

Forestry Commission

2009 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 2008-09, sets out the programme of surveys proposed for 2009-10, and presents outline plans for the following two years. Approval is now sought for the survey programme for 2009-10 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 2008-09, the total administrative burden cost was around £18,300, about 10% higher than the level planned (£16,700). The main reason for the difference was that a survey of woodland owners in three case study areas received higher response rates than expected.

5. Approval is now sought for the programme of surveys to start in 2009-10, with an estimated administrative burden cost in England of £25,700. Outline plans have an estimated administrative burden cost of £29,000 for 2010-11 and £16,500 for 2011-12. The largest new requirement is for a survey of woodland owners as part of the National Forest Inventory; the first cycle of the new inventory runs from 2009 to 2014.

Regular Surveys of Businesses

6. The Forestry Commission regularly carries out four voluntary postal 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, the small survey of forest nurseries provides information on the use of improved stock.

7. In 2008/09, a total of 191 businesses in England were approached, with an estimated burden of £2,500. It is planned that the four surveys will continue to run each year with little change, giving a total burden of around £2,600 in 2009-10 rising to £2,800 by 2011-12. In addition, it is 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, with around 210 businesses approached in England, implying a burden of £2,000 in 2009-10 rising to £2,100 by 2011-12.

Ad Hoc Surveys in 2008-09

8. A survey of woodland owners' attitudes to the provision of public benefits was carried out in three case study areas, delayed from 2007-08. This included face to face interviews with 10 owners in each area (not counted as statistical surveys), and 200 owners in each area approached with a self-completion questionnaire. The response rate was much higher than expected, at around 80%, giving a burden of around £7,200.

9. The Forestry Commission's Plant Health Service, in association with the Timber Packaging and Pallet Confederation (TIMCON) ran a GB-wide customer satisfaction survey of the UK Wood Packaging Material Marking Programme members. This approached around 660 businesses in England, but only achieved a 20% response rate, giving a lower than expected burden of £4,300.

10. 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, approaching around 100 owners, giving a burden of £2,300.

11. The survey of timber hauliers to estimate timber miles had planned to run throughout calendar year 2008, mostly in Scotland but with up to 24 approaches to English hauliers. However it was abandoned in April because of the poor response rate, giving a negligible burden in England in 08-09.

12. The survey plans last year had also included provision for other miscellaneous business surveys not yet identified. A GB-wide survey of woodfuel suppliers was run in early 2009; it approached around 210 business in England with a burden of £2,000.

Ad Hoc Surveys – Plans for 2009-10

13. The largest new requirement is for a survey of woodland owners as part of the National Forest Inventory; the first cycle of the new inventory runs from 2009 to 2014. When owners or their agents are approached to agree surveyors' access to the woodland, they will be asked to classify the owner type and provide two items of information about each stand visited. The start of the survey will focus on private sector conifer areas for Production Forecast 2011, so is expected to seek data for around 1,400 non-FC sample squares in England in 2009-10. The estimated burden is based on 1,400 approaches, giving an estimated burden of £12,600 for businesses and £1,000 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.

14. Two of the three surveys planned for 2008-09 in the various areas of the South West, to assess woodland owners' attitudes and capacity to produce woodfuel and other products, have been carried forward to 2009-10. In total for the two surveys, around 200 owners could be approached, giving a burden of around £3,900.

15. For the Plant Health Service, a GB-wide survey covering import/export customers is planned for 2009-10. In England it will approach around 140 businesses with a burden of around £1,200.

16. Around 200 woodfuel suppliers across GB are being invited to complete an online survey as part of a Woodfuel Suppliers Network Study, with an estimated burden of around £1,200 for England. The survey is to identify the benefits and services they feel would be most useful to their businesses and make recommendations as to how these can best be provided.

17. We propose to make provision for other miscellaneous business surveys not yet identified at a slightly lower level than in last year's plan's, to cover up to 160 businesses, with a burden up to £1,200.

Ad Hoc Surveys – Outline Plans

18. The largest requirement is for the survey of woodland owners as part of the National Forest Inventory, as described above for 2009-10, with the first cycle continuing to 2014. With more FC woodland included after the first year, the number of non-FC sample squares in England is expected to be around 930 in each year, giving estimated burdens of £8,600 and £8,900 for businesses and £800 each year for local authorities.

19. The outline plans for 2010-11 include a GB-wide Forest Business Health survey, to continue the monitoring at 3-year intervals. If the survey were to have the same sample size (around 1,350 in England) and response rate as in 2007, then the estimated burden in England would be £13,000. Requirements and possible approaches will be developed during 2009 and firmer plans presented next year.

20. We propose to make provision for other miscellaneous business surveys not yet identified at a lower level than in last year's plan's, to cover up to 240 businesses in each year, with a burden up to £1,900 in 2010-11 and up to £2,000 in 2011-12.

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