

MFP begins production of beech wall elements

The Romanian hardwood sawmill and gluelam board manufacturer Massiv Forest Products (MFP) s.r.l. of Buchin is adding solid beech wall elements to its range of products. Regular production of the solid elements for interior finishing marketed under the name of "Craftwand" is to begin in June this year. Sights have been set on an annual output of approximately 25,000 m², which equates to roughly 3700 m³ per year based on the rectangular modules with a cross-section of 15 cm and lengths of 15-120 cm in increments of 15 cm. The blocks are connected using dowel pins and screws.

The wall system was presented to the trade at the BAU trade fair in Munich in January 2015. The Craftwand is to be marketed partly directly by the manufacturer. For this purpose MFP has added more employees to its workforce in Buchin, including architects and designers who can assist with planning larger-scale projects. In addition to direct sales, however, MFP will also be marketing the new product via timber merchants and agents.

MFP is currently still negotiating with timber wholesalers and specialist dealers for Germany. In Scandinavia, the distributor in Sweden and Norway is the timber wholesaler CEOS AB of Forserum, Sweden, specialised in boards and part of the Norwegian trading company Treschow-Fritzøe A/S of Larvik. The UK distributor is Norex Forest Products in Walton on the Hill; the timber merchant is currently geared to the distribution of solid worktops in particular. Agreements have already been made with the Austrian JAF group

of Stockerau for distribution on the domestic market in Romania.

In the last few months MFP has invested approximately €1.5m in new production equipment for the modular wall system. The machinery installed includes planing systems from the Weinig group (Tauberbischofsheim, Germany), a cross-cut system from Paul Maschinenfabrik GmbH & Co. KG (Dürmentingen, Germany), and a processing station from SCM Group S.p.A. (Rimini, Italy). The beech blocks required for the wall elements are produced in the company's own sawmill.

MFP is one of the biggest integrated manufacturers of hardwood gluelam boards in Romania. In the last few years, however, the company had withdrawn from the production of finger-jointed beech gluelam boards for DIY stores in particular due to the shrinking profit margins. The output of hardwood gluelam boards has also been decreasing in recent years as a result of the changes in business relations with German timber trading companies.

For this reason only roughly half of the existing capacity of around 13,000 m³ per year is used for producing mainly 19/20 mm and 40/45 mm beech and oak gluelam boards with joint-free and finger-jointed lamellas.

The sawmill with an American-standard log band saw with a roller diameter of 2400 mm and two recut band saws based on the company's own designs has an annual cutting capacity of approximately 35,000 m³, roughly 80% of which is accounted for by beech. □

SPI acquires sawmill assets in Shelton from Simpson

The US company Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) of Redding, California, has acquired a large part of the assets of the sawmill in Shelton, Washington, from Simpson Lumber Co. of Tacoma, Washington. The transaction is subject to the usual conditions precedent and is to be completed during the course of the summer. According to information from Simpson Lumber, business operations in Shelton are to be terminated sometime in the next 60 days. The 270 or so employees there are to be made redundant. Following the conclusion of the takeover of four Simpson sawmills by the Canadian company International Forest Products Ltd. (Interfor) of Vancouver, British Columbia, at the beginning of March, the sale of the Shelton assets marks Simpson Lumber's complete withdrawal from the sawmilling business to concentrate on door production with the remaining 188 employees at Simpson Door near McCleary/Washington.

According to a report from Simpson on 28 April 2015, SPI will not continue to operate the sawmill but is planning to build a completely new sawmill at the location in the port of Shelton by 2017 which will be geared mainly to processing small dimensions of roundwood. No machinery suppliers have been selected nor a schedule produced for the start of building work yet, says SPI.

US media had reported in December 2014 that SPI had received a permit for building a sawmill in Frederickson, Washington, roughly 50 miles away from Shelton, and would be commencing construction work shortly. According to information from Mark Pawlicki, director of corporate affairs and sustainability at SPI, however, following the acquisition of Shelton, the sawmill project in Frederickson is being postponed.

SPI currently operates a total of ten sawmills, seven of which are located in Washington and three in California. Lumber production amounted to some 1.95bn bdf in 2014, making the group currently one of the three biggest US softwood lumber producers. □

200,000 t pellet works planned by Arba Follum in Norway

The Norwegian company Arba Follum AS of Follum is planning to build a pellet works for manufacturing an annual 200,000 t of so-called "Advanced Wood Pellets" (AWP) on the site of the former Norske Skog Follum AS paper mill. A total of around NOK350m, roughly equivalent to €41.4m, is to be invested in building the plant planned since 2012. The investors have not yet announced a schedule or more specific technical details for the project.

