

Survey Review: Survey of UK Pellet & Briquette Production

Introduction

Summary reviews are undertaken each year for our regular surveys. These consist of:

- Establishing the continuing need for the survey;
- Reviewing the questionnaire to be used; and
- Updating the distribution list of businesses to be approached.

A programme of full reviews of annual surveys has been introduced from 2012, with each survey to be reviewed every 5 years. These are more detailed than the summary reviews. In 2014, the survey of UK pellet & briquette production (pellet survey) has been reviewed, and the findings are summarised here.

There is a parallel process for methodology and outputs reviews.

Wood pellets are sawdust or wood shavings compressed into uniform diameter pellets. They are often burned for heat or energy, but may also be used for other purposes (such as horse bedding or cat litter). Briquettes are similar to pellets but larger and are used for heating.

The pellet survey is one of a series of annual surveys and data requests used to produce statistics on the UK timber industry. The survey is run by the Forestry Commission (in association with the Forest Service in Northern Ireland) to collect data from wood pellet and briquette manufacturers in the UK, in order to monitor trends in wood use and renewable energy. The data is also used by international organisations.

More information on the survey, including a quality report, is available at www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-94ukb2.

Methodology

The review was conducted using the Quality, Methods and Harmonisation Tool (QMHT), a self-assessment questionnaire developed by the Office for National Statistics and the Government Statistical Service:

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/quality/harmonisation/index.html

The questionnaire covers the entire surveying process and helps identify potential issues and suggest improvements. The following areas were examined in this review:

- Establishing user requirements (QMHT Section 3)
- Design of survey data collection (QMHT Section 6)
- Editing and imputation (QMHT Section 8)
- Confidentiality (QMHT Section 14)
- Triennial and quinquennial reviews (QMHT Section 19)

Other areas (that are also relevant to this review) are covered in the 2012 methodology review for UK wood production, available at www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/ahen-589ddl :

- Regular analysis in the production of statistical outputs (QMHT Section 10)
- Regular or repeated statistics (time series) (QMHT Section 12)
- Confidentiality (QMHT Section 14)
- Dissemination (QMHT Section 15)

The Expert Group on Timber and Trade Statistics (EGTTS) was consulted as part of the review process. More information on the EGTTS can be found at:

www.forestry.gov.uk/website/forestry.nsf/byunique/infid-5rabj3 .

The review also considered feedback from the 2013 User Engagement Survey (www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infid-7zejnv), which did not suggest making changes to the pellet survey.

Conclusions

The review concluded that the survey continues to be required and is fit for purpose.

No major issues were identified, but the following improvements were suggested:

Survey data collection design (QMHT Section 6)

1. Documentation on the justification for every question asked in the survey questionnaire should be published, to provide data providers and users with an understanding of why the information is required and how it will be used.
2. Documentation on the methods and processes involved in data collection should be published, to help data users assess the quality and limitations of the statistics.
3. The feasibility of publishing additional results from the survey should be investigated, subject to disclosure constraints, to better meet data users' requirements.

Editing and imputation (QMHT Section 8)

4. Documentation on the editing and imputation performed on the survey data should be published, to help data users assess the quality and limitations of the statistics.

Action plan

We plan to address these areas for action as follows:

Point 1 will be addressed by February 2015.

Points 2, 3 and 4 will be addressed by September 2015.

Sheila Ward / Jeremy Darot
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February 2015