

Forestry Statistics 2021

Chapter 3: Trade

Release date:

30 September 2021

Coverage:

United Kingdom

Geographical breakdown:

None

Issued by: Forest Research, Silvan House,
231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh, EH12 7AT

Enquiries: Robert Stagg, 0300 067 5238
statistics@forestresearch.gov.uk

Statistician: Sheila Ward, 0300 067 5236

Website: www.forestresearch.gov.uk/statistics/



The Research Agency of the
Forestry Commission

Forest Research is the Research Agency of the Forestry Commission and is the leading UK organisation engaged in forestry and tree related research.

The Agency aims to support and enhance forestry and its role in sustainable development by providing innovative, high quality scientific research, technical support and consultancy services.

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Key findings.....	5
3.1 Apparent consumption of wood in the UK.....	6
3.2 Apparent consumption of wood products in the UK.....	9
3.3 Flow of recovered paper	11
3.4 UK import quantities by product	12
3.5 UK export quantities by product.....	14
3.6 UK import values by product	16
3.7 UK export values by product	18
3.8 Origin of wood imports	20

Introduction

This chapter contains information about UK imports and exports of wood products, and about the level of apparent consumption estimated from data for UK production, imports and exports.

Information on imports and exports mainly comes from the Overseas Trade Statistics compiled by HM Revenue & Customs. Estimates are provided at a UK level only. International comparisons of apparent consumption are provided in the International Forestry chapter. Further information on the data sources and methodology used to compile the figures is provided in the Sources chapter.

Figures for 2020 were previously published in "UK Wood Production and Trade: 2020 Provisional Figures", released on 13 May 2021. Some figures for 2020 and earlier years have been revised from those previously published. For further details on revisions, see the Trade section of the Sources chapter.

A copy of all trade tables can be accessed in spreadsheet format from the Data Downloads web page at www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/data-downloads/.

Key findings

The main findings are:

UK imports:

- 7.2 million cubic metres of sawnwood in 2020, a 3% increase from 2019;
- 3.3 million cubic metres of wood-based panels in 2020, a 10% decrease from 2019;
- 9.1 million tonnes of wood pellets in 2020, an increase of 2% from 2019;
- 4.4 million tonnes of paper in 2020, a 14% decrease from 2019.
- The total value of wood product imports in 2020 was £7.5 billion, representing a 10% decrease from 2019; of which £3.4 billion was pulp and paper.
- Sawn softwood, particleboard, fibreboard, and paper and paperboard were overwhelmingly imported from EU countries in 2020.
- Sawn hardwood and wood pulp imports originated from a range of both EU and non-EU countries in 2020.
- The vast majority of UK imports of plywood and wood pellets in 2020 came from countries outside the EU.
- Apparent consumption of wood in the UK was 54.8 million m³ wood raw material equivalent underbark in 2020, representing a 1% decrease from the previous year.

UK exports:

- The total value of wood product exports in 2020 was £1.5 billion, a 10% decrease from 2019; of which £1.3 billion was pulp and paper.

3.1 Apparent consumption of wood in the UK

Apparent consumption is the amount of timber used as wood and wood products by people and industries in the United Kingdom. It is calculated as total United Kingdom production plus imports, minus exports. Apparent consumption differs from actual consumption by the extent of changes in the level of stocks. It is not practical to collect information on actual consumption.

As table 3.1 covers a broad range of products (including secondary processed wood products), volumes are expressed in wood raw material equivalent (WRME) underbark. WRME volumes represent the amount of wood that would have been required to make the product.

UK production of roundwood totalled 10.4 million m³ WRME underbark in 2020 (Table 3.1). A further 48.0 million m³ WRME underbark of wood and wood products were imported to the UK and 3.6 million m³ WRME underbark were exported, giving apparent consumption of 54.8 million m³ WRME underbark. This represented a 1% decrease in apparent consumption from the previous year. These figures exclude recycled wood and recovered paper (see Table 3.3 for statistics on recovered paper).

