

United Kingdom – Potential Wood Supply

This is a slightly expanded version of the UK's oral statement at the Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest Economics & Statistics, 2 April 2008.

The last National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (NIWT) in Great Britain, with base date 1995-1999, did not assess timber volume in mensuration plots. As a result, the UK statistics for growing stock and net annual increment in international reporting (FRA and MCPFE) are expert estimates, based on reported areas by species and age. Only the state forest commercial growing stock estimates are based on mensuration plots. Expert consultation and modelling were also used for the 2005 UK softwood production forecasts¹ on the private sector estate. There are currently no UK production forecasts for hardwood.

Work has now started on the next NIWT (NIWT2), with the creation of a new digital map of woodland down to 0.5 ha, based on the Ordnance Survey (OS) aerial photography from the period 2003-2007 and OS Mastermap (the standard national mapping product). This digital map will be updated to a 2008 base, using various sources, and published in 2009. The NIWT2 field survey will be piloted during 2008, planning to start a rolling programme of field survey work in 2009.

NIWT2 will include mensuration plots, with priority in 2009 to plots in commercial conifer plantations, to contribute to the next production forecast (PF2010). NIWT2 will then roll on to collect data for all woodlands. In the past, UK production forecasts were a mix of biological potential, expert assumptions on future harvesting and actual harvesting plans. The methodology for the new forecast will aim to identify the biological potential, then produce a range of production forecasts, taking account of constraints and considering different scenarios.

Looking more widely, the Woodfuel Resource Study² in 2003 identified potential volumes from other sources. In addition to the stemwood covered by other statistics and forecasts, this study assessed the potential volumes from harvesting brash (lop and top and other parts of the harvested trees), arboricultural arisings, short rotation coppice and primary processing co-products. Wood energy is of increasing importance in the UK, but there has been no systematic update of this wider potential availability since 2003.

The statistical sources used for the UK response to the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE) in 2006 were generally of poor quality, with major inconsistencies between the forestry statistics and energy statistics. We will be drawing from various sources to try to compile a better assessment of the current situation for JWEE 2008.

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¹ United Kingdom,: New Forecast of Softwood Availability, Forestry Commission, 2006
[\\$FILE/pf2005.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/pf2005.pdf)

² Woodfuel Resource Study, 2003 <http://www.eforestry.gov.uk/woodfuel/>