

Methodology Note: UK Wood Production

Last updated:

May 2021

Next update due:

May 2026

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.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Sources	4
Methodology	5
Disclosure	7
Revisions.....	8
Glossary.....	9

Introduction

Forest Research releases statistics on UK wood production annually. These include:

- the harvesting of timber from woodland (removals);
- the deliveries of timber to wood processors (mills); and
- the manufacture of primary wood products (such as sawnwood, paper and wood-based panels).

Provisional statistics for the preceding year are released each May in “UK Wood Production and Trade: provisional figures”. Final figures are released in September in “Forestry Statistics” and “Forestry Facts and Figures”.

This paper sets out the data analysis methods used to produce annual estimates of UK wood production.

Sources

The data sources used to estimate UK wood production are described in the Sources section of each edition of Forestry Statistics, available at www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/forestry-statistics/. They comprise:

- Administrative records from woodland owned or managed by Forestry England, Forestry and Land Scotland, Natural Resources Wales or the Forest Service (in Northern Ireland). Further information about administrative data on timber sales is available at www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/statistics-by-topic/timber-statistics/uk-wood-production-and-trade-provisional-figures/.
- Industry surveys run annually by Forest Research: Private Sector Softwood Removals Survey, Sawmill Survey, Survey of Round Fencing Manufacturers,

and Pellet and Briquette Production Survey. Details on each survey and methodology is available at www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/about-our-statistics/surveys/.

- Data from trade associations, including the Wood Panel Industries Federation (WPIF), Confor (the Confederation of Forest Industries) and the Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI).
- Other data requests to relevant businesses concerning wood shavings manufacture, brash removals, roundwood and chip exports, and wood fuel.
- Estimates from the Expert Group on Timber and Trade Statistics (www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/about-our-statistics/expert-group-on-timber-and-trade-statistics/).

Methodology

Administrative records and data from trade associations are usually received in Microsoft Excel format. Data from surveys are mainly collected through online questionnaires, although some returns are received in Excel or Word format or on paper.

Online survey data are collected using Smartsurvey. For returns received in other formats, data is transferred into Smartsurvey before all data is exported to Excel before being transferred to SAS, a statistical software package (www.sas.com).

Data processing and analysis mainly takes place in SAS. The processing steps are documented as comments within the SAS code. The outputs of interest are calculated and finally exported from SAS to Excel.

The main outputs are aggregates from the source data, such as total production or consumption of a given wood product, or breakdowns expressed as percentages, and do not require complex data analysis techniques.

A number of QA checks, corrections and imputations are carried out at several stages of the data processing and analysis. They include testing for errors in data entry, completeness (missing, duplicate or incomplete records), consistency between categories (such as consumption and production), consistency with historical data and comparison with other data sources.

For large suspected errors or missing data, the data providers are contacted where possible and asked to check their submission. Failing this, or for minor discrepancies, manual amendments or imputations are made by the statistics team based on historical data. The Expert Group on Timber and Trade Statistics (www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/about-our-statistics/expert-group-on-timber-and-trade-statistics/) may also provide estimates for large non-respondents to the industry surveys. When current year data are unavailable and no other information is known, previous year data are used to produce estimates. Estimates for non-respondents usually assume no change from the previous year, but alternative assumptions may be used (e.g. applying the average percentage change reported by respondents) if the default assumption of no change is believed to be inappropriate.