Imports accounted for 82% of all wood (production + imports) in the UK in 2020.

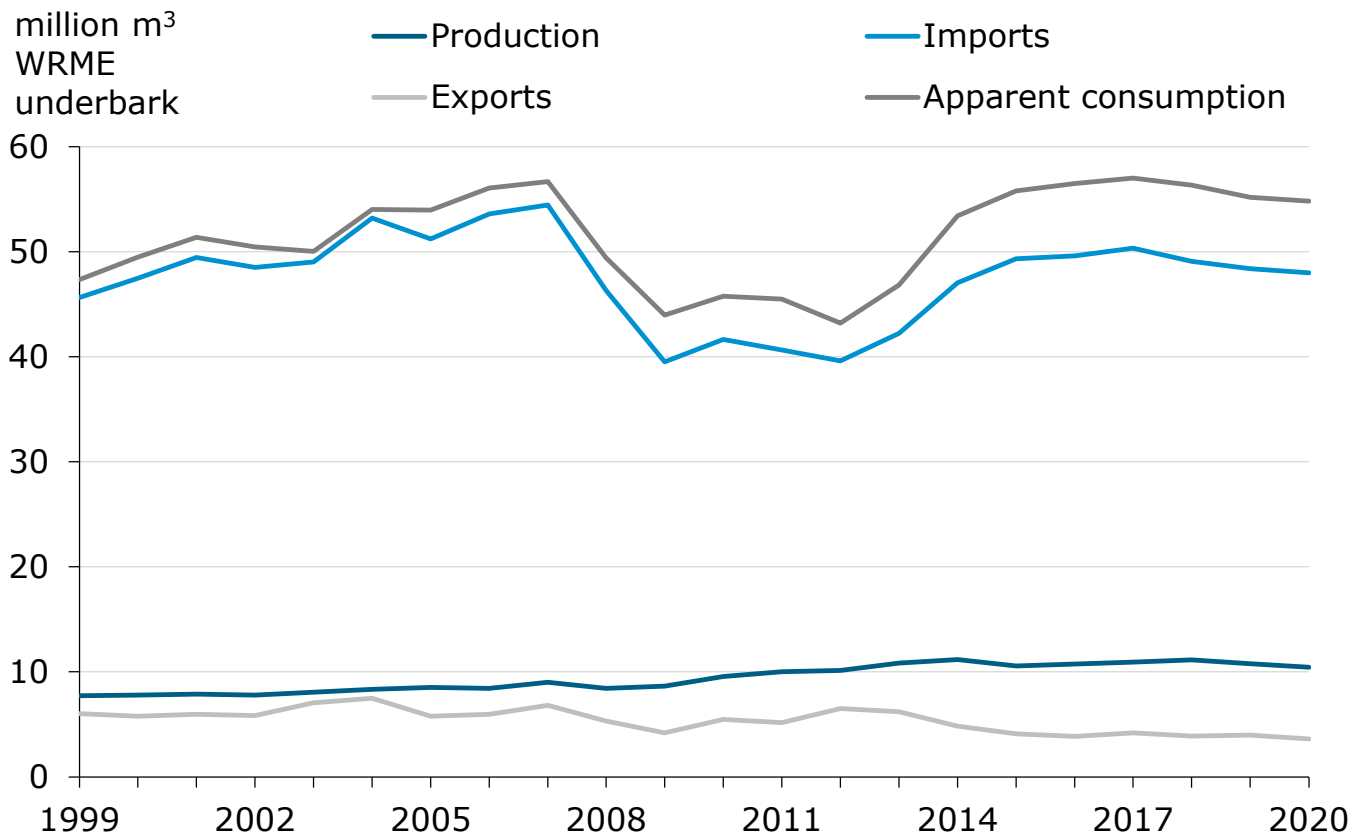
Table 3.1 Apparent consumption of wood¹ in the UK, 2011-2020million m³ WRME underbark

Year	UK production ²	Imports	Exports	Apparent Consumption
2011	10.0	40.6	5.2	45.5
2012	10.1	39.6	6.5	43.2
2013	10.8	42.2	6.2	46.8
2014	11.2	47.0	4.8	53.4
2015	10.6	49.3	4.1	55.8
2016	10.7	49.6	3.8	56.5
2017	10.9	50.3	4.2	57.0
2018	11.2	49.1	3.9	56.3
2019	10.8	48.4	4.0	55.2
2020	10.4	48.0	3.6	54.8

Source: Industry surveys, industry associations, UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs) and conversion factors to Wood Raw Material Equivalent (WRME).

