

Statement Of Compliance

with the National Statistics Code of Practice and Protocols

The Forestry Commission is responsible for collecting, compiling, processing, analysing, interpreting, and disseminating a wide range of statistics which cover woodland, forestry and primary wood processing.

Some of our statistics are designated as 'National Statistics' which means that they are produced in accordance with the arrangements set out in the Framework for National Statistics and in line with the principles set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice and its 12 supporting Protocols.

Links to Framework, Code and Protocols:

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/national_statistics/downloads/FrameDoc1.pdf

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/national_statistics/cop/downloads/StatementRD.pdf

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/national_statistics/cop/protocols_published.asp

On occasion we may also produce and publish 'Experimental Statistics' under the arrangements set out in the Protocol on Data Presentation, Dissemination, and Pricing. Our expectation and plan is that these statistics will also, and eventually, be labelled as 'National Statistics'.

Other statistical outputs are not designated as 'National Statistics', but some may be considered for inclusion at a future date.

A catalogue of all our data products, identifying those which have been designated as 'National Statistics', can be found at the following address.

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/ns_ons/nsproducts/default.asp

As well as complying with the Code of Practice and its supporting Protocols, all of our National Statistics are also produced and published in accordance with the following statements and policies, each of which forms an integral part of this Compliance Statement:

- Data Management Policy
- Publication Strategy
- Statement on Release Practices
- Statement on Revisions and Errors
- Statement on Confidentiality and Access
- Statement on Customer Service and Complaints

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Updating procedure

The Forestry Commission undertakes to ensure that this statement and complementary information on the Forestry Commission website and National Statistics Online are regularly updated.

Contacts

Forestry Commission Head of Profession for Statistics:

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Economics and Statistics

Forestry Commission

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Data Management Policy

Introduction

Our Data Management Policy is published in accordance with the requirements set out in the Protocol on Data Management, Documentation and Preservation. It applies to all our National Statistics, whether obtained from administrative or statistical sources, and howsoever published. The policy also applies to any associated metadata or documentation.

Policy Implementation

Data Managers

Responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this Data Management policy and for the stewardship of each of our organisation's data holdings is vested in trained, identifiable and accountable Data Managers who work under the overall direction of the organisation's Head of Profession.

Their responsibilities are to ensure that the Forestry Commission manages its data resources in accordance with the best practice principles and standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice and its supporting Protocols; with the Statements and Policies which form part of this Compliance Statement; and in accordance with the Forestry Commission's statutory obligations. Our Data Managers are also responsible for: -

- compiling and maintaining metadata to cover the whole life-cycle of each of the statistical resources they manage, using the standard metadata reporting system currently used by the Government Statistical Service (GSS) – the contents of which can be accessed via the National Statistics website – and adopting any new GSS system once developed;
- guarding the integrity and security of their data holdings in accordance with the organisation's overall policies on security and business continuity;
- archiving their resources in line with the organisation's overall policy on data retention, preservation, and destruction.

Data Managers' duties will evolve to match the development of each of the systems and policies described above.

Exceptions

None.

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Publication Strategy

Our Publication Strategy is issued in accordance with the requirements set out in the National Statistics Protocol on Data Presentation, Dissemination and Pricing. Its aim is to make our National Statistics accessible to the widest possible community and to maximise the use of our statistical information in all walks of life – subject to the need to comply with legal, ethical and confidentiality constraints. It is based on the following key principles:

Knowing our users – the content of our resources and products, and the supporting information we provide, will be informed by an understanding of our customers' needs - obtained through a combination of market research, analysis of demand, networking and consultation.

Informing our users – we will help users to understand and make the best possible use of our products by publishing supporting, background, or educational information and material, and by encouraging users to contact us.

A common identity – we will make it easier to identify which of our products have been branded as 'National Statistics' by using a common logo and by following standard practices and procedures.

Web focus – In order to promote widespread access and informed public debate, we will use the Web as our main channel for the dissemination of statistics. This means that our products may appear on the Forestry Commission website, linked from the National Statistics website, before they become available in print and that some may be published on the web only. We will continue to provide products in other formats in line with our statutory obligations, and where there is sufficient demand.

Charging – All the information we publish on-line will be free at the point of use. Any charges we impose will conform to the rules and procedures set out in the Protocol.

Accessibility – We will make it easy for users to find and understand our published data by using adequate signposting and standard documentation procedures.

Exceptions

None.

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Release Practices

Background

The Release Practices Protocol requires each Department/Administration to publish and maintain a statement describing how it applies the standards set out in the Protocol to each of its releases.

This statement sets out the position in the Forestry Commission, including its Agencies Forest Enterprise and Forest Research.

