

Forestry Commission

Forestry Statistics 2006

Sources & definitions

Scope

This publication covers a wide range of forestry aspects in the United Kingdom, drawing on statistics produced by the Forestry Commission (FC) for England, Scotland and Wales, statistics from the Northern Ireland Forest Service (FS) and other sources. Information on FC and FS woodland is available from the management of their estates; information on non-FC/FS woodland comes from administration of grants and licences, and is supplemented by various FC-run surveys of the forestry and primary wood processing industries.

Woodland

The definition of woodland in United Kingdom forestry statistics is land under stands of trees with a canopy cover of at least 20% (or having the potential to achieve this), including integral open space, and including felled areas that are awaiting restocking. There is no minimum height for trees to form a woodland at maturity, so the definition includes woodland scrub but not areas of gorse, Rhododendron, etc., outside woodland. This is a different definition from that used internationally which is based on 10% canopy cover and a minimum height at maturity of 5m, but the two definitions are estimated to give similar areas of woodland in the UK.

There is no minimum size for a woodland. In this report, 'woodland' (defined in the glossary) refers to woods and forests of all sizes. The 1995-99 National Inventory of Woodland and Trees mapped all areas down to 2.0 ha, but sample-based information was also collected for smaller woods, small groups of trees and individual trees. The area statistics in Chapter 1 show totals for woods over 0.1 hectares.

Woodland includes native and non-native trees; semi-natural and plantation areas. Woodland habitat types are not currently differentiated in these statistics.

Most public sector woodland is owned or managed by the Forestry Commission (FC) or, in Northern Ireland, the Forest Service (FS). Woodland owned by local authorities, the Ministry of Defence, and other public sector bodies is included in 'non-FC/FS woodland'.

Integral open space is defined differently in the data sources used in this publication for woodland owned or managed by Forestry Commission (FC) and woodland owned by others (Tables 1.1 and 1.3). FC data now come from a GIS where mappable open space is excluded from the total. Non-FC woodland (from the National Inventory of Woodland and Trees, NIWT) includes open areas less than 1 hectare as integral open space.

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Forestry Activity

Statistics for economic aspects of forestry and primary wood processing relate to the forestry-based activities involved. So in a business with several different activities (say forestry, construction and property management), it is only the forestry part of the business which contributes to the figures. Support for forestry activities (such as office workers) is however included. The sampling frame of businesses involved in forestry and primary wood processing is mostly obtained from lists of members of trade associations. Measures are taken to avoid double counting where businesses are members of more than one organisation, but there may be a small level of undercounting for businesses which are not members of any organisation.

Business statistics in the United Kingdom are generally produced using a different classification system, where the whole of a business is classified according to its largest activity. This means that most estimates in this publication are not directly comparable with results from the Annual Business Inquiry carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which is used in this publication to provide supplementary estimates of employment and gross value added.

Quality of Estimates

There are several components of quality, and it is difficult and expensive to measure many of them regularly. Some indications of the quality of the estimates in this publication are given under the headings below.

Business Surveys

Frame

The frame for the business surveys here includes businesses and individuals that belong to one or more of the following associations; Forestry Contracting Association (FCA), United Kingdom Forest Products Association (UKFPA) or Forestry and Timber Association (FTA). The frame population size is reduced to account for businesses that are members of more than one association. Some businesses are identified from other sources such as FC Forest Districts. There are probably some businesses involved in forestry which are not members of any of these associations or otherwise identified, and these will not contribute to statistics.

Non-response

Some businesses do not respond to surveys, so some compensation for their non-response is needed in compiling the statistics. If there are differences between the characteristics of businesses that respond and businesses that do not, this can lead to a bias in the results. This bias is minimised by stratifying into groups (for example by size) that might be expected to have similar characteristics, but there have been no studies to estimate the bias in the context of these surveys.

Sampling error

Sampling errors arise from taking a sample rather than surveying all the businesses. Many of the figures here are from censuses where all businesses are sampled, and in these cases the sampling error is zero.

Visitor Surveys

Frame

There is no frame for visitor surveys (that is, there is no list of visitors from which to select a sample). Most on-site visitor surveys aim to select a representative set of sample periods, and interview the next group to pass after completing an interview. Some of the information about visitors comes from household surveys (for example the Day Visits Survey) that use recognised sampling frames.