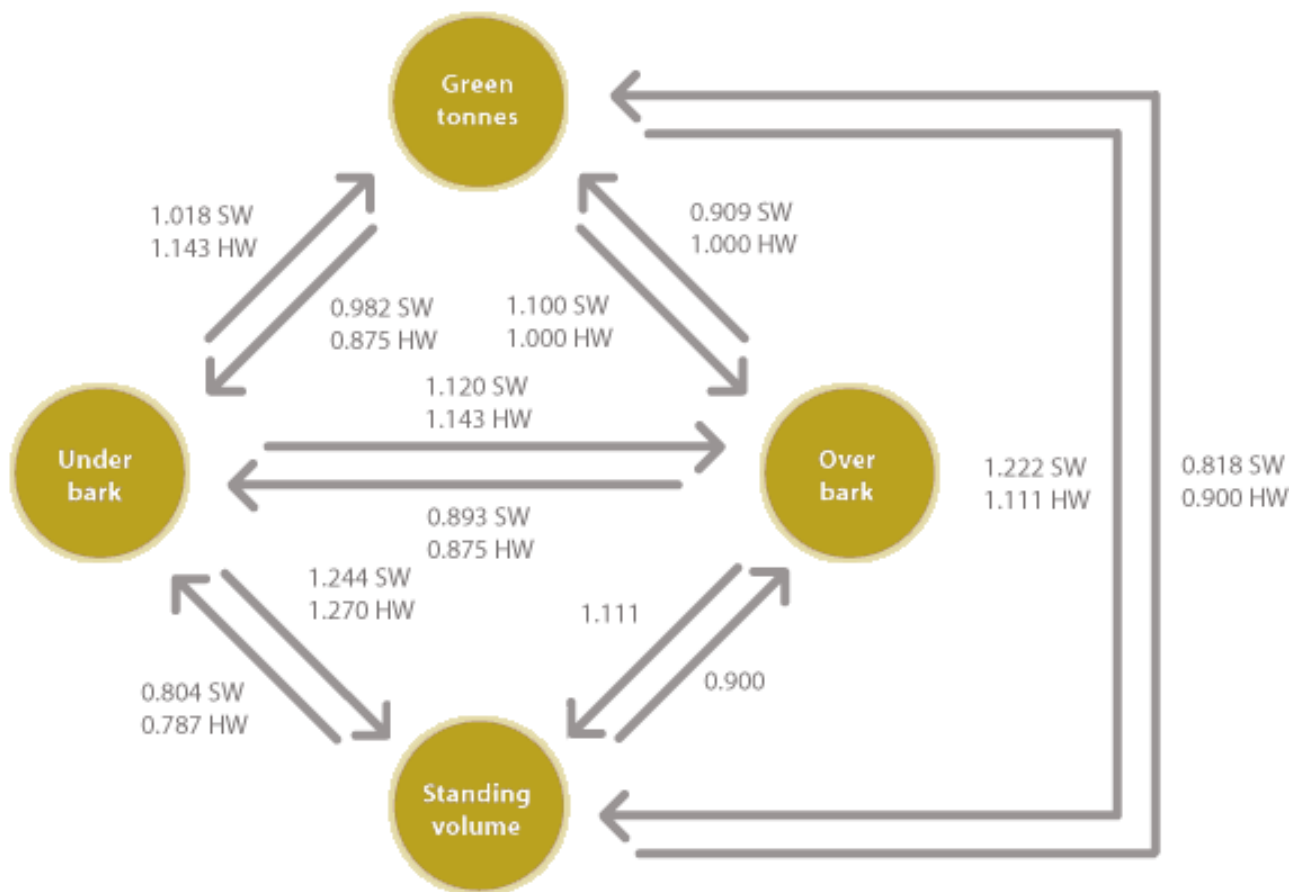
The Sawmill Survey, the Survey of Round Fencing Manufacturers and the Pellet and Briquette Production Survey are thought to cover nearly all operating businesses and can be considered as censuses.

However, a significant proportion of private sector softwood removals (currently estimated by the Expert Group on Timber and Trade Statistics at 15%) are thought to be carried out by businesses not covered by the Private Sector Softwood Removals Survey. Therefore, 15% is added to the survey results (both for respondents and imputed data for non-respondents) to give overall estimates of private sector softwood removals. This methodology was adopted after a methodological review undertaken in 2011-2012. The paper "Methodology Review of Softwood Removals from Non-FC/FS Woodland" provides further information on

the change on methodology and is available at www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/about-our-statistics/surveys/private-sector-softwood-removals-survey/.