Application of protocol to National Statistics produced by the Forestry Commission

The following outputs are Forestry Commission National Statistics releases:

Publications

- Forestry Facts and Figures
- Forestry Statistics

First Releases

- Timber Price Indices (twice-yearly)
- UK Wood Production and Trade (provisional figures)
- Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

The National Statistics publication United Kingdom Timber Statistics, previously British Timber Statistics, was discontinued after 2006; the contents were moved to the publications UK Wood Production & Trade (provisional figures) and Forestry Statistics.

Unless otherwise indicated below the Release Practices Protocol will apply in full to all Forestry Commission National Statistics releases.

Accessibility: Number and types of releases

In the current year the Forestry Commission expects to produce the 5 National Statistics releases listed above, most of which are annual publications. None of the Department's statistical outputs are regarded as market sensitive.

All of the Forestry Commission's National Statistics outputs are freely available on the Internet for download. The publication Forestry Facts & Figures is also released as hard copy, available free of charge. The Forestry Commission aims to make hard copy versions available at the same time as Internet versions are released.

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Pre-announcement

Release dates for all the Forestry Commission's statistical outputs are pre-announced in National Statistics Updates and on the Forestry Commission's own website (www.forestry.gov.uk/statistics). Dates are provided for the year ahead and are updated monthly.

If necessary, approximate dates will be provided initially. Release dates will be finalised at least two weeks before publication.

Timing of Releases

The timing of releases is determined by the Head of Profession (in consultation with the National Statistician as necessary). Each publication is announced by means of a Statistical News Release from the Forestry Commission, issued during a normal working day, usually at 9:30 a.m.

Format of releases

The Head of Profession has final responsibility for the content and format of all statistical outputs (in consultation with the National Statistician as necessary).

Publications will normally be in the form of a booklet or web-based publication, giving a number of tables, charts and commentary. First Releases are shorter publications, to give statistics for a more limited topic or to give access to statistics available before the main publications.

Each release is accompanied by a Statistical News Release – a short summary of the key results, intended primarily to assist the media in reporting on the results.

First Releases and Statistical News Releases are prepared to a standard format. Any statement by Ministers or Commissioners is issued separately from and not before the statistical release.

Releases will retain a core of standard tabulations, but content may vary to reflect the needs of users and to allow proper presentation and analysis of any new or particularly interesting results.

Pre-release access to statistics

The Forestry Commission maintains a record, available for public scrutiny, of all those who have pre-release access and the purpose of that access. Any such access is in line with the protocol. This includes those with access for management, briefing, and/or quality assurance purposes.

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Availability of detailed results

Detailed results are available on request, subject to restrictions of confidentiality.

Details for individual releases

Details of arrangements for individual releases are published on the Forestry Commission website (www.forestry.gov.uk/statistics). A hyperlink is provided in the electronic version of each output and is quoted in each hard copy version.

Minimum Standards Applied To Statistics That Are Not National Statistics

The Forestry Commission also produces a range of statistics that are not currently classified as National Statistics because they have not been subject to National Statistics quality assurance standards.

These include the following statistical outputs produced under the professional management of the Head of Profession:

- Forest Employment Survey (suspended since 1999)
- Forest Visitor Survey (annual summary)
- Forest visitor surveys (individual survey reports)
- Global Forest Resources Assessment UK report (5-yearly)
- Integrated Environmental & Economic Accounting for Forests UK data
- Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire UK data (provisional and final)
- Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (biennial)
- MCPFE indicators for sustainable forest management UK data (4/5-yearly)
- Nursery Survey
- Public Opinion of Forestry survey (biennial, multiple reports)
- UNECE Timber Committee questionnaire
- UK Indicators of Sustainable Forestry

Statistical outputs produced by others in the Forestry Commission include:

- National Inventory of Woodland and Trees
- Softwood Availability Forecasts
- English, Scottish and Welsh Forestry Strategy indicators
- Forest Enterprise management information and performance indicators

It is inevitable that those who have access to management information may become aware of the likely results or directions of statistical analyses well before these are finalised or published as official statistics.

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The Forestry Commission has practices in place for the release of non National Statistics publications that will not undermine confidence in official statistics. As a minimum it will:

- (a) provide publicly accessible information about all its statistics
- (b) produce plans for how and when information from each source is made available
- (c) put in place arrangements for controlling access prior to public release
- (d) put in place arrangements for release.

As far as possible the arrangements for statistical publications that are not National Statistics will comply with the practices adopted for the Forestry Commission's National Statistics publications. However, there may be other considerations that influence the arrangements for a particular publication/ release. In these circumstances arrangements will be agreed with the Forestry Commission Head of Profession for Statistics.

