

National Statistics Quality Review No. 19: Review of Forestry Statistics

Implementation Plan

	Recommendation	Implementation
A.1	Quality measures should be developed and made available to users in line with the forthcoming draft Code of Practice Protocol on Quality Management.	Agreed in principle, and quality measures will be provided where this can be done easily. But we do not expect to have the resources to do much in 2002-03.
A.2	Greater use should be made of graphs and maps to illustrate key messages in publications. The compendium publication produced by the Finnish Forest Industries Federation could serve as a useful example of good practice.	Agreed in principle but we do not expect to have the resources to do much in 2002-03. We will take this forward in 2003-04.
A.3	ESU should consider the consequences for the statistics they produce arising from the forthcoming Freedom of Information Act.	Agreed. We will liaise with FC Communications Branch to see what they expect impact to be, and also seek guidance from ONS.
A.4	ESU should consider making statistics available on the Forestry Commission website in a more detailed form than is available in publications.	Agreed. We will consider how best to make available the more detailed statistics from administrative sources currently held as working tables in Excel, and whether even greater detail can be provided by these admin sources. We will also seek to receive future tabulations from market research companies in electronic as well as paper form, so that they can also be published on the website.
A.5	The statistical information published on the Forestry Commission website should be extended to include metadata.	Agreed. The metadata are already available for StatBase. We will review by March 2003 how best to make them available on the FC website, with links to appropriate publications and other outputs.
A.6	ESU should pursue with HM Customs & Excise the possibility of obtaining data on imports and exports of wood and wood products electronically.	Agreed in principle. If resources are available to take this forward, we will contact HMCE in early 2003.
B.1	ESU should find out from industry associations the methodology used to estimate figures for non-members and include this in metadata (see A.5).	Agreed that we should ask the industry associations (WPIF, PFGF) before the next publication of British Timber Statistics, in August 2003.

- C.1 Consideration should be given to incorporating more time series without unduly lengthening the publication. In particular, the presentation of longer term data in graphical format should be considered. Agreed to consider this for the publication in 2003.
- C.2 Extension of the coverage of this publication from Great Britain to United Kingdom should be considered. Agreed to consult Forest Service (Northern Ireland) to discover whether they would support this. If so, then it can be considered for the publication in 2003.
- C.3 ESU should consider replacing the existing table showing Forest Enterprise recreational facilities with alternative, more useful data which could be included as a time series. Agreed to consider this for the publication in 2003.
- C.4 Two of the tables are limited to Forest Enterprise only, whilst the remainder relate to all forestry in Great Britain. The presentation should make clear that only an incomplete picture of forestry in Britain is provided in these tables. Agree to consider how to improve presentation for 2003.
- D.1 New publications, along the lines of "Forestry Statistics" should be produced separately for England, Scotland and Wales. Given that there is still an interest in, and a need for, statistics at a UK level, these new publications should be additional to the existing "Forestry Statistics" publication. The publication for England should, where possible, provide data at regional level. The publication for Wales should be bilingual. Agree that these publications would be desirable, but it would be difficult to progress them in 2002-03 without additional resources. We will inform the National Offices about this recommendation, and seek their views on desirability and importance to them. Any decision to take this forward will be affected by the outcome of the Forestry Devolution Review. One possibility would be to produce short web-only versions in 2003 for trialling.
- D.2 The methodology used to produce estimates of woodland area should be clearly explained and included in metadata (see A.5). Agreed. This should be done in the first release as well as Forestry Statistics. A short statement has been added as a footnote to Forestry Facts & Figures 2002.
- E.1 ESU should investigate the scope for standardising the units of measurement used on the sawmill survey questionnaire to cubic metres, to avoid confusion. Agreed. We will seek the views of the Supply & Demand Subcommittee by November 2002.

- E.2 ESU should consult the Forestry Commission Advisory Panel Subcommittee on Supply and Demand and the sawmilling industry on a significant reduction to the length of the “long” questionnaire, sent to larger sawmills biennially, to reduce compliance costs and encourage responses. Agreed. Initial views of the Subcommittee were sought in August 2002. We will prepare more detailed proposals for the Subcommittee by November 2002.
- F.1 The methodology for the index base should be reviewed, to consider introducing chain-linking or revising the index base at regular, known, intervals of around 10 years. If the index base is changed, figures should be published on both bases. The review should be completed in time for a change in 2006. Agreed. We will review in 2004-05.
- F.2 The effect on prices of differences in the species mix and other factors should be investigated. Agreed in principle, and this will be taken forward when resources permit (unlikely to be in 2002-03). The other factors that could be relevant include thinning v clearfell, and location. It would be desirable to address this as part of more wide-ranging work on long-term and short-term price-size relationships, which should include econometric modelling
- F.3 Publication of price indices by country should be considered. Agree to consider this, when resources allow (unlikely to be in 2002-03). Indices are already calculated for Scotland, and included in the Scottish Economy Core Brief for Scottish Executive internal use. Before publishing (perhaps in a new “Scottish Forestry Statistics”), it would be desirable to undertake further work to establish the reliability of country-level indices, which may be based on a small number of transactions in a size class. Calculating and publishing separate figures for Wales would be a greater problem, because of periods with no transactions in a size class. It would also be desirable to take account of locational analysis (as proposed in response to F2), as this may show that country borders are not the best way of stratifying the data.

