

PRIVATE SECTOR PRODUCTION FORECAST 2011 WORKING GROUP

2nd meeting at: Crewe Arms Hotel
24th June 2008

11.00 Albert Room

Roger Coppock	Colin Kennedy
Oliver Coombe	Mark Lawrence
Martin Craig	David Leslie
Chris Edwards	Andy Mason
Justin Gilbert	Simon Gillam
Gabriel Hemery	Jez Ralph

Minutes

Roger welcomed everyone to the second meeting and thanked them for travelling to be there.

1. Apologies

Robert Matthews

Steve Connolly is standing down from the group due to workloads. Jim Colchester of Buccleuch had also been invited but again had had to decline for similar reasons.

2. Notes of previous meeting

3. Actions arising

RM – action point on BSORT carried forward to future meeting

RC and SL to write note for ConFor - done - GH asked about the first paragraph. CK asked about the graph and text – the graph is GB but the text is speaking about Scotland. **Action:** RC will try and get the text resolved prior to publication by ConFor.

BD non-spatial data provision – RC said that a web page had been created and will be the location for any outputs from this group. – agenda item

Provision of data from group members to BD – agenda item

4. Timber quality forecasting

RC wanted to introduce the concept to the group.

JG made a presentation informing the group about the basis of timber quality assessment and how it can be incorporated into the forecasting system.

JR asked about the inclusion of the work on stiffness and durability within the forecast. JG replied that this would be dependent on the stage at which this work had reached. RC noted that form does not necessarily indicate stiffness. DL asked about the increasing 'wooliness' of the red/green definition. Stiffness might add a large burden to the forecasting program. BD plot network of general stiffness, specific measurements of stiffness using acoustic tools. JR will use this approach in Douglas fir and see whether stiffness and durability can be predicted. RC wanted to know whether we wanted to work on a pure modelling approach or to include actual data as well. Modelling diameter is important, as there would seem to be relationship between diameter and stem straightness. Previous treatment of the stands is important in future straightness. OC diameter class against stiffness pass rates – higher pass rate out of smaller logs. Straightness of grain and knot size are key to logs failing stress tests in the mills. RC said that we needed to be clear about what we wanted to be in the TQ prediction red/green might not be as useful outturn of

longer logs and pass this on to BD and RM. DL quality and value is strongly linked to availability of material. RC - strong need for the requirements of industry and the PS to be clearly communicated to the team developing TQ. RC proposed to invite Barry Gardiner from Forest Research to the next meeting to discuss the work he has undertaken with the Scottish forecast for the national forest estate.

5. Web-driven portal concept

GH gave an outline of how PS information portal might look and function over the web. It would gather information on forest owners, inventory and as an incentive could also be developed to act as a marketing tool. The target for this approach was probably not the larger management companies but those whom we might find harder to contact directly.

DL asked about the coverage of the project in relation to the softwood forecast – many owners might have only small broadleaved holdings. These owners may be of future use in looking at the hardwood forecast although not directly useful now it was useful if all might be captured.

CE stressed the need to communicate the message relating to the production of fibre and raw material without too much emphasis on conifers, which tend to have a negative affect on policy makers. OC mentioned the problem of defocus on commercial forestry in England.

What data is available from government agencies e.g. AJAX, single farm payments (JG – how much access can we get to this information?)

SG said he had done work that estimated that there were 106,000 woodland owners in GB, half of these being farmers. ML asked about data protection for the site re owner data. In reply GH said that it would be a PS initiative and so could be set up as an independent organisation. OC/CK asked about the likelihood of the PS engaging with the site – benefit to ‘client’ is important. Appropriate approaches for different types of owners would be important. AM said that woodland owners were known to the FC woodland officers but data protection might prevent the use of this information? MC asked about the use of this information in the forecast. It could be used but it might be 2016 rather than 2011 before it was really fully ready. SG said that certification of woodland might enable creation of draft layer from the information on the certificate. BD spoke of the potential of having an ownership layer; something of the sort that GH was proposing is already in operation in Sweden. The need for one standard, one quality of information to be collected; other qualities of data could be received but would need to be flagged and used appropriately.

