



Independent Statistics & Analysis

**U.S. Energy Information
Administration**

Supporting Statement for Survey Clearance: Densified Biomass Fuel Report

Part B: Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods

OMB Number 1905-NEW

FORM EIA-63C, Densified Biomass Fuel Report

Original Date: September 2014



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B STATISTICAL METHODS

B.1 Respondent Universe

Form EIA-63C, “Densified Biomass Fuel Report”

The Form EIA-63C is a mandatory monthly census survey of U.S. companies engaged in densified biomass fuel manufacturing, sales, or exporting. The information collected includes volume produced and sold, revenues from sales, feedstock purchases and costs, inventory of products, technical characteristics of the densified biomass fuel products, and employment data. The survey frame for the Form EIA-63C contains approximately 150 respondents. Potential respondents are identified from U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) databases; industry/manufacturer directories; and trade publications.

Data for this survey will be collected monthly from respondents with a production capacity of 10,000 tons per year or more. Limited data (Parts 1 and 2) will be collected from the remaining small respondents (those with under 10,000 tons per year capacity) on an annual basis.

Biomass Magazine publishes a list of all known wood pellet plants in the U.S., publicly available at <http://biomassmagazine.com/plants/listplants/pellet/US/>. An analysis of 2015 published capacity information plus additional market research on the production capacity of potential respondents indicated that 10,000 tons per year was an appropriate cutoff threshold for reporting on this survey for minimizing burden to small producers. At that level, about 90 percent of the industry activity will be covered in the monthly data collection, and the number of respondents would allow publication of aggregate data at a state or regional level. Raising the cutoff would not provide adequate market coverage and too few respondents in some regions or states to allow publication of meaningful data.

Production and consumption of biomass fuel for heating follows seasonal patterns. Collection on a monthly basis will allow analysis of seasonal patterns which could not be captured from data collected less frequently. Cognitive interviews with potential respondents confirmed the seasonal nature of production and sales. Accounting records are kept on a monthly basis by most potential respondents making monthly data easily accessible for reporting.

B.2 Statistical Methods

The survey addressed in this supporting statement does not make use of sampling, but uses methods to impute for unit and item nonresponse.

Item nonresponse for missing production data will be estimated using regional averages by product type weighted by production capacity. Missing cost data will be estimated using regional averages by product type.

B.3 Maximizing Response Rates

The response rates for the EIA renewable surveys have historically been at or near 100 percent. Recent response rates for surveys conducted by the Office of Electric, Renewable and Uranium Statistics are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1. Recent Survey Response Rates

| Frequency of Survey | Survey | Survey Frame | Number of Responses | Response Percentage | Non-Responses | Non-Response Percentage |
|--|----------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Annual Surveys Collection of 2011 Data (See Notes) | EIA-63B | 171 | 171 | 100% | 0 | 0% |
| | EIA-411 | 9 | 9 | 100% | 0 | 0% |
| | EIA-860 | 3160 | 3154 | 99.8% | 6 | 0.2% |
| | EIA-861 | 3287 | 3287 | 100% | 0 | 0% |
| | EIA-861S | See Notes | | | | |
| | EIA-923 | 5600 | 5593 | 99.9% | 7 | 0.1% |
| Monthly Surveys: Collection for June 2013 | EIA-826 | 533 | 533 | 100% | 0 | 0% |
| | EIA-860M | 188 | 187 | 99.5% | 1 | 0.5% |
| | EIA-923 | 2108 | 2108 | 100% | 0 | 0% |
| Notes: Monthly collections in June 2013 are for April 2013 data. The Annual Surveys Collection of 2011 data (completed in 2012) are the most current, complete annual surveys collection. The current annual surveys collection of 2012 data (conducted in calendar year 2013) is still on-going. The Form EIA-861S did not exist in calendar year 2012 when 2011 data were collected. The survey was introduced in calendar year 2013 for the collection of 2012 data. At the end of June 2013, with data collection still underway, the Form EIA-861S had a frame of 1115 respondents of whom 1108 had submitted data (99%). | | | | | | |

To maximize response rates, EIA surveys and instructions are designed and written for clarity and conciseness. Data that are not expected to change from year-to-year or month-to-month are pre-populated on the forms. Notifications are emailed early to maximize the time that respondents have to complete the surveys.

As noted in Part A, EIA's Internet data collection system makes forms available on-line as soon as respondents obtain a secure ID and password. Given the high Internet use rate among respondents to these surveys (approximately 95 percent), most online respondents will log on in the next data collection period and access their required forms. Form due dates are the same each period so that respondents can schedule their completion activities.

Any non-respondents are contacted by email, telephone, and letter to request data submission, until an insignificant or zero non-response rate is obtained. Follow-up email messages citing failure to file the required form are sent to all non-respondents. If the follow-up email messages do not result in a response, additional correspondence requesting immediate submission is sent to the supervisor of the primary contact and, if necessary, to higher-level management officials at the non-responding entity. These letters are sent from the EIA Office Director or, on rare occasions, from the Assistant Administrator or Administrator of EIA.

Respondents who file via the Internet system are given the opportunity to either correct or explain unusual data during their submission. These explanations are reviewed by EIA staff. Respondents are contacted if further clarification is needed. For those respondents that do not file via the Internet, but rather on a hard copy of the form, email messages are sent and/or telephone calls are made to confirm corrections or clarifications of any data suspected to be in error.

B.4 Test Procedures and Forms Consultations

The survey designs were reviewed by EIA cognitive specialists and modified as necessary to improve clarity and reduce burden. Draft surveys are also made available for review as part of the 60-day and 30-day Federal Register Notice (FRN) comment periods. When the FRNs were published, emails were sent to the approximately 150 monthly survey contacts and a list of about 100 stakeholders concerning the survey changes with links to the proposed forms. In addition, the draft forms and instructions are posted on EIA's website for the general public. When comments are received on form design and content, the comments are evaluated and changes made as necessary.

For additional information on forms review, please see Part A, Section A.8., "Summary of Consultations Outside of the Agency."

B.5 Statistical Consultations

For additional information concerning this proposed information collection, please contact Rebecca A. Peterson at 202-586-4509, or at rebecca.peterson@eia.gov.

For information concerning this request for OMB approval, please contact the EIA Forms Clearance Officer, Alethea Jennings, at 202-586-5879, or alethea.jennings@eia.gov.