- G.1 The discrepancy between results from the Private Sector Softwood Removals Survey and figures for deliveries of roundwood should be investigated and addressed. In particular, current assumptions concerning the proportion of harvesting accounted for by survey respondents and the suitability of the existing sampling frame should be evaluated. This should be a priority for action.
- Agree. This is being taken forward by a small working group that includes representatives of FTA, UKFPA and Forestry Commission.
- G.2 The Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) should be used to augment existing sampling frames held by the Forestry Commission and ESU should pursue with ONS the possibility of flagging forestry businesses on the IDBR.
- Agree. FC to agree details with ONS by March 2003 for implementation in surveys to be run in early 2004.
- G.3 Further information on data confidentiality and the National Statistics Code of Practice should be provided to respondents as an assurance that any data they provide will be treated in confidence.
- Agree. We will identify best practice from other NS surveys, striking a balance between adequate reassurance and the desire for brevity.
- G.4 Electronic submission of returns should be permitted and promoted. In particular, consideration should be given to the use of web-based returns, as are being developed by DEFRA.
- Agree. The sawmill survey in January 2002 included an option for respondents to give an email address that could be used for future surveys. When resources are available we will investigate methods of electronic forms used by DEFRA and others, with the aim of introducing a good system for electronic submission by 2005 (to meet eBusiness commitment).
- G.5 Data queries should be followed up with respondents. In order to reduce the burden on small businesses, this should be restricted to the large sawmills (those producing over 5,000 m³) in the Sawmill Survey only, which saw 90% of the total volume.
- Agree to review. It will be necessary to balance the quality improvement from following up the query, against the burden on business from querying a figure that could be corrected using our best judgement.
- G.6 Phone call reminders (as currently undertaken for the Sawmill Survey) should be restricted to the large mills only, to maximise efficiency.
- Agree to formalise current arrangements in line with this recommendation for surveys to be run in early 2003.

- G.7 An additional final step should be added to the reminder procedures to give non-respondents an opportunity to see and correct the estimates which will be made for them if they fail to reply. The Subcommittee on Supply & Demand (SSD) were consulted on this recommendation in August 2002 and did not support it. There are therefore no plans to take this forward.
- H.1 ESU should consider extending the published data to include additional statistics on ancient and native woodlands. Agree. Some additional information is included in the UK Indicators of Sustainable Forestry, published in October 2002. If some of the data meet NS quality standards, they will be considered for inclusion in future Forestry Statistics.
- H.2 New data sources should be investigated and existing sources developed to provide statistics on progress towards national biodiversity action plan (BAP) and habitat action plan (HAP) targets. Agree that this is desirable, and will be taken forward when resources permit, in collaboration with FC adviser responsible for woodland HAP/BAP monitoring.
- H.3 The possibility of obtaining data for all forest fires from Fire Services should be investigated. [This is not a high priority, given the relatively low level of fire damage in the UK.] Agree that this is desirable, and will be taken forward when resources permit.
- H.4 The information published in "Forestry Statistics" from the National Inventory of Woodlands and Trees should be extended to include data on type of owner and to extend the data on species composition and age structure. Agree. This will be implemented for the edition to be published in November 2002.
- H.5 The possibility of publishing additional information related to planting, including previous land use and species planted, should be investigated. Agree that this is desirable, and will be taken forward when resources permit.
- H.6 The possibility of obtaining and publishing data on woodlands on farms from Agricultural Censuses should be investigated. Agree that time series on area of farm woodlands should be included in Forestry Statistics in November 2002. The availability of any other data will be explored with the data owners when resources permit.
- H.7 The statistics published on grant schemes should be extended to include the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme and the Energy Crop Scheme in England. Agree that this is desirable to be included in Forestry Statistics in November 2002.