In applying the above principles the Forestry Commission will implement the following:

- (a) The statistical collections and administrative data sources will be described on the Forestry Commission's website, its Information Asset Register, and National Statistics Online.
- (b) After they have been collected and validated, statistics compiled from these sources can be used in publications and/ or released in response to Parliamentary Questions and Open Government requests subject to cost, quality and confidentiality restrictions.
- (c) All draft statistical publications produced by the Government Statistical Service will use a security marking "Restricted – Statistics" prior to release. On the covering page there will also be a statement of the purposes for which the information is shared. A list of those to whom the document is sent will be retained by the author.
- (d) Statistical publications produced by the Government Statistical Service will identify the individual accountable for the content and release arrangements.
- (e) A record of these arrangements will be provided to the Forestry Commission Head of Profession for Statistics.

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Revisions and Errors

Revisions

This Statement is issued in accordance with the requirements set out in the Protocol on Revisions and sets out our intention to be open and transparent about any revisions we make to National Statistics and to ensure that users of our statistics have easy access to comprehensive information about those revisions:

We will achieve this aim by:

- maintaining an area on the Forestry Commission website (www.forestry.gov.uk/statistics) which provides access to current and historical information on any revisions, corrections or changes to any of our National Statistics, and the reasons for their occurrence ;
- including explanations for, and background details about, revisions, corrections or methodological changes within any of the publications that incorporate them.

Exceptions

No Forestry Commission outputs are classified as key National Statistics.

Errors

Many of the revisions we make are a normal, unremarkable and inevitable feature of statistical life and users are able to absorb and plan for those revisions accordingly. However, some revisions are 'avoidable' in the sense that they are the consequence of errors or weaknesses in procedures or systems, rather than of design. In the latter case, and regardless of whether the responsibility is ours or others, we will follow the procedures described below:

Announcement of impending corrections

We will be open and transparent about the need for any unscheduled corrections and, in normal circumstances, and once we ascertain the need for a correction, and become aware of its likely size and direction, we will inform all users about our intention to issue corrections, and by when.

Dissemination of corrections

Decisions relating to the dissemination of unscheduled corrections will be made by the Head of Profession in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time but in general terms:

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If a correction is minor and insignificant, we may decide not to make a correction to the publication, but make the amendment to the next edition.

Web versions of releases/publications/tables/articles/etc

As soon as possible after we ascertain that a correction is necessary and warranted, we will amend all current electronic versions of any release, publication, table, article etc which contains the affected statistics or text, and re-populate the website as soon as possible with those amended versions. If the correction is minor and insignificant in the sense of being inconsequential and hardly noticeable, we will insert the necessary changes without alerting anyone. Otherwise, these electronic versions will include a note alerting readers to the fact that certain (albeit insubstantial) corrections have been incorporated and the reason why. If the error is substantial and significant, we will, in addition, issue a prominent alert on the website to notify users about the correction and the reason for its occurrence.

Paper versions of releases/publications/tables

Unless there are compelling reasons, we will not attempt to recall/re-issue any paper versions of any release, publication or table etc that contains the affected statistics or text if it has already been distributed. When we issue further paper copies, they will include a notification of any corrections that have been incorporated in the electronic versions.

However, if the error is substantial and significant, we will, where practicable, notify the recipients of paper versions by telephone or e-mail, and point them to the revised version available on the web. If the release or publication has a long shelf-life, we will consider re-issuing a revised paper version.

Exceptions

We will not announce impending corrections of minor or insignificant errors.

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Confidentiality and Access

This Statement is issued in conformance with the requirements set out in the Protocol on Data Access and Confidentiality. It sets out the arrangements we have put in place to:

- protect the security of our data holdings and uphold our guarantee that no statistics will be produced that are likely to identify an individual unless specifically agreed with them; while at the same time
- obtain maximum value from these micro-data, once obtained, by extending access to bona-fide and authorised third parties.

Arrangements for maintaining the confidentiality of statistical data

It is Forestry Commission information security policy that all our key systems are compliant with appropriate standards. This includes BS7799.

Physical security

All staff working in the Forestry Commission and all visitors to its sites require a pass to access the premises. There is no unsupervised public access to any part of the organisation where confidential statistical data may be held.

Technical security

We maintain a Government Secure Intranet (GSI) network. No sensitive statistical data are held on laptops or any other portable devices or kept on unprotected portable storage media. All transmission of micro-data is conducted within the GSI network or on encrypted e-mail or password protected CDs.

Organisational security

We use a combination of survey project managers, data custodians, and data management teams to protect and maintain our data.

Disclosure Security

The Forestry Commission complies with the provisions of the Data Protection Act. We use a combination of data manipulation and/or statistical disclosure techniques to meet the confidentiality guarantee. These are reviewed every five years for adequacy.

