

Methodology Note:

UNECE Timber Forecast

Introduction

The yearly UNECE Timber Forecast Questionnaire collects estimates for the current year and forecasts for the coming year of removals, production and trade of wood and wood products.

This short note sets out the methodology used by the Forestry Commission to derive these estimates and forecasts for the UK and provides guidance on the appropriate interpretation of the figures.

Sources

Historical figures on removals, production and trade of wood and wood products are compiled annually by the Forestry Commission for publication in *UK Wood Production and Trade: provisional data* in May and *Forestry Statistics* and *Forestry Facts and Figures* in September. They are also reported to international organisations through the Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (provisional data in May, final data in September).

The data sources used to estimate these figures are described in the Sources section of *Forestry Statistics 2013*:

www.forestry.gov.uk/website/forstats2013.nsf/TopContents?Open&ctx=9314380047FD5FFD8025731E00475FD7. They include:

- Industry surveys run annually by the Forestry Commission: Private Sector Softwood Removals Survey, Sawmill Survey, Survey of Round Fencing Manufacturers, and Pellet and Briquette Production Survey. Details on each survey and methodology can be found at www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-94pgqt.
- Administrative records from woodland owned or managed by the Forestry Commission (in Great Britain) or the Forest Service (in Northern Ireland). Further information on administrative sources can be found at: www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-832ey5.
- Data from trade associations, including the Wood Panel Industries Federation, the UK Forest Products Association and the Confederation of Paper Industries.
- Overseas trade statistics for intra-EU trade and extra-EU trade produced by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and available at www.uktradeinfo.com.

Methodology

Near-final historical data is shared with the Expert Group on Timber and Trade Statistics at their August meeting. The group is asked to provide estimates for the current year and forecasts for the coming year based on the historical data and their expert knowledge of the current markets.

The initial assumption, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, is that all figures will remain at latest historical levels for both the current year and the following year.

For figures that are expected to change, forecasts are initially expressed as broad percentage changes from the latest year of data, usually in multiples of five percentage points. This reflects the level of uncertainty inherent in forecasting. For the same reason, the resulting absolute figures are rounded to the nearest ten thousand cubic metres (or ten thousand metric tonnes) prior to submission to UNECE.

Interpretation of results

As previously noted, the estimates and forecasts produced are approximate. They should be interpreted as a broad indication of expected results, rather than precise estimates. In particular, estimates and forecasts that are reasonably close to the latest historical figures (within 5 thousand cubic metres or 5 thousand metric tonnes) should be considered to represent the expectation of a relatively constant level.

Revisions

The Timber Forecast data submitted to UNECE is not normally revised.

A revision to the 2013 estimates and 2014 forecast was made in October 2013 to take account of additional information from the Timber Trade Federation (TTF) and Timbertrends (working on behalf of the Forestry Commission and TTF).

The Forestry Commission's revisions policy sets out how revisions and errors to statistics are dealt with, and can be found at:

[www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCrevisions.pdf/\\$FILE/FCrevisions.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCrevisions.pdf/$FILE/FCrevisions.pdf)

Further information

More information on the Expert Group on Timber and Trade Statistics including a list of members and minutes from past meetings can be found at:

www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-5rabj3

Copies of the UK's annual Timber Forecast submissions to UNECE are available at:

www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-7aqjql

Jeremy Darot
Statistics, Forestry Commission
October 2013

Glossary

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

Forestry Commission (FC) The government department responsible for forestry matters in England, Scotland and (until March 2013) Wales. The Forestry Commission's functions in Wales transferred to a new organisation, Natural Resources Wales, on 1 April 2013. The responsibility for forestry is devolved.

Forest Service (FS) An agency of the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Great Britain (GB) England, Wales and Scotland.

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

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 to be burned for heat or energy.