Notes:

1. Excludes recovered paper.
2. UK production of roundwood is estimated from deliveries to wood processing industries and others, as in tables 2.5 and 2.6.

Figure 3.1 Apparent consumption of wood¹ in the UK, 1999-2020

Source: Industry surveys, industry associations, UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs) and conversion factors to Wood Raw Material Equivalent (WRME).

Notes:

1. Excludes recovered paper.
2. UK production of roundwood is estimated from deliveries to wood processing industries and others, as in tables 2.5 and 2.6.

3.2 Apparent consumption of wood products in the UK

Table 3.2 provides volumes of UK production, trade and apparent consumption in selected wood products. It differs from table 3.1 in terms of both coverage (table 3.1 covers a wider range of wood and wood products, including secondary processed products) and in terms of units (wood raw material equivalents in table 3.1, volumes of product in table 3.2).

UK production accounted for 32% of the UK sawnwood market, 51% of the UK wood-based panel market and 61% of the UK paper market in 2020 (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Apparent consumption of wood products^{1,2} in the UK, 2020

Product	UK production	Imports	Exports	Apparent consumption
Sawnwood³ (thousand m³)				
Coniferous	3,302	6,677	208	9,772
Non-Coniferous	37	541	23	555
Total	3,340	7,218	231	10,327
Woodbased panels (thousand m³)				
Veneer sheets	0	22	2	20
Plywood	0	1,362	83	1,280
Particleboard	2,296	1,004	246	3,054
Fibreboard	656	879	59	1,475
Total	2,952	3,267	389	5,830
Paper & paperboard (thousand tonnes)				
Sanitary & household papers	742	362	9	1,095
Packaging materials	1,915	2,110	316	3,709
Other paper & paperboard (incl graphic papers)	974	448	303	1,120
Total	3,631	2,920	628	5,924

Source: Industry surveys, industry associations, UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs).

Notes:

1. Excludes other wood products, e.g. fuelwood and round fencing.
2. Excludes roundwood and intermediate products (e.g. sawmill products, pulp and recovered paper) to avoid double-counting.
3. Includes sleepers.

3.3 Flow of recovered paper

UK production of recovered paper (the amount recovered from businesses and households in the UK) totalled 6.6 million tonnes in 2020 (Table 3.3) a decrease of 11% from 2019. Imports increased by 92% and exports decreased by 11% between 2019 and 2020, resulting in a 7% fall in apparent consumption over this period.

Table 3.3 Flow of recovered paper, 2011-2020

thousand tonnes				
Year	UK production	Imports	Exports	Apparent consumption ¹
2011	8,036	177	4,479	3,733
2012	8,099	160	4,447	3,812
2013	7,901	184	4,248	3,837
2014	8,014	136	4,436	3,714
2015	7,912	305	4,881	3,336
2016	7,825	125	4,932	3,018
2017	7,772	107	4,733	3,147
2018	7,539	120	4,530	3,129
2019	7,348	83	4,327	3,104
2020	6,576	159	3,842	2,893

Source: Confederation of Paper Industries, UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs).

