

Measuring Timber Certification

INDUSTRY SECTORS: HARVESTING; SAWMILLING &
PANEL PRODUCTION

TECHNICAL NOTE

RESEARCH PURPOSE, METHODOLOGY & ANALYSIS

Background to the Research

By the middle of 2006, limited estimates existed of wood products certification in some of the main sectors of the UK timber industry and in the UK as a whole. Some reliable information on certification was available from the Forestry Commission and the Northern Ireland Forest Service, but it was necessary to augment this with further examination of the harvesting, sawmilling and panel production sectors, which, in conjunction with new research conducted in the timber importing and trading sector would, it was hoped, eliminate the gaps in knowledge that existed.

Purpose of the Research

To quantify certified softwood roundwood, sawn timber and panel products available from recognised schemes within the major sectors of the timber industry in the United Kingdom (UK).

Scope of the Research

The research was concerned with the main primary wood processing industries in the UK and the timber importing and trading sector in the UK.

The research was designed to gather information on:

- the production of softwood roundwood from UK forests and **consumption** of softwood roundwood by UK primary processors and,
- the **production** of solid wood and panel products from UK primary processors
- the **importation** of solid wood and panel products to the UK.

This necessitated a sectoral approach which would identify the total quantities and the amount certified, of roundwood harvested and delivered to (consumed by) the main primary processing industries as represented by sawmilling, pulp production and panel production.

To complement these estimates of inputs to primary processing, estimates of the outputs, or production of these processed products and the amount certified and available for sale to the timber supply chain by main sector was also sought.

This would enable estimates to be made of UK produced certified material which, when added to estimates from the importing sector, would provide a measure of UK certification at the primary entry point to the supply chain.

Research Methodology & Sample

To provide the widest possible coverage whilst keeping costs to a minimum - in this first attempt at quantification of certification in the UK and by sector - it was decided to use e-mail and telephone as the prime methods of contact to a carefully selected sample of companies using a short (four question) survey form as the means to capture the required data. The publication, "United Kingdom Timber Statistics" from the Forestry Commission has been used to verify results from the survey and as the prime measure of certification in selected parts of the domestic production sectors.

This study, conducted in 2006 to provide a reference point in the measurement of certification in the UK in 2005 and an indication of future development, consists of five reports. They are:

- An all-sector, UK summary report and, four individual sector reports:
- timber importing;
- sawmilling;
- panel production;
- timber harvesting,

The measurement criteria used in these reports are:

green tonnes for the consumption of UK harvested forest products by sawmills, panel producers, pulpmills and other markets; and

tonnes for the production of other (than sawn) products from UK sawmills; and

cubic metres for imports and UK production from sawmills and panel producers.

The research was carried out between August and November 2006.

The research was conducted by *timbertrends*, an independent industry analyst, thereby guaranteeing total confidentiality for each the companies supplying information.

Analysis

Individual analyses were conducted for the three sectors of harvesting, sawmilling and panel production.

Consumption of Softwood Roundwood and Other Material

In the harvesting sector, only a very few harvesting companies responded, but collectively they accounted for nearly a third of all volume harvested and delivered in 2005. This data, in conjunction with Forestry Commission information, enabled estimates to be made of the quantities of deliveries from both private woodlands and the public estate and the proportions certified.

The certification study also requested consumption information from primary processors, represented by the sawmilling, panel production and pulp production industries. Consequently, it was possible to compare the output from the forest with the input to primary processing, which provided further evidence and confirmation of the extent of certified material harvested and delivered. Separate analyses of the consumption of softwood roundwood was carried out for each of these primary processing industries.

The analysis in the sawmilling sector was hindered by a low response to the survey, nevertheless, 58% of the consumption and 53% of the production of UK sawmilling was identified. A reasonable spread of respondents by size of company facilitated analysis by larger and smaller mills, in order to detect possible differences in certification between the two types. However, because of low response, the findings from the certification research were used in conjunction with the Forestry Commission's statistical information to provide reliable estimates.

Analysis of the panel production sector was aided by **all** panel producers responding to the study. This enabled identification of the main raw material consumed and facilitated the measurement of certification of these inputs. Consequently, a measure of certified softwood roundwood, other sawmill products (e.g. chips, sawdust) and recycled wood fibre was possible.

The consumption of softwood roundwood by pulp mills in the UK was derived from the survey responses of these companies and their harvesting suppliers.

Production from Primary Processing

The main focus in the measurement of certified goods entering the timber supply chain was the output from UK sawmills of sawn timber and other products (e.g. wood chips) and the output from panel mills (e.g. particleboard). This classification permitted the volumes identified to be added to comparable sawn and panel products imported to the UK, in order to provide a total UK view of certification at this primary point of entry to the supply chain.

The timber importing and trading sector is separately reported elsewhere, but for the UK production of these materials, survey work was concentrated upon sawmillers and panel producers.

The outputs from sawmills identified the volumes and the extent of certification of sawn softwood and other sawmill products such as wood chips, bark and sawdust. Volumes of sawn hardwood were not included in the study due to the poor response from this very small sector of UK production.

Also, production from pulp producers, fencing contractors and the host of other producers (e.g. bio-energy) did not feature in the certification study.

The total volume of production from panel producers in the UK was identified through this study and the proportion of all certified panel products identified.

Development of Certification into 2006

The research was tasked with identifying the extent of certification in the UK in 2005 (the last full year for which data was available at the time of the study) but also attempted to determine the likely volume development of certification for the following year, 2006. Each of the sector questionnaires requested estimates of the volumes consumed and produced and this facilitated a projection, by sector and for the UK as a whole, of how certification was expected to develop into 2006.