Unit conversion factors are documented in the Sources: Timber section of each edition of Forestry Statistics and in the Annex of UK Wood Production and Trade Statistics. For convenience, the conversion factors between cubic metres and green tonnes are reproduced below for softwood (SW) and hardwood (HW) timber:

Conversion factors: green tonnes and cubic metres



Disclosure

All results are checked for potential disclosure. These checks are more extensive for the more detailed breakdowns published from the sawmill survey data, where there is greater potential for disclosure.

There are only two active pulp and paper mills in the UK. Their consent is sought before publishing potentially disclosive data on inputs to the integrated pulp and paper mills and employment by these mills.

Revisions

Statistics from surveys of the timber industry are subject to annual revision, as new information becomes available. This usually happens as a result of late notification of mills closing or new mills opening, but can also occur when reported data for the most recent year suggest that the imputed values since the last reported data (made as a result of non response to surveys in intervening years) are unrealistic. Other data are not normally revised.

Our revisions policy sets out how revisions and errors to statistics are dealt with, is available at www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/about-our-statistics/code-of-practice/quality-of-official-statistics/.

More specific information on revisions to UK wood production statistics can be found in the quality reports on UK Wood Production and Trade and on Forestry Statistics and Forestry Facts and Figures, both available at www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/about-our-statistics/code-of-practice/quality-of-official-statistics/.

Glossary

Brash

Branch wood and leaf material that is generally too small in diameter to be considered part of the timber product from a harvesting site.

Briquettes

Similar to wood pellets (see below) but larger, briquettes are made from compressed wood fibres and used for heating.

Confor

Confederation of Forest Industries.

Deliveries

The quantities of UK-grown roundwood that is delivered to processors (mills) or for other uses (such as wood fuel and exports). Note that for sawmills and round fencing mills, the deliveries figure reported is actually the quantity of roundwood consumed by the mill, which may differ from the true deliveries figure if the levels of input stocks vary.

Forest Research (FR)

The Forestry Commission agency responsible for forestry and tree related research (including statistics).

Forest Service (FS)

An executive agency of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). Forest Service fulfils DAERA's legal obligations for forestry in Northern Ireland.

Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS)

The Scottish Government agency responsible for managing the national forests and lands in Scotland, created on 1 April 2019.

Forestry Commission (FC)

The government department responsible for forestry matters in England. The Forestry Commission's functions in Wales transferred to the Welsh Government and to Natural Resources Wales on 1 April 2013. The Forestry Commission's functions in Scotland transferred to Scottish Forestry and to Forestry and Land Scotland on 1 April 2019. The Forestry Commission is supported by two agencies; Forestry England and Forest Research.

Forestry England (FE)

The Forestry Commission agency responsible for managing the national forests in England. Prior to April 2019, Forestry England was known as Forest Enterprise England.

Great Britain (GB)

England, Wales and Scotland.

Green tonne

The weight measurement of timber freshly felled before any natural or artificial drying has occurred.

Hardwood

The wood of broadleaved trees, such as oak, birch and beech; a term sometimes used for the broadleaved trees themselves.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

The organisation responsible for advising the Welsh Government on the environment, created on 1 April 2013.

Pulp

Fibrous material produced by mechanically or chemically reducing wood into its component parts from which pulp, paper and paperboard sheets are formed after proper slushing and treatment or used for dissolving purposes (dissolving pulp or

chemical cellulose) to make rayon, plastics, and other synthetic products. Sometimes called wood pulp.

Roundwood

Trunk or branch wood, generally with a top diameter of 7 cm or more. Can be in the form of logs (14 cm top diameter or more) or small roundwood (7 to 14 cm).

Sawnwood

Sawn timber - timber that has been cut into planks or boards from logs.

Softwood

The wood of coniferous trees, such as spruce, pine and larch; a term sometimes used for the coniferous trees themselves.

United Kingdom (UK)

Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Wood pellets

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).

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 2025