Notes:

1. Apparent consumption of recovered paper refers to use of recycled paper pulp in the UK.

3.4 UK import quantities by product

Wood imports to the UK in 2020 included 7.2 million cubic metres of sawnwood (a 3% increase from the previous year), 3.3 million cubic metres of wood-based panels (10% decrease), 9.1 million tonnes of wood pellets (2% increase) and 5.4 million tonnes of pulp and paper (12% decrease) (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 UK import quantities, 2011-2020¹

Year	thousand m ³				
	Sawn wood ² (thousand m ³)	Wood-based panels ³ (thousand m ³)	Other wood ⁴ (thousand m ³)	Wood pellets (thousand tonnes)	Pulp & paper ⁵ (thousand tonnes)
2011	4,936	2,827	985	1,015	8,073
2012	5,179	2,650	965	1,487	7,812
2013	5,488	2,964	1,267	3,432	7,213
2014	6,425	3,260	1,329	4,773	7,319
2015	6,323	3,215	1,378	6,573	7,560
2016	6,794	3,410	1,121	6,782	7,092
2017	7,663	3,800	1,379	6,885	6,798
2018	7,213	3,878	1,766	7,992	6,663
2019	7,040	3,650	2,229	8,878	6,130
2020	7,218	3,267	2,136	9,078	5,386

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Sources chapter).
2. Sawnwood includes sleepers from 2017.
3. Includes veneer sheets.
4. Includes roundwood, wood charcoal, chips, particles, residues and from 2017, includes recovered wood.
5. Further details of pulp and paper import quantities are provided in table 3.4a.

Paper accounted for the majority of pulp and paper imports, with a total of 4.4 million tonnes imported in 2020 (Table 3.4a). This represented a 14% decrease from the previous year.

Table 3.4a UK import quantities, 2011-2020¹: Pulp and paper

thousand tonnes

Year	Paper	Pulp	Recovered paper	Total Pulp & Paper
2011	6,887	1,009	177	8,073
2012	6,631	1,021	160	7,812
2013	5,929	1,100	184	7,213
2014	5,949	1,234	136	7,319
2015	6,032	1,223	305	7,560
2016	5,876	1,092	125	7,092
2017	5,610	1,081	107	6,798
2018	5,477	1,066	120	6,663
2019	5,150	897	83	6,130
2020	4,439	788	159	5,386

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Sources chapter).

3.5 UK export quantities by product

A total of 4.6 million tonnes of pulp and paper (including recovered paper) was exported from the UK in 2020 (Table 3.5), representing an 11% decrease from 2019.

Table 3.5 UK export quantities, 2011-2020¹

Year	thousand m ³				
	Sawn wood ² (thousand m ³)	Wood-based panels ³ (thousand m ³)	Other wood ⁴ (thousand m ³)	Wood pellets (thousand tonnes)	Pulp & paper ⁵ (thousand tonnes)
2011	162	546	1,430	38	5,485
2012	141	597	1,779	54	5,585
2013	167	432	1,267	106	5,390
2014	175	404	1,083	98	5,467
2015	187	286	1,018	88	5,712
2016	193	314	810	21	5,700
2017	218	374	638	126	5,528
2018	238	295	595	63	5,317
2019	215	384	604	33	5,160
2020	231	389	293	4	4,617

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Sources chapter).
2. Sawntwood includes sleepers from 2017.
3. Includes veneer sheets.
4. Includes roundwood, wood charcoal, chips, particles, residues and, from 2017, includes recovered wood.
5. Further details of pulp and paper export quantities are provided in table 3.5a

Recovered paper accounted for the majority of pulp and paper exports, with 3.8 million tonnes exported in 2020 (Table 3.5a).

Table 3.5a UK export quantities, 2011-2020¹

thousand tonnes				
Year	Paper	Pulp	Recovered paper	Total Pulp & Paper
2011	974	32	4,479	5,485
2012	1,102	36	4,447	5,585
2013	1,119	23	4,248	5,390
2014	1,010	21	4,436	5,467
2015	807	24	4,881	5,712
2016	760	7	4,932	5,700
2017	788	7	4,733	5,528
2018	772	15	4,530	5,317
2019	825	9	4,327	5,160
2020	749	26	3,842	4,617

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Sources chapter).

