

Methodology Review: Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking

Introduction

The methodology and outputs relevant to a particular topic are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

A more formal process was introduced in 2012, with one topic to be covered each year. The topics to be covered are: wood production, imports and exports, woodland area, timber prices, environment and climate change, recreation, and FC administrative data. One topic is reviewed every year on a rotating basis. In 2014, woodland area, planting and restocking statistics were reviewed, and the findings are summarised here.

There is a parallel process for survey reviews.

More in-depth reviews, to address specific issues, are undertaken on an ad hoc basis.

Statistics on UK woodland area (including certified area), new planting and restocking are compiled by the Forestry Commission (in association with the Forest Service in Northern Ireland).

These statistics are used to inform government policy and resource allocation, and to provide context to UK forestry and land management issues. They are also used to compile the UK's Greenhouse Gas Inventory for the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector.

Data are released twice a year. Provisional figures are published in *Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking* in early June. Final figures are released in *Forestry Statistics* at the end of September.

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 statistical output production process and helps identify potential issues and suggest improvements. The following areas were examined in this review:

- Establishing user requirements (QMHT Section 3)
- Use of administrative data or data sourced from other organisations (QMHT Section 4)
- Regular analysis in the production of statistical outputs (QMHT Section 10)
- Regular or repeated statistics (time series) (QMHT Section 12)
- 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/infd-5rabj3 .

The review also considered feedback from the 2013 User Engagement Survey (www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-7zejnv).

Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking and *Forestry Statistics* were rated as good or very good by 77% and 89% of the respondents to the 2013 survey, respectively.

One of the recommendations from the survey is to improve and expand deforestation statistics. Deforestation estimates are expected to become available with the release of the National Forest Inventory second cycle interim results in 2018.

Conclusions

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

No major issues arose in the review, but the following areas for improvement were identified:

Establishing user requirements (QMHT Section 3):

1. Investigate possible improvements to restocking statistics, to better meet data users' requirements.
2. Investigate possible improvements to deforestation statistics, to better meet data users' requirements.

Analysis of statistical outputs (QMHT Section 10):

3. Additional documentation on the data analysis methods used in the production of the output should be published, to complement the Methodology Note: Annual Woodland Area Estimates, and 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 investigated in 2015.

Point 2 was also raised by the 2013 User Engagement Survey, and it was decided that no action would be taken until the release of the National Forest Inventory second cycle interim results in 2018.

Point 3 will be addressed for the next publication of *Woodland Area, Planting and Restocking* in June 2015.

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