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Characteristics of the forestry workforce in the U.S.A.

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Abstract: In the U.S.A. business and organization statistics are aggregated under the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). The statistics for forestry businesses and workforce are mostly contained in three NAICS codes for logging (113310), forestry services (115310), and timber tract operations (113110). While all forestry employment declined in the last decade, industry changes have had a dramatic impact on the logging industry. The forestry industries face significant hurdles in describing their status and in enumerating workers and employers due to issues with industrial classifications, government agency responsibilities, and the characteristics of forestry business organizations. Employees in forestry (113110 and 115310) are both laborers that accomplish manual work in forest tending and technicians responsible supervising forestry tasks and measuring and monitoring forest resources. For laborers retention and hiring are difficult due to job status, working conditions, and pay and benefits compared to other opportunities in forested communities. The future of the logging industry is complicated by the aging of business owners and key employees and business owners' limited access to capital. Experienced logging employees are valued because training programs are rare and turnover of new recruits is very high. Sustainability of this work force and these industries will be heavily influenced by access to foreign workers, businesses' ability to offer competitive wages and benefits, and worker productivity. Prevailing industry conditions will challenge the employment benefits often attributed to future increases in woody biomass production and harvesting.

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