aggregate number of sheep breeders but if one is commercial or not is open to interpretation.

**KAS are happy to have a direct dialogue with NSA Cymru Wales about any future provision and would openly invite them to do so.**

Tacit issues such as data protection legislation must also be taken into account and only aggregate level information should be published.

KAS don't just classify farms as upland or lowland – there are many other levels such as region and farm type and economic size.

There is data from the Farm Business Survey which can also be used:

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/ibers/enterprise-kt/fbs/>

The last published Sheep Breed report was 2003:

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/evidence/economics/foodfarm/reports/documents/pollott2003.pdf>

Another breed survey was undertaken by EBLEX and HCC in 2012 and the analysis undertaken by Signet:

<http://www.signetfbc.co.uk/news/index.aspx?section=66&item=276>

Whilst there seems to be a (roughly) decennial breed survey, it would be difficult for KAS and the Welsh Government to justify extra data collection when the data exists elsewhere. KAS would be interested in the analysis of this survey for reference purposes.

However, KAS note NSA Cymru's comments regarding the response rates to the decennial breed survey – it is useful to note that KAS have already have, and continue to have, a dialogue with other organisations in terms of sharing best practice and providing ad-hoc survey advice in specific regards to improving response rates.

Also, with the separate proposal to use SAG Annual Inventory data, this may also give more Welsh agricultural regional data on a herd size/holding level as compared to the current December Survey of Agriculture – especially when the structure of the sheep industry is markedly different as compared to June. KAS hope to open this up for some long term seasonal analysis in the future.

## Question 7

**Do you agree with discontinuing the current Wales December Survey of Agriculture and using the SAG Inventory data in lieu of the December Survey data? If yes, please explain why you agree with this.**

YES	NO	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
4	2		6

There was a clear response from organisations that represent individual farmers who said YES over users of the data who said NO.

The overwhelming response from people who said YES was that in view to reduce the burden of paperwork to our farmers, ending the December Survey of Agriculture would save duplication, provide better coverage and also standardise the approach of DEFRA in England by using SAG Annual Inventory data.

The caveat with the YES responses is that quality of the new data must not be compromised. KAS concur and would refer readers to the Review of the SAG Annual Inventory which is [here](#) for a more detailed response.

The NO responses, as end users of the data, had obvious concerns that the ending of the sheep data series would affect their analyses.

**KAS would hope that our responses in the SAG Review would put the NO responses at ease in terms of future plans and developments.**

There still would be a statistical release for the 'December' data, at the same time as usual, so there still would be an output.

## Question 8

**Do you think your work will be affected by ending the current series of the December Survey of Agriculture? If yes, please state why**

YES	NO	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
2	4		6

This question was posed to also cover the other items which are collected off the December Survey of Agriculture, aside from sheep, which was covered in Question 7 and cattle which is already collected direct from BCMS.

The majority of respondents believed that the ending of the December Survey of Agriculture would not affect them nor would they foresee any impacts on their work.

There was a feeling that June Survey data and SAG Inventory data would be sufficient but items such as hay and silage was useful (see also Question 10).

The NO responses were the same as Question 7 – that using SAG Inventory data would not give the coverage that the December Survey currently provides.

KAS have mentioned there are other fields in the SAG that can be used (purpose of animals etc). Hopefully if we utilise this data, it may fit the needs of end users of the data.

Bydd yr adran hon yn eich helpu i lenwi ffurflen eich Stocrestr Fflynyddol This section will assist you in completing your Annual Inventory return							
Blwyddyn / Year	Nifer y Defaid Magu ac Ŵyn Benyw sydd wedi cael hwrdd / Number of Breeding Sheep & Ewe Lambs put to the ram		Defaid Eraill / Other Sheep		Geifr / Goats	Cyfanswm / Total	Dyddiad eu Cofnodi / Date Entered
	Mamoglaidd / Ewes	Ŵyn benyw / Ewe Lambs	Hyrddod / Rams	Eraill / Others			

This is a copy of the Sheep and Goat Record Book which is circulated to farmers in Wales – one would comment that maybe the SAG Inventory form should reflect the questions as it does in the Record Book i.e. ewes and ewe lambs and rams and others breakdown. Doing so may assist users who responded with YES.



## Question 9

**Crops and fertilisers administrative data is available from sources other than the December Survey – where you aware of this? If no, do you require any further information?**

YES	NO	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
4	2		6

The majority of the responses related to the fertiliser question element rather than the crops.