6. South West forecast

JR laid the context of woodland in the South-West with small-scale processors. There is a need for locally sourced construction timber but currently there is no local structural timber. Quality and Stand assortment were critical and would be investigated. To this end, a contract had been awarded to Forest Research to carry out this work, which would be developed to harmonise with the National Inventory and PF2011: samples are to be distinct from the NIWT/PSF plots. Initially conifer woodland greater than 5ha, collect and validate accessible data, adding plots and scale for areas where data is lacking. An inventory would be produced for summer 2008, a forecast within the financial year which would then be linked to the 2011 forecast.

Other initiatives were also being undertaken:

DF timber properties being related to site and silvicultural practice

Processing investment to aid development of local structural timber

Brokerage – timber from growers to users

Funding to support use of timber over other materials by financing additional cost of timber to develop supply of structural timber.

OC asked if 'local' meant 'regional'. For regionally funded projects then this was true but timber from other GB sources was better than material from Canada or Russia, timber miles are important (Brittany is closer than Scotland). The protocols developed by this group may lead to a National data standard, perhaps to replicate the South-West project in other areas.

7. Applying statistics to the forecast

SG gave a report on the meeting, 20th June 2008, of the Production Forecast Statistical Methodology Group, regarding the sampling for the National Inventory and the mensuration protocol and the potential for integration of other data into the forecasting system.

8. Data collection format

BD came up with questionnaire – draft circulated – of information needed for the forecast. Outline list of questions. Asking for feedback on the draft. Potential for conflict over confidentiality when we are looking at more local level than the national forecast. Stressed importance of gaining as much accurate planting year data as possible. Keeping track of felling would also be very useful as well as management intentions - when is an area to be felled. Extractability relationship to economic market for timber – costs v. value of material. CE said that volume might not be offered on the open market. BD might be possible to use DTM to do a broad analysis of the impact of extractability on the forecast. Users of availability forecast must make their own judgements of likelihood of volume actually becoming available. RC asked the PS members of the group about the possibility of them supplying this data. SG - Local data is not just for local forecast but it enables linkage of the sample data to operational data and it supports much better forecasting at the regional level. Different levels of provision linked to what we might report about the area. Different levels of data possessed depending on the type of owner. DL suggested some tiers of information. MC - YC data is old information – NIWT might get new information – share with owner? The range of data that might be held by the PS began to be explained by the PS members. Backstop is the NIWT information. SG will quantify the quality of PS data – range of uncertainty – balance through statistical process between PS and NIWT sample data. Felt that species, area and p-year might not be bad but YC just isn't done / used. Access is still an issue of debate – might be modifiable in England with market change but in Scotland physical factors are less subject to change. OC – very complicated issue to build in. Species correlation with the NIWT map might be a third of the uncertainty – could save on samples. Is there data - mensurational fact, professional estimate, other (guesswork). **Action:** BD will restructure the form before sending out and perhaps pre-test within the FC.

ML asked who could provide boundary data for their land holdings/species and planting so we could facilitate the pilot and other survey work. BD asked about scale and confidentiality as being an issue – may not be a problem. Felling licence and return to say that the area has actually been cut as a possibility. This might be tied to grant aid provision i.e. through regulation. It was suggested that the FSC process through the mills enabled the determination of what had been felled but OC said that this was OK in terms of tonnage but could not be tracked in terms of hectares felled or restocking. PS were supportive of this data gathering, OC said that it was in the sectors own interest to improve the forecast in this respect. Completion date related to felling licence by site.

Action: BD to write a note and circulate the draft around the group.

9. Data availability update

This was dealt with under the previous item.

10. AOCB

11. Location and time of next meetings

Silvan House, Wednesday, 3rd September 2008
Crewe, Tuesday 25th November 2008

12. Close -15:03

Roger thanked everyone for their contributions to a very successful meeting.