

## **FORESTRY COMMISSION 2008 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 2007-08, sets out the programme of surveys proposed for 2008-09, and presents outline plans for the following two years. Approval is now sought for the survey programme for 2008-09 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 2007-08, the total administrative burden cost was around £14,200. This outturn was similar to the average of the three previous years, It was much lower than the level that had been planned, because several ad hoc surveys did not go ahead.

5. Approval is now sought for the programme of surveys to start in 2008-09, with an estimated administrative burden cost in England of £16,700. Outline plans have an estimated administrative burden cost of £7,300 for 2009-10 and £6,400 for 2010-11.

### **INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE CO-ORDINATION AND REDUCE BURDEN**

6. During the review of the Forestry Commission's survey plans in 2007, it was agreed that we would aim to improve co-ordination between ad hoc and regular surveys, and aim to reduce the extent to which businesses (particularly small businesses) receive more than one Forestry Commission survey. In 2007-08, this was implemented for an ad hoc survey in Scotland. However, in the GB-wide survey of Forest Business Health, in order to ensure adequate coverage of businesses using home-grown timber, it was necessary for the sample to include larger

businesses that are also covered by our regular surveys.

7. None of the ad hoc surveys in the 2008-09 plans or outline plans for the following years will involve approaches to businesses in England covered by the regular surveys. At present, the outline plans do not include any repeat of the Forest Business Health survey.

## **REGULAR SURVEYS OF BUSINESSES**

8. The Forestry Commission regularly carries out three voluntary postal surveys of businesses in Great Britain to gather information on sawmills, round fencing and private sector removals. Results from these 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 statistical outputs became part of National Statistics from August 2001 and were included in a National Statistics Quality Review of forestry statistics, which was published in December 2002. The surveys are reviewed each year with the Expert Group on Timber and Trade Statistics.

9. In 2007/08, a total of 196 businesses in England were approached, with an estimated burden of £2,100. It is planned that the three surveys will continue to run each year with little change. In addition, it is proposed that a small survey of forest nurseries first carried out in 2007 should become annual, with a burden of around £200 a year. In total, the future burden for these regular surveys will be around £2,400 each year.

## **AD HOC SURVEYS IN 2007-08**

10. In 2007-8, a GB-wide survey of forest business health, following similar surveys in 2004 and 2000, was carried out to monitor trends in turnover, profitability and employment in forest sector businesses. It went to 1352 businesses in England, with a burden of around £11,700. This was lower than in the plans (based on the 2004 survey), because the sampling scheme changed the balance between countries, and because the response rate was lower than expected.

11. Two planned ad hoc surveys in England did not go ahead - woodland owners' attitudes to producing woodfuel from their woodlands and a survey of views about the Regional Forestry Framework in SW England. After piloting, the planned survey of the practical and economic availability of timber from private sector woodlands in the North East region proceeded as a smaller scale field survey, without collecting data from owners. The planned survey of woodland owners' attitudes to the provision of public benefits in 3 case study areas was delayed to start in spring 2008 (see below). Provision had been made for other miscellaneous business surveys in England in 2007-08 to cover up to 200 businesses, but no other surveys were brought forward.

12. Three GB-wide surveys had been planned in response to objectives in the Scottish forestry strategy. As planned, a survey to assess sales of genetically improved stock from forest nurseries went to 17 nurseries in England, with a burden of around £200, and will now become annual (see above). A 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. So far the response rate has been very poor so the future of the survey is in doubt; the burden in England for the first quarter is less than £100. After a scoping study it was decided not to proceed with a planned survey to assess the construction timber market.

### **AD HOC SURVEYS – PLANS FOR 2008-09**

13. The plans for 2008-09 include three surveys in the various areas of the South West, to assess woodland owners’ attitudes and capacity to produce woodfuel and other products. In total, around 300 owners could be approached, giving a burden of around £2,800.

14. A survey of woodland owners’ attitudes to the provision of public benefits is planned in three case study areas, delayed from 2007-08. This will include face to face interviews with 10 owners in each area (not counted as statistical surveys), and up to 200 owners in each area approached with a self-completion questionnaire, giving a burden of around £4,400.

15. A GB-wide customer satisfaction survey of the Plant Health Service’s wood packaging material customers is planned to include around 660 businesses in England with burden around £5,500. The plans also include the remaining three-quarters of the “timber miles” survey for calendar year 2008, with burden of around £200.

16. As in last year’s plans, we propose to make provision for other miscellaneous business surveys in England in 2008-09 to cover up to 200 businesses, with a burden up to £1,500.

### **AD HOC SURVEYS – OUTLINE PLANS**

17. The outline plans for 2009-10 include a Plant Health Service customer survey, to approach around 140 business in England, with a burden of around £1,200. In addition, we propose to make provision for other miscellaneous business surveys in England to cover up to 500 businesses in each year, with a burden up to £3,800 in 2009-10 and up to £3,900 in 2010-11.

### **SURVEYS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

18. No surveys of local authorities were carried out in 2007-08, and none are planned for 2008-09, 2009-10 or 2010-11.

Simon Gillam  
Head of Statistics  
Survey Control Liaison Officer  
Forestry Commission  
Tel: 0131 314 6280  
Email: [simon.gillam@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:simon.gillam@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)  
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