The BSFP representative also commented direct that the BSFP does not provide information on fertiliser stocks and if there was to be future increased Welsh coverage, there would have to be appropriate funding.

KAS are having a current dialogue with colleagues in DEFRA/BSFP about future Welsh provision in this regard.

However, there may be scope for fertiliser information in any future FPS as it is unlikely for Welsh Government to fund more provision for the (BSFP) if the costs outweigh the outcomes.

A suggestion from an FUW member as a part of the response to this consultation suggested that non-commercially sensitive information from suppliers could form part of the collection of fertiliser data as undertaken by the British Survey of Fertiliser Practice (BSFP). This will be presented to the BSPF representatives for their attention.

A number of responses asked for information in regards to the crops and fertiliser administrative sources. These will be listed at Annex 2 in this response but to note, not all the data is at a Wales level – but at GB or E&W level.

## Question 10

**Do you use data from the hay and silage questions off the December Survey form? If yes, will ending the series affect you?**

YES	NO	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
2	4		6

The majority of respondents believed that the ending of the hay and silage questions off the December Survey of Agriculture would not affect them nor would they foresee any impacts on their work.

One response said they were not aware of the hay and silage information, but they would now use it.

However, two responses said they would be affected; the information provided useful background information on changes in Welsh production systems, according to HCC.

NSA Cymru/Wales commented that knowing what stocks of forage farmers had was useful for them to gauge what support their members might need in different years.

KAS believe that if there is scope for a Farm Practices Survey (FPS), there may be provision in that to ask questions on hay and silage.

It is useful to again note, as per the consultation documentation, that there is no statutory duty to collect hay and silage data.

To that end, KAS will no longer collect hay and silage information as a result of the discontinuation of the December Survey of Agriculture paper collection.

However, possible future provision on a FPS will be considered if appropriate.

## **Annex 1 – open comments**

**NB Only questions which had an open response have been published.**

### **Agricultural & Horticultural Development Board (AHDB)**

#### **Do you agree with a proposal to continue as before with paper based collections?**

"Although we agree, we do think that use of telephone/online surveying may offer some advantages. Online data collection is useful but only in parallel with paper surveys as we believe internet-only data collection would significantly impact response rates in some sectors."

#### **Do you think that we should make the annual Surveys available online?**

Access to more information for use in our analysis and forecasting activities allows us to provide better value to our Welsh and other UK levy payers.

#### **Do you use any data from our outputs?**

We use data that covers livestock numbers, dairy producer numbers, cow numbers, average herd size and crop areas. Data is used for publications, ongoing analysis of market conditions and forecasting - to help industry decision making."

#### **These forms supply most of the information published in our Statistical Releases, headlines, publications and bulletins. Not having a collection could potentially affect these outputs What impact would this have on you and your work?**

It would undermine the accuracy of UK red meat production forecasts. It would also prevent mid-season assessment of UK red meat market conditions and put greater emphasis on the June Survey.

#### **Is there any data that is not collected that you would like to see collected?**

"The dairy sector would find more detailed farm practice data useful to contribute to the Welsh Dairy Road Map. e.g. land under environmental schemes by sector. In addition, more detail on the spread of the dairy herd with be useful e.g. Age profile."

**Do you agree with discontinuing the current Wales December Survey of Agriculture and using the SAG Inventory data in lieu of the December Survey data?**

"Sheep analysts require the detailed information in the December survey. However, dairy and cereals analysts mainly use June Survey and BCMS data so would be less inconvenienced."

**Do you think your work will be affected by ending the current series of the December Survey of Agriculture?**

The current December series details the breakdown of the cattle herd and the sheep flock in a way that the inventory data does not e.g. the split of ewe lambs for breeding.

**Do you use data from the hay and silage questions off the December Survey form?**

We were not previously aware of hay & silage data but will now start using it.

## National Sheep Association (NSA) Cymru/Wales

### **Do you agree with a proposal to continue as before with paper based collections? NO**

If no, which other methods do you think could be used and implemented?

NSA CYMRU/WALES does not think paper-based collections should be continued for everyone, as it would be quicker and more convenient, for those who are willing and able, to respond online. We recommend still sending the request to everyone by post rather than email, but to give people the option to respond online if they wish.

### **Do you think that ad-hoc surveys are best undertaken via a paper based collection? NO**

NSA CYMRU/WALES thinks non-compulsory ad-hoc surveys may get a greater response if there is the option for people to respond online. In addition, promoting ad-hoc surveys on websites and e-newsletter may generate more interest.

