

Forestry Commission

2010 Annual Report on Statistical Surveys in England

Purpose

1. This report provides details of the statistical surveys carried out or authorised by the Forestry Commission in 2009-10, sets out the programme of surveys proposed for 2010-11, and presents outline plans for the following two years. Approval is now sought for the survey programme for 2010-11 to proceed in England.

Background

2. UK Government Departments are required to provide Ministers with an annual report on all the statistical surveys of businesses and local authorities carried out in the previous year and plans for future surveys. This report covers regular and ad hoc statistical surveys of businesses and local authorities in England. Some of these surveys run at the same time in Wales and Scotland, so summary information for the three countries and GB totals are presented in an Annex.

Administrative Burden Cost - Summary

3. The administrative burden cost, previously called the response burden, is the estimated cost of the staff time required to fill in the survey questionnaires. The hourly rates supplied by the Survey Control Unit of ONS have been used. In calculating burdens, account is taken of expected response rates, with a nominal cost estimated for each non-respondent. The number of ad hoc surveys and their total burden vary from year to year, depending on the requirements for research related to policy development and monitoring.

4. For surveys in 2009-10, the total administrative burden cost was around £5,000, compared with a planned level of £25,700. The majority of the difference was because of the delayed start for the survey of woodland owners as part of the National Forest Inventory, but some other smaller surveys were also dropped.

5. Approval is now sought for the programme of surveys to start in 2010-11, with an estimated administrative burden cost in England of £26,200. Outline plans have an estimated administrative burden cost of £23,000 for 2011-12 and £22,400 for 2012-13. A large part of the increase compared with 2009-10 is because of the start of the survey of woodland owners as part of the National Forest Inventory.

Regular Surveys of Businesses

6. The Forestry Commission regularly carries out four voluntary surveys of businesses in Great Britain to gather information on sawmills, round fencing, private sector removals and forest nurseries. Results from the first three surveys and other enquiries to wood processing industries are published in Forestry Facts & Figures, Forestry Statistics and other statistical publications available on the Forestry Commission Internet site, and are also used in compiling UK statistical returns for international organisations. These surveys are reviewed each year with the Expert Group on Timber and Trade Statistics. Since 2007, a small survey of forest nurseries provides information on the use of improved stock. It had been planned that the GB-wide survey of woodfuel suppliers (first run as an ad hoc survey in 2008-09) should become a regular annual survey, but it was subsequently decided to limit this survey to UK pellet manufacturers and to use other sources of information for other types of woodfuel.

7. In 2009-10, a total of 208 businesses in England were approached, with an estimated burden of £2,800. It is planned that the five surveys will continue to run each year with little change, giving a total burden of around £2,900 in 2010-11 and £3,000 in each of 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Ad Hoc Surveys in 2009-10

8. An online survey for the Woodfuel Suppliers Network Study, to identify the benefits and services most useful to their businesses and how these can best be provided, included around 100 businesses in England with an estimated burden of around £1,300. The survey plans last year had also included provision for other miscellaneous business surveys not yet identified; another online survey was commissioned to estimate employment in the woodfuel sector, including around 120 businesses in England with an estimated burden of around £1,000.

9. The plans for 2008-09 had included three surveys in various areas of the South West, to assess woodland owners' attitudes and capacity to produce woodfuel and other products. Only one of these was carried out in 2008-09, with the other two postponed to 2009-10. It was subsequently decided to replace these surveys with activity under a woodland owner engagement programme.

10. The start of the survey of woodland owners as part of the National Forest Inventory was postponed to 2010-11 (see below). The planned GB-wide survey of Plant Health Service customers did not go ahead.

Ad Hoc Surveys – Plans for 2010-11

11. A survey of woodland owners is being carried out as part of the National Forest Inventory; the first cycle of the new inventory runs from 2009 to 2014. It has been

decided to separate the initial approach to owners or their agents, to agree surveyors' access to the woodland, from the statistical request to classify the owner type and provide two items of information about each stand visited, so the latter will now start in 2010-11. The start of the survey will focus on private sector conifer areas for Production Forecast 2011, so is expected to seek data for around 1,540 non-FC sample areas in England in 2010-11, giving an estimated burden of £11,800 for businesses and £1,700 for local authorities. Methods are being developed to obtain woodland data in bulk from the largest owners and managers, which should reduce the burden from the figures shown here.

12. The outline plans for 2010-11 had included a GB-wide Forest Business Health survey, to continue the monitoring at 3-year intervals. The latest thinking is to run this as a continuous panel survey, with panel recruitment and the first survey response around the end of 2010. It is thought that around 400 businesses in England would have to be approached to form a panel of around 200, which would then receive one round of the survey, giving a total estimated burden in England of around £4,800 for the year.

13. Ideas for two surveys are being considered to supplement qualitative research related to woodland creation to mitigate climate change. A survey of landowners' perceptions could approach up to 200 landowners with a burden of around £2,500. A survey of major businesses on the possibilities for funding woodland creation could approach up to 50 businesses with a burden of around £600.

14. We propose to make provision for other miscellaneous business surveys not yet identified to cover up to 240 businesses, with a burden up to £1,900.

Ad Hoc Surveys – Outline Plans

15. A major ongoing requirement is for the survey of woodland owners as part of the National Forest Inventory, as described above for 2010-11, with the first cycle continuing to 2014. With more FC woodland included after the first year, it is expected to cover around 1,030 non-FC sample areas in England each year, giving estimated burdens of £8,100 in 2011-12 and £8,400 in 2012-13 for businesses and £1,300 each year for local authorities.

16. Provision is made in each year for four quarterly rounds of the Forest Business Health panel survey, with 200 approached each time, giving a burden of £7,400 in 2011-12 and £7,700 in 2012-13.

17. A Plant Health Service import/export customer survey is planned for 2011-12, expected to include around 140 businesses in England, with a burden of around £1,300.

18. We propose to make provision for other miscellaneous business surveys not yet identified to cover up to 240 businesses in each year, with a burden up to £2,000 in each year.

Simon Gillam
Head of Statistics
Survey Control Liaison Officer
Forestry Commission
Tel: 0131 314 6280
email: simon.gillam@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
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