3.6 UK import values by product

Wood product imports in 2020 were valued at a total of £7.5 billion, a 10% decrease from 2019 (Table 3.6). Pulp and paper (including recovered paper) accounted for 45% of the total import value in 2020. Sawnwood imports were valued at £1.6 billion in 2020, wood-based panels at £1.0 billion and wood pellets at £1.3 billion.

Table 3.6 UK import values, 2011-2020¹

£ million

Year	Sawn wood ²	Wood-based panels ³	Other wood ⁴	Wood pellets	Pulp & Paper ⁵	Total
2011	1,080	838	79	129	4,696	6,822
2012	1,084	791	75	185	4,266	6,402
2013	1,180	882	88	412	4,165	6,727
2014	1,420	936	80	547	4,196	7,180
2015	1,311	957	88	780	4,375	7,510
2016	1,423	1,010	85	915	4,003	7,436
2017	1,636	1,155	90	961	4,004	7,845
2018	1,743	1,201	122	1,117	4,075	8,257
2019	1,598	1,134	184	1,309	4,076	8,301
2020	1,587	969	198	1,339	3,385	7,478

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Sources chapter).
2. Sawnwood includes sleepers from 2017.
3. Includes veneer sheets.
4. Includes roundwood, wood charcoal, chips, particles, residues and from 2017, includes recovered wood.
5. Further details of pulp and paper import values are provided in table 3.6a.

Paper imports were valued at £2.9 billion in 2020, accounting for 86% of all pulp and paper imports (Table 3.6a).

Table 3.6a UK import values, 2011-2020¹

£ million

Year	Paper	Pulp	Recovered paper	Total Pulp & Paper
2011	4,049	613	34	4,696
2012	3,727	519	21	4,266
2013	3,644	500	21	4,165
2014	3,667	509	19	4,196
2015	3,711	642	23	4,375
2016	3,434	557	13	4,003
2017	3,418	572	14	4,004
2018	3,415	639	21	4,075
2019	3,538	520	17	4,076
2020	2,903	448	35	3,385

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Sources chapter).

3.7 UK export values by product

Wood product exports from the UK were valued at a total of £1.5 billion in 2020, a 10% decrease from the 2019 total (Table 3.7). Total exports of wood products in 2020 comprised 86% pulp and paper, 7% wood-based panels, 4% sawnwood and 2% other wood.

Table 3.7 UK export values, 2011-2020¹

£ million

Year	Sawn wood ²	Wood-based panels ³	Other wood ⁴	Wood pellets	Pulp & Paper ⁵	Total
2011	41	128	50	3	1,650	1,872
2012	34	130	51	4	1,589	1,807
2013	37	109	47	5	1,519	1,717
2014	43	107	39	2	1,480	1,672
2015	44	75	35	1	1,441	1,597
2016	50	91	26	0	1,307	1,473
2017	55	109	41	6	1,651	1,861
2018	64	103	41	5	1,597	1,810
2019	58	123	41	2	1,491	1,714
2020	63	114	36	1	1,336	1,549

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Sources chapter).
2. Sawnwood includes sleepers from 2017.
3. Includes veneer sheets.
4. Includes roundwood, wood charcoal, chips, particles, residues and from 2017, includes recovered wood.
5. Further details of pulp and paper export values are provided in table 3.7a.

Paper exports were valued at £0.9 billion in 2020, accounting for 70% of all pulp and paper exports (Table 3.7a).

Table 3.7a UK export values, 2011-2020¹: Pulp and paper

£ million

Year	Paper	Pulp	Recovered paper	Total Pulp & Paper
2011	1,044	11	595	1,650
2012	1,048	10	531	1,589
2013	1,017	8	494	1,519
2014	997	7	476	1,480
2015	901	7	534	1,441
2016	838	4	465	1,307
2017	997	5	649	1,651
2018	1,022	5	570	1,597
2019	1,049	4	437	1,491
2020	931	11	394	1,336

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Sources chapter).

3.8 Origin of wood imports

Table 3.8 presents data on the source of selected wood products that have been imported into the UK in 2020.