### **Do you think that we should make the annual Surveys available online? YES**

NSA CYMRU/WALES believes people with access to the internet, who are familiar with doing a lot of business that way, will find it quicker and more convenient to use this option. However, we would recommend still sending the official notification of annual surveys via post, in case emails are bounced-back or not seen.

### **Do you use any data from our outputs? YES**

Both NSA and NSA CYMRU/WALES find data from your outputs incredibly useful, specifically sheep numbers, enterprise types, farm incomes etc.

### **These forms supply most of the information published in our Statistics Releases, headlines, publications and bulletins. Not having a collection could potentially affect these outputs. What impact would this have in you and your work?**

A reduction in the amount of data and statistics would have an incredible impact on both NSA and NSA CYMRU/WALES and would severely reduce the standard of service we provide for our members and the wider sheep sector, as we need hard figures to support our work.

### **Is there any data this is not collected that you would like to see collected? YES**

For the sheep sector, NSA CYMRU/WALES would hugely value data on whether a farmer is a pedigree breeder or runs commercial sheep, or both.

This would give NSA and others a far greater appreciation of farm types, as simply classifying them as upland or lowland hides a great deal of detail.

Asking sheep farmers what breed of sheep they have would also be useful, as currently a survey of sheep breeds is only conducted every 10 years and does not generate a massive amount of response. Having a more detailed and up-to-date picture of sheep breeds and their regional spread would greatly aid the work of NSA and NSA CYMRU/WALES, as well as other organisations. Such information during a disease outbreak would also be vital, as some breeds that are only found in specific geographical areas are at high risk if a cull is ordered.

**Do you agree with discontinuing the current Wales December survey of Agriculture and using the SAG Inventory date in lieu of the December Survey Data? YES**

NSA CYMRU/WALES feels it is important to take the same approach as England, and also to reduce the amount of paperwork required of Welsh farmers, but hopes this will not compromise the quality of the statistics produced.

**Do you think your work will be affected by ending the current series of the December Survey of Agriculture? NO**

We feel the June survey and SAG will provide enough data for NSA and NSA CYMRU/WALES to work with. But the hay and silage information is useful, as reflected in our answer to question 10 below.

**Crops and fertilisers administrative data is available from sources other than the December Survey. Where you are of this? NO**

If no, do you require any further information? YES

NSA CYMRU/WALES would value information on where this information is available and if the data specifies the farm enterprise, so we can see what fertiliser is being using on livestock farms or even on sheep farms specifically.

**Do you use data from the hay and silage questions off the December Survey form? YES**

Knowing what stocks of forage farmers tend to keep over the winter period, and how this is affected in a bad year, is very useful for NSA CYMRU/WALES in terms of knowing what support our members might need to different years. We can gain this information on an ad-hoc basis from members but it is useful to see in confirmed in the data.

## Country Landowners Association (CLA)

**Do you agree with a proposal to continue as before with paper based collections? If No, which other methods do you think could be used and implemented?"**

We believe that online surveys that are incorporated into collection of other information such as SFP is preferable to reduce the amount of form filling to our members. This is particularly objected to by our members when the same questions are asked repeatedly.

**Do you think that we should make the annual Surveys available online?**

Many members find it quicker and preferable to respond online

**Do you agree with discontinuing the current Wales December Survey of Agriculture and using the SAG Inventory data in lieu of the December Survey data? "If yes, please explain why you agree with this."**

Simplification and reduction in amount of form filling required

## **Farmers Union of Wales (FUW)**

Thank you for inviting the Farmers' Union of Wales to contribute to the above consultation on the future of agricultural statistical data collection methods in Wales. Following an internal consultation with its twelve County Branches, the Union submits the following comments for your consideration.

The Union welcomes moves to reduce the administrative and personnel burden associated with the collection of agricultural data in Wales and would seek to ensure that all data collection methodologies employed represent value for money. However it is essential that any review, and subsequent reform, of collection methodologies does not compromise the strength and accuracy of the data collected.

Members did not reach a consensus on the progression to alternative forms of data collection.

The Union notes that, post 1995, the June survey of Agriculture and Horticulture has been conducted on only a sample (subset) of the agricultural population; with a full census being conducted once in every decade. Given that response to the survey is compulsory in accordance with the Agricultural Statistics Act 1979, the Union would query how the move towards an online survey system would reach those individuals without online capabilities during the full census. As with discussions pertaining to ad hoc surveys in the present consultation, some retention of paper surveys may therefore be required for the June survey of Agriculture and Horticulture. Furthermore, it may be necessary for individuals to 'opt in' to alternative methods of data collection in order to protect those who do not wish to receive surveys by telephone or via an online method.