- H.8 New data sources should be investigated and existing sources developed to provide statistics on the use of wood as fuel for domestic, industrial and power station use. Agree that this is desirable, and will be taken forward when resources permit. This is viewed as a high priority, because of the increased policy importance of renewable energy, and the increasing use for electricity generation.
- H.9 New data sources should be investigated and existing sources developed to provide statistics on the use of recycled fibre by wood processing plants. Agree that this is desirable, and will be taken forward when resources permit.
- H.10 The possibility of obtaining and publishing data on the transportation of timber (mode of transport and distances) should be investigated. Agree that this is desirable, and will be taken forward when resources permit.
- H.11 Estimates of the total value to the economy of the forestry sector should be developed and published. This should ultimately be available by country and for English regions and should incorporate multiplier effects. Agree that this is desirable. Estimates were provided by three country multiplier studies in recent years, using a variety of methodologies. Better estimates should be available from a commissioned report on “Economic Impact of British Forestry”, which should be received in 2002. If further work is required, this will be taken forward when resources permit.
- H.12 Statistics on the UK wood and wood product market should be published, showing production, imports and exports by category of product. Agreed. This will be compiled from the data compiled for the JQ1 and JQ2 international returns, with the intention of including a table in Forestry Statistics in November 2003.
- H.13 Statistics on the UK position in the global trade in wood and wood products should be published. Agreed. This will be included in Forestry Statistics in November 2002, drawing from timber trade statistics compiled by UNECE/FAO. The information could be presented as in previous Forest Industry Yearbooks, but we will review to consider any possible improvements in presentation.
- H.14 “Forestry Statistics” should be extended to include the IPD Forestry index (which is produced from a sample of private sector coniferous plantations of Sitka spruce in mainland Britain). Agreed, subject to approval by IPD. IPD have agreed to (and welcomed) a summary table being included in UK Indicators of Sustainable Forestry, and the same table could be included in Forestry Statistics, with the table labelled as being non-NS.

- H.15 ESU should investigate the scope for extending the price data published to include sawlog prices, prices from private sector woodlands, prices of logs delivered to processors and sawnwood prices. Agree that this is desirable, and will be taken forward when resources permit. A sawlog price index for state forests is available from FE, but its construction would have to be studied before its inclusion. ONS could be asked about the availability of sawlog and sawnwood prices from their surveys. It would be more difficult to obtain price information for private woodlands.
- H.16 New data sources should be investigated and existing sources developed to provide statistics on timber certification. Agreed. A GIS/database for certified woodland should be developed in 2003. Questions about the use of certified timber will be included in the statistical surveys of wood processing industries to be run in early 2003.
- H.17 The existing Forestry Statistics table on Community Forests should be extended to include the National Forest. Agreed. We will seek this information for inclusion in the table in Forestry Statistics in November 2003.
- H.18 ESU should investigate possible sources for data on community forestry and on public access to woodlands. Agreed. Information on the number and area of community woodlands in Scotland has been compiled by Reforesting Scotland. We have been in contact with another NGO about the possibility of compiling similar information for England and Wales, and plan to take this forward in 2003 if specification and resources are agreed. Information on the extent of public access will be taken forward when resources permit, linked to CRoW in England/Wales and Land Reform in Scotland.
- I.1 Final control over the content and scope of the Forest Employment Survey should rest with professional statistical staff, to ensure comparability of results across surveys. Agree that final decisions should rest with professional statistical staff, but taking account of policy needs. As the policy needs may evolve, and as the statistical methodology may be improved, the headline figures may not be comparable. But we agree that additional work should be undertaken to make like-with-like comparisons of successive surveys.
- I.2 The Forest Employment Survey should be carried out more frequently and at known intervals to ensure that results are up-to-date and relevant. Agree that it would be desirable to increase the frequency of data outputs. However, if the current methodology is maintained for frequent full surveys, the staff resources involved are unlikely to be available and the burden on respondents may be judged to be excessive. It will be necessary to review the methodology, to see whether less frequent full surveys can be combined with more frequent smaller scale surveys that can extrapolate forward from the full survey.

- I.3 The Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) should be used to assist in the compilation of sampling frames for the Forest Employment Survey. Agree. This will be taken into account when planning starts for the next full survey.
- I.4 Statistics on indirect employment (e.g. suppliers to forestry industries) should be obtained from ONS surveys or from development of the Forest Employment Survey. Agree that it is desirable to produce estimates of indirect employment by suppliers. This may be possible by applying coefficients from ONS input-output tables, or those collected in recent forest multiplier studies. This will be taken into account when planning starts for the next full survey.
- I.5 ESU should consider whether to pursue National Statistics status for the Forest Employment Survey in consultation with key stakeholders. Agree. This will have to take account of resources that would be required to obtain NS status.
- I.6 ESU should consider delaying the 2003-04 Forest Employment Survey to allow improvements to be put in place. Agree. At present, the next full survey is scheduled for 2003-04, to maintain the regular 5-year pattern (see I2). But staff resources may not be available in 2002-03 to make much progress in the planning, so it may be desirable to delay if the resource position could be improved in 2003-04.
- I.7 Future contracts with market research companies employed to undertake the Public Opinion of Forestry Survey should ensure that National Statistics standards are met. Agree. We will seek to establish what is done by other departments who use external researchers to produce National Statistics, and adopt best practice.
- I.8 The methodology used to produce quality measures for the Public Opinion of Forestry Survey should be made available. Agree. The market research company will be asked to provide information on standard errors for its survey design. We will seek to establish what other quality measures are obtained by other departments who use external researchers to produce National Statistics, and adopt best practice.
- I.9 National Statistics status for the Public Opinion of Forestry Survey should be pursued. Agree that this would be desirable, and will be taken into account for planning of next survey. However plans for next survey (scheduled March 2003) are on hold, because of external research budget cuts in 2002-03, so the timing of this is uncertain.