Sawn softwood, particleboard, fibreboard, and paper and paperboard were overwhelmingly imported from EU countries in 2020 (Table 3.8):

- Sweden (41%), Latvia (20%) and Finland (12%) provided the majority of imports of sawn softwood to the UK.
- Most particleboard imports to the UK came from Germany (20%), Latvia (18%) and Ireland (17%).
- Ireland (33%), Germany (19%), Belgium and Latvia (both 10%) were the principal sources of fibreboard imports.
- Most paper and paperboard imports came from Sweden (20%), Germany (17%) and Finland (14%).

Sawn hardwood and wood pulp imports originated from a range of both EU and non-EU countries in 2020:

- The USA (14%), Latvia (12%), France (11%) and Estonia (10%) provided almost one half of sawn hardwood imports to the UK.
- Brazil (33%) and Sweden (27%) provided over one half of wood pulp imports to the UK.

The vast majority of UK imports of plywood and wood pellets came from countries outside the EU in 2018:

- China (40%) and Brazil (20%) were the principal sources of plywood imports to the UK.
- The USA (63%) and Canada (18%) provided the majority of wood pellet imports to the UK.

Table 3.8 Country of origin of wood imports to the UK, 2020

per cent of total UK imports (volume) in each category

Source	Sawn ¹ soft wood	Sawn ¹ hard wood	Ply- wood	Particle- board	Fibre- board	Pellets	Wood pulp	Paper and paper- board
Sweden	41	0	0	0	0	0	27	20
Germany	8	3	0	20	19	0	1	17
Finland	12	0	8	0	1	0	9	14
Latvia	20	12	2	18	10	10	0	0
France	0	11	1	11	1	0	0	6
Ireland	5	2	0	17	33	0	0	1
Netherlands	0	4	0	0	1	0	5	4
Italy	0	8	0	2	0	0	3	4
Austria	1	1	1	1	2	0	2	4
Belgium	0	1	1	14	10	0	0	2
Portugal	0	0	0	8	2	2	3	3
Spain	0	1	1	2	8	0	5	2
Poland	1	4	1	1	3	0	0	2
Estonia	2	10	0	0	0	3	0	0
Other EU	3	5	0	3	1	0	0	2
Total EU	92	62	16	98	90	14	57	80
USA	0	14	0	0	0	63	2	4
Canada	0	3	1	0	0	18	0	3
Brazil	0	1	20	0	0	1	33	1
China	0	0	40	1	4	0	0	1
Russia	6	2	7	1	5	3	0	1
Norway	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	4
Indonesia	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1
Chile	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1
Malaysia	0	2	5	0	0	0	0	0
Cameroon	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other non-EU	0	5	4	0	1	0	7	5
Total non-EU	8	38	84	2	10	86	43	20