Members agreed with the discontinuation of the current Wales December Survey of Agriculture and using the SAG Inventory data in lieu of the December survey data. The Union believes that merging the December Survey of Agriculture with the SAG Inventory would reduce the administrative burden associated with this type of data collection and would make better use of existing data collected under the SAG. Members expressed concern that no use was presently being made of Welsh SAG data and the FUW would stress the importance of collecting, evaluating and disseminating Welsh specific agricultural data where possible. Members therefore welcomed moves to use the Welsh SAG data as an administrative statistical data source after proper validation and evaluation

The Union recognises that the collection of data from other administrative sources, such as the Single Application Form, does not, in isolation, provide information which is comprehensive enough to meet existing EU legislative requirements. However the FUW would seek to ensure that the wealth of information collected from such sources is used whenever possible and is reviewed in order to remove any existing duplication with other data collection streams. Removal of duplication would likely go partway to mitigating the decline in response rates reported in the present consultation document (Pg 8, Para 3).

As part of the current review, the FUW believes that all current sources of data collection should be examined for their potential contribution to existing data collection streams. For example, one member suggested that non-commercially sensitive information from suppliers could form part of the collection of fertiliser data as undertaken by the British Survey of Fertiliser Practice.

I trust that due consideration will be given to the preceding information.



## Hybu Cig Cymru (HCC) – Meat Promotion Wales

**Do you agree with a proposal to continue as before with paper based collections? If No, which other methods do you think could be used and implemented?**

We agree that a paper based collection system should be employed to collect data. We also believe that other options for collection should be explored and utilised (i.e. Web based) in conjunction with the paper based collections.

**Do you think that we should make the annual Surveys available online? If Yes, please explain why you think this and how it would benefit you. If No, please state your reasons.**

Having online surveys may increase response rates which would in turn benefit our organisation due to the higher statistical robustness of the data.

**Do you use any data from our outputs? If yes, which data and what do you use this data for?**

Welsh Agricultural Statistics and associated outputs are used to monitor livestock numbers in Wales.

This information is then disseminated to the Welsh agricultural industry through publications, meetings and during conversations with industry representatives at different events that HCC attend during the year.

**These forms supply most of the information published in our Statistical Releases, headlines publications and bulletins. Not having a collection could potentially affect these outputs What impact would this have on your and your work?**

Any decrease in statistical output would have a detrimental impact on our ability to monitor and evaluate changes in the red meat sector in Wales. This would be particularly relevant to the livestock numbers and financial outputs statistics.

**Do you think your work will be affected by ending the current series of the December Survey of Agriculture? If yes, please state why**

The current December survey results allows for the breakdown of livestock numbers into different categories (i.e. Ewe lambs tupped/kept for breeding etc). Should this be discontinued then our organisation ability to monitor and forecast future red meat production in Wales would be affected.

**Do you use data from the hay and silage questions off the December Survey form? If Yes, will the ending of the series affect you? Please explain how.**

This information provides useful background data on changes in Welsh production systems.

## **National Farmers Union (NFU)**

NFU Cymru represents 22,216 farmers, managers and partners in agricultural businesses, including those with an interest in farming and the countryside and I therefore thank you for seeking NFU Cymru's views on future proposals for the collection of agricultural statistical data in Wales.

As a Union we very much value the work done by the Welsh Government and others in collecting and compiling agricultural statistics and make frequent use of the statistical output. We are keen to ensure that the collection of statistical data does continue, although we realise that there is a good case for rationalising the ways in which some of these data are gathered.

I will comment on behalf of NFU Cymru on both Proposal 1 and Proposal 2 and the questions raised under each proposal in the order in which they were raised. From the outset, I will make the point that of the two sets of proposals, NFU Cymru prefers Proposal 2.

Proposal 1

**Do you agree with a proposal to continue as before with paper based collections? If no, which other methods do you think could be used and implemented?**

Of the two proposals outlined, NFU Cymru's preference is for Proposal 2 for the reason that where the possibility exists of reducing the amount of paperwork that is sent to farmers, the Welsh Government should seize the opportunity.

If however the Welsh Government following consultation does decide to pursue Proposal 1 then we think it would be appropriate for the Welsh Government to adapt and explore the possibility of offering online and telephone methods of collecting data alongside the collection of data via paper based systems.

