



*Independent Statistics & Analysis*  
U.S. Energy Information  
Administration

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# Supporting Statement for Densified Biomass Fuel Report

## **Part B: Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods**

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**OMB No. 1905-0209**

Form EIA-63C *Densified Biomass Fuel Report*

June 2018



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## B.1. Respondent Universe

Form EIA-63C, *Densified Biomass Fuel Report*, is a mandatory monthly census survey of U.S. companies engaged in densified biomass fuel manufacturing, sales, or exporting. The information collected includes volumes 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 Form EIA-63C contains 108 respondents (87 monthly respondents and 21 annual 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 are collected monthly from companies with a production capacity of 10,000 tons per year or more. Limited data (Parts 1 and 2) are collected from small companies (those with production capacity under 10,000 tons per year) on an annual basis.

Analysis of 2016 and 2017 capacity information 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's activity will be covered in the monthly data collection and the number of respondents would be sufficient to allow publication of aggregate data at the state or regional level. Raising the cutoff threshold would not provide adequate market coverage and would result in too few respondents reporting in some regions or states to allow publication of meaningful data.

## B.2. Statistical Methods

The survey addressed in this supporting statement does not make use of sampling. Imputation methods are applied 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.

Production and consumption of biomass fuel for heating follows seasonal patterns. Collection on a monthly basis allows analysis of seasonal patterns which could not be captured from data collected less frequently. Accounting records are kept on a monthly basis by most respondents making monthly data easily accessible for reporting.

## B.3. Maximizing Response Rates

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 such as first operational year, or installed maximum annual production capacity. Notifications are emailed early to maximize the time that respondents have to complete the surveys.

As noted in Supporting Statement A, EIA's Internet data collection system makes forms available on-line as soon as respondents obtain a secure ID and password. The response rate for this survey for 2017 was

approximately 98%, with many months having full 100% response. All survey responses are submitted through the online portal. Form due dates are the same each period so that respondents can schedule their completion activities.

Non-respondents for Form EIA-63C 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 and respondents are contacted if further clarification is needed. For respondents who file a paper copy of the form, email messages are sent and/or telephone calls are made to confirm corrections or clarifications of any suspected errors in data.

#### **B.4. Test Procedures and Form Consultations**

After the 60 day Federal Register notice was published, emails were sent to the monthly survey respondents and to a list of about 100 stakeholders concerning the survey changes with links to the proposed forms to solicit their feedback. 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.

The response burden has changed from 1.5 hours to 1.4 hours. This reduction is due to the removal of the six questions from the form and removal of the requirement to report quantity, characteristics, inventory, and revenue data on compressed fuel logs, bricks, and briquettes from Questions 3.3, 3.4 and 4.1.

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

#### **B.5. Statistical Consultations**

For information concerning this request for OMB approval, please contact Thomas Broene, at 202-586-5774, or [Thomas.Broene@eia.gov](mailto:Thomas.Broene@eia.gov).