Arbaflame AS of Oslo, which also holds the worldwide patent (NO 320971/EP 1776440) for the production technology for manufacturing AWP, holds a 40% share in Arba Follum. Another 40% is held by the Norwegian forest owner associations Viken Skog SA of Hønefoss, and the remaining 20% has been in the hands of the Norwegian state forest enterprise Statskog SF of Namsos since 24 April 2015. Viken Skog is contributing the Norske Skog premises in Follum purchased in 2012 on which the pellet mill is to be built. Viken Skog also officially opened a new railway terminal at the beginning of this year which can handle a total of around 100,000 m³ of roundwood per year.

Arbaflame has been operating a pilot plant with a capacity of around 40,000 tpy at the Grasmofacility in Norway since 2003 on which roughly 100,000 t of AWP has been produced since it was put into service. The bulk of the volume has been fed into various coal-fired power stations in Europe and North America as a co-firing product for test purposes. The power stations include four Vattenfall stations in Denmark, Holland, Sweden, and Germany as well as the RWE station in Tilbury, UK. □

Dust explosion and filter fire at MAK planing mill & pellet plant

On 27 April 2015 there was a fire at planing mill and pellet plant MAK Holz GmbH (Haimburg, Carinthia) in which the filter and extraction system was destroyed and a production building was damaged. According to police information, the dust explosion resulted from a technical defect in the filter of an extraction system of the pellet plant. The fire which ignited from this explosion also spread to the roof structure of a production building. The fire brigade, however, was able to prevent the fire from spreading further. Exact information on the extent and cost of the damage has not been disclosed as yet by the police or new managing director Alfred Jechart, who has only been in his role since the beginning of April. MAK Holz has planing capacities in Haimburg for 150,000m³/annum on a three-shift operation. The annual capacity of the pellet plant is 30,000t. □

Rodman Group is first furniture producer to use click technology on a larger scale

Unilin and Välinge Innovation have issued more licences

The furniture industry is still hesitant to use click technology for furniture and furniture parts. About 15 furniture manufacturers have entered into production and distribution licences for this technology over the past three years. Yet, most of these companies are smaller furniture producers, commercial furniture manufacturers and interior remodelling firms. Just a few major businesses are among the licensees. The ready-to-assemble furniture sector, which was originally defined as a key target group, is fundamentally interested, but concrete investment decisions have yet to be made - with a few exceptions. The kitchen furniture industry, which was a secondary target and supposed to use click technology for cabinet assembly, is still holding back on using this new technology. Just a handful of furniture manufacturers are actually using this process in manufacturing at present, most of them small companies active in niches of the furniture market. The only major European companies to actively embrace click technology so far are the Danish ready-to-assemble furniture manufacturer Tvilum ApS, based in Faarvang, and the Egger group, headquartered in St. Johann, Austria. Tvilum secured a licence this effect from Unilin bvba, based

in Wielsbeke, Belgium, in February 2012 and showcased the first production samples at the Cologne furniture fair IMM Cologne in January 2013. The Minutes click furniture collection was unveiled at the start of 2014. A reorganisation under way at Tvilum for some time means that no further advancements have been made in this product area; output thus remains limited. Egger has made finished furniture parts with click connections at a retrofitted finished part line at its St. Johann complex since the start of May 2013. These products are mainly sold to small and medium-sized furniture manufacturers under the Egger clic name. Over the past year, a click version for intermediate shelves has been added to the corner connections that have now been offered for about two years. Originally, Egger was next set to install manufacturing capacity for click connections at a second furniture part site in Bünde, Germany that does business as Egger Elemente GmbH & Co. KG, as well. However, this decision has been shelved.

The Australian company Rodman Group Pty. Ltd., based in Launceston, Tasmania, has now become the first furniture manufacturers to intensify its use of click technology. In mid-2014, the firm secured

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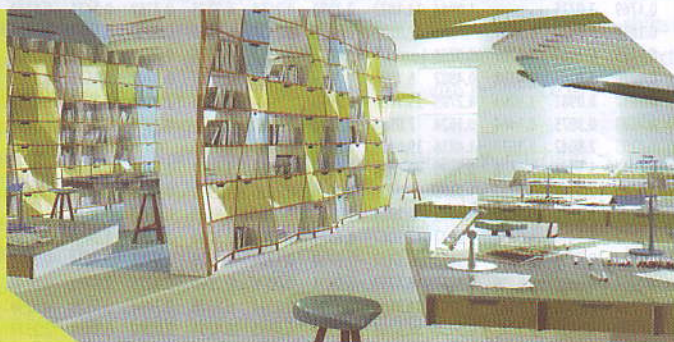
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