We would not support using the SAF form as a means of gathering survey data, we would take the view that the SAF form should stay as it currently is and be used only for the collection of information that it legally required for the purposes of the SAF exercise.

**Do you think paper based collections are the best method for collecting such data?**

Paper based collections certainly have a role in gathering agricultural data but we believe that the Welsh Government should be open to new ideas and methods for collecting data including online and telephone methods. In the event that Proposal 1 is the chosen proposal then we would want farmers to continue to have the option of being able to submit paper returns should they wish.

**Are ad-hoc surveys in a paper form the most effective way to run a small scale survey?**

We would suggest that the Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Services Department are perhaps in a better position to answer this question than NFU Cymru. NFU Cymru are however keen to avoid un-necessary paperwork arriving through the post with our members, but we acknowledge there are instances when this might be unavoidable. Paper surveys do have a role, but it might be more effective to conduct such small scale surveys over the telephone. We note for example that a telephone survey appears to be one of the Proposal 2 options in relation to pigs.

**The impact of not collecting data on your work**

NFU Cymru does make fairly extensive use of the data that the Welsh Government gathers in relation to agriculture. Typically we use this information for our own documents and analysis and also for press releases. Not having this data available would therefore create problems for us.

**Do you think that we should make the annual surveys available online? If yes, please explain why you think this and how it would benefit you. If No, please state your reasons**

If Proposal 1 goes ahead then we would support annual surveys being made available online, alongside a paper based option for those who lack the necessary broadband connection or IT literacy to be able to complete the survey online. We believe that putting the survey on an online platform will offer convenience and choice to our members, although there is no benefit to NFU Cymru itself.

**Do you use any data from our outputs? If yes, which data and what do you use this data for?**

Please see our response to question 4

**Are there any items of data that are not collected that you would like to see collected? If yes, please provide reasons and potential uses**  
**NFU Cymru has no comment to make in relation to Question 7.**

Proposal 2

It has been mentioned by many of our members that there do appear to be certain instances of duplication when it comes to data collection. We do therefore welcome the moves outlined in Proposal 2 to rationalise data collection and dispense with the December survey, and seek instead to obtain the data that is normally collected via the December survey from elsewhere

**Do you agree with discontinuing the current Wales December Survey of Agriculture and using the SAG Inventory data in lieu of the December survey data? If yes, please explain why you agree with this.**

It is NFU Cymru's desire that the volume of paperwork sent out to farmers is reduced as far as possible. We do therefore support the Welsh Government's proposal that the sheep and goat inventory data is used in lieu of the December survey data if this will mean that one less piece of paperwork will be sent out to farmers.

**Do you think your work will be affected by ending the current series of the December Survey of Agriculture? If yes please state why**

NFU Cymru does not foresee any adverse impacts upon our work of the discontinuation of the December Survey of Agriculture provided that quality data can be sourced from elsewhere by the Welsh Government.

**Crops and fertilisers administrative data is available from sources other than the December survey – were you aware of this? If No, do you require any further information?**

Yes, NFU Cymru is aware that data is available from other sources in relation to fertilisers. At the moment, the fertiliser data is available as aggregated England and Wales data, clearly we share the Welsh Government's desire to see disaggregated data made available so that Welsh figures for fertiliser use will be available. NFU Cymru is aware of the HGCA's work in terms of gathering data relating to crops. The Union conducts its own survey of planting and cropping in relation to arable crops which also provides the Union with some data.

**Do you use data from the hay and silage questions off the December survey form. If yes, will the ending of the series affect you? Please explain how**

NFU Cymru does not make much use of the data generated by the hay and silage questions, and we also realise that there is no statutory duty to collect these data. With the distinct possibility that the December survey could be discontinued and that the data, normally gathered via the December survey, could be sourced from elsewhere, we do not consider the gathering of information on hay and silage to be of itself a compelling enough reason to keep the census form. We are therefore willing to accept the fact that hay and silage information will no longer be available, as a consequence of ending the December survey.

## **Annex 2 – Crops and fertiliser data sources**

### **Home Grown Cereal Authority (HGCA):**

<http://www.hgca.com/content.output/100/100/Markets/Markets/Survey%20Results.msp>

[http://www.hgca.com/publications/documents/markets/winter\\_planting\\_survey\\_2012.pdf](http://www.hgca.com/publications/documents/markets/winter_planting_survey_2012.pdf)

### **British Survey of Fertiliser Practice (BSFP):**

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/foodfarm/enviro/fertiliserpractice/>