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Arrangements for providing controlled access to micro-data

We may provide micro-data to bona fide researchers in the academic sector and to consultants undertaking research commissioned by government. Data may be released under arrangements described in a Service Level Agreement, a Concordat, contracts, and confidentiality declarations. In every case, release must be approved by the Head of Profession (HoP). The HoP's approval gives the business area the authority to release the data. The HoP also maintains the definitive documentation of all access to data held by the organisation.

Recording the details of access authorisations

Full details of all authorised access to the organisation's micro-data are available on request from the HoP. General information about every release is available on the Forestry Commission website (www.forestry.gov.uk/statistics). The detailed information is updated with every authorisation.

Auditing of beneficiaries of access

All beneficiaries of access are required to agree to audits of organisational, technical and physical security. The standards must be those to which the beneficiary agreed in the data access agreement.

Exceptions

None.

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Customer Service

This Statement is issued in accordance with the requirements set out in the Protocol on Customer Service and User Consultation. It describes our intention to provide a high level of service to all our customers. More specifically we aim to meet the following standards of customer service:

Service to Data Suppliers

We will endeavour to operate efficiently by placing the minimum load necessary on data providers and by integrating our statistical work across government. We will take good care of all the information provided to us and we will respect the confidentiality of all identifying information in accordance with the accompanying Statement on Confidentiality.

Service to Users

We will maintain the relevance of all our statistical activities so that they meet the needs of all our users, and where possible, make sure that the information we provide is equally accessible to the whole community.

We welcome constructive comments on everything we do because that will help us to improve our service.

Service Standards

If you get in touch with us, you can expect us to be polite, approachable and helpful, and to readily identify ourselves. We will make every reasonable effort to ensure that you are provided with information that is timely, relevant and accurate, and we will endeavour to meet the following targets.

- We will endeavour to respond to customer correspondence, whether in paper or electronic form, within 5 working days commencing from the date when we receive your correspondence.
- Our response will either be an answer to the issue you have raised, or a notification that the correspondence is being dealt with, but noting that the reply may take longer than the initial 5 day period.
- Our holding reply will either contain a date by which we intend to provide a full response, or a date by when we will contact you with a progress update.
- We will return customers' calls within 1 business day.

Sometimes, our service delivery standards will be affected by circumstances beyond our control and occasionally we make mistakes. When this happens we will apologise and do everything we can to put things right. If you have a concern about the quality of our service, or the treatment you have received from us and you cannot resolve the problem with the person you have been dealing with, you can make a formal complaint.

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If you do decide to make a formal complaint, then please follow our Complaints Procedure, details of which are attached.

Exceptions

This Customer Service Statement will be subject to change when it is subsumed within an overarching FC Customer Service Statement, which is currently being developed.

Statement of Compliance

Complaints

This guide tells you how to make a formal complaint about our administration or service and what you can do if you are unhappy with our response.

Our commitment

We aim to deliver a high quality service but we recognise that sometimes things can go wrong. When this happens, we will do our best to put matters right quickly.

We will listen to your complaint and

- treat it seriously, and in confidence;
- investigate it thoroughly and fairly;
- resolve it promptly, and informally whenever possible ;
- wherever possible find a remedy and ;
- learn from complaints to improve our services.

What to do if you have a formal complaint

You can complain in writing, by fax, by e-mail, by telephone or in person (by appointment please). Please provide as much relevant information as possible so that we can deal with your case promptly.

If you know the name or title of the appropriate member of staff, please make your complaint direct to them (referring to this complaints procedure would be helpful).

If you do not have this information, please telephone our statistics enquiry point on 0131 314 6171 who will put you in touch with the most appropriate person.

If direct contact is not possible, or if having done this you remain dissatisfied, you should write to our statistical complaints officer:

Sheila Ward
Economics and Statistics
Forestry Commission
231 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh
EH12 7AT

E-mail: sheila.ward@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 0131 314 6475

Fax: 0131 316 4344

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If you complain in person or over the telephone, we will try to resolve the complaint on the spot. Similarly, if you complain in writing, by fax or by e-mail, we will try to respond promptly, and in any case within 5 working days. If this is not possible, we will explain why and give a new deadline.

Not satisfied?

If you are not satisfied with the initial response you receive, or the way in which your complaint has been handled, you can ask for your complaint to be referred to the Head of Profession for Statistics, who will try to resolve it.

If following your second response, you are still not satisfied, you can ask for your complaint to be referred to the Head of Corporate & Forestry Support.

As a final resort if you are still not satisfied, you can ask a Member of Parliament to request that the Independent Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (the Ombudsman), investigate your complaint and how it has been handled. The Ombudsman will only investigate after any internal review has been completed. If the Ombudsman is satisfied that your complaint has been dealt with fairly, he will close your case.

Exceptions

This Complaints Procedure will be subject to change when it is subsumed within an overarching FC Complaints Procedure, which is currently being developed.