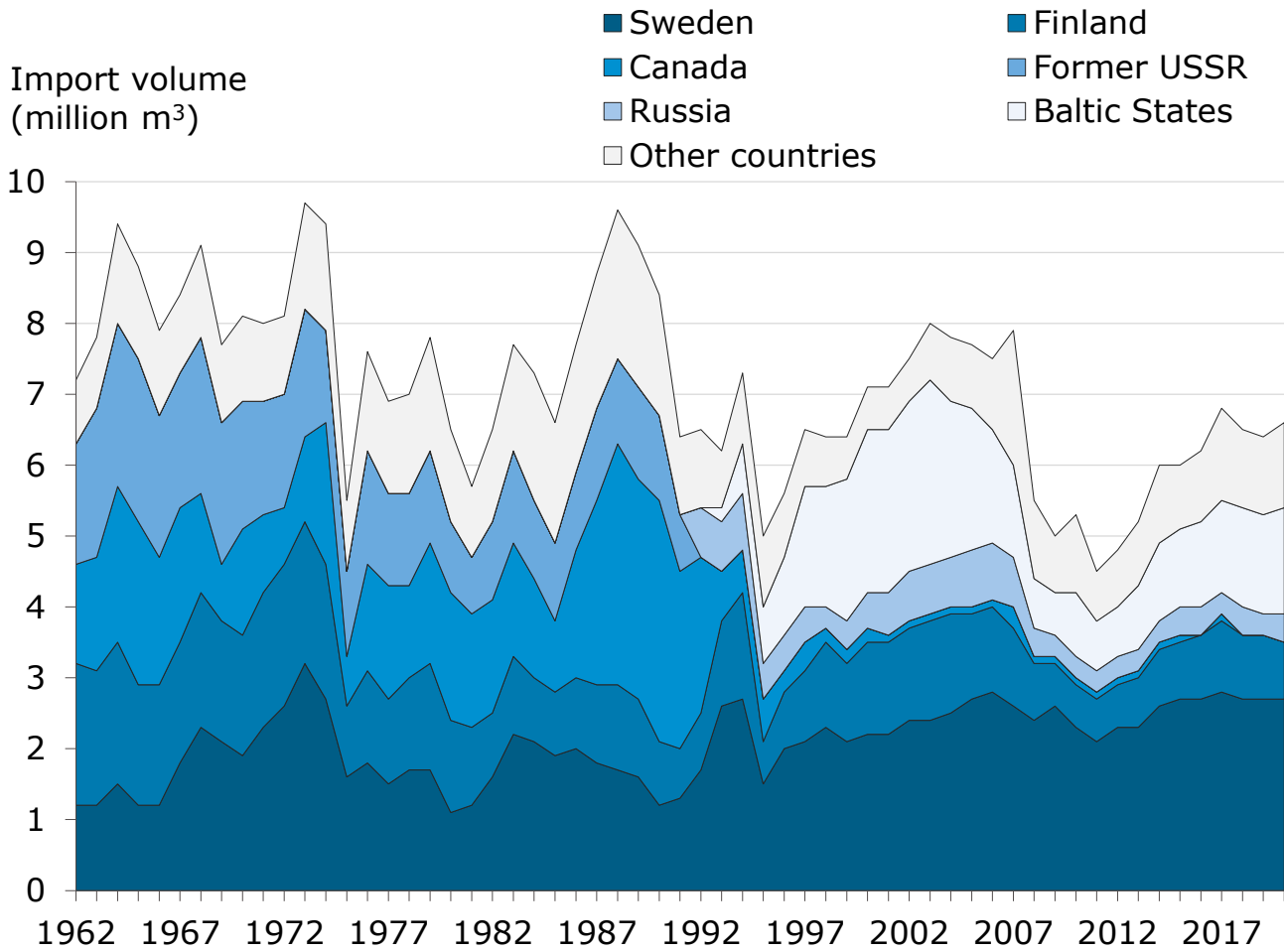
Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations.

Notes:

1. Sawnwood imports in this table exclude sleepers.

Figure 3.2 shows the main sources of imports of sawn softwood to the UK since 1962. The total level of sawn softwood imports has fluctuated between around 5 million m³ and 10 million m³ from 1962 to present. Imports to the UK from Canada have reduced substantially since the early 1990s. In contrast imports from the Baltic States increased between 1992 and 2003 and, although there was some decline between 2003 to 2012, imports from the Baltic States to the UK have started to increase again in recent years. Since 1993 Sweden has consistently been the principal country of origin for UK sawn softwood imports.

Figure 3.2 Country of origin of sawn softwood¹ imports to the UK, 1962-2020



Source: FAO, UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations.

Notes:

1. Sawn softwood imports in this chart exclude sleepers.

Alice Holt Lodge

Farnham
Surrey, GU10 4LH, UK
Tel: **0300 067 5600**

**Northern Research
Station**

Roslin
Midlothian, EH25 9SY, UK
Tel: **0300 067 5900**

**Forest Research in
Wales**

Environment Centre
Wales
Deiniol Road, Bangor
Gwynedd, LL57 2UW,
UK
Tel: **0300 067 5774**

info@forestresearch.gov.uk

www.forestresearch.gov.uk

Forest Research will consider all requests to make the content of our documents available in alternative formats.

Please send any such requests to: research.info@forestresearch.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2021