



Timber Trades Journal-WWF Environment Focus 2010



TIMBER & THE ENVIRONMENT FOCUS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Transforming the supply chain..... 2

It is possible to supply the world's need for timber while conserving the biodiversity of the last, great forest areas, writes George White, head of WWF's Global Forest & Trade Network

Working together 3

Relations between NGOs and the timber trade are far better than they were, but both could benefit from an even closer links, says Betsy Hickman, communications manager for the WWF's Global Forest & Trade Network

A clear call for certification 4

Timber certification will only progress if it's clearly specified through the supply chain, says Ian Gray, WWF's Global Forest & Trade Network responsible forestry co-ordinator

Energy issue hots..... 5

The growing wood energy market needs ground rules to ensure fair competition for fibre and that fuel is sustainably sourced, says Laszlo Matthe, bioenergy co-ordinator for WWF International

Green building bonus..... 5

WWF construction sector adviser Sam Hall says working with builders on certification is good for the timber trade

From carbon neutral to chemical free..... 6

Timber businesses are taking an increasingly all-round approach on environmental performance



COMMENT

Building bridges: WWF in the TTJ



ASKING THE WWF and Global Forest & Trade Network to contribute the lion's share of our Environment Focus wasn't without dangers for TTJ. Not infrequently over the years, have the environmental movement and timber industry been at loggerheads, and there are still some companies in the sector who object to anything that resembles being bossed by the 'greens'. That's not necessarily because they're afraid the NGOs will point out shortcomings in their environmental performance, more likely because they feel they've been in the business long enough to know best – and some in this trade, including the TTJ, have been around over a century!

But we felt the risk of criticism we might get from this quarter for 'surrendering' control of part of their magazine to the WWF was worth taking. The majority of our industry today is fully engaged in environmental issues and, while the disagreement and debates haven't evaporated entirely, and maybe never will, there's a realisation of the importance of dialogue with the environmental NGOs.

The timber sector has undeniably made important advances on key green issues in

recent years; take the uptake of third party environmental forestry and timber certification. And there's a widespread appreciation that this has come about to no small degree through frank and open communication with environmentalists. There's also clear acknowledgement that more needs to be done to tackle deforestation and illegal logging and that success here can only come through businesses and activists building an even closer working relationship. The hope is that opening the pages of the TTJ to the WWF has helped that process. And we'd like to keep the channel open for the future. We feel it can only build understanding on both sides and the ultimate beneficiary of that has to be the environment.

Mike Jeffree
Editor

GUEST COLUMN

George White is head of the WWF's Global Forest & Trade Network



AS I SIT down to write this in the heart of Borneo, in the world's longest certified tropical forest surrounded by a sea of oil palm plantations, I am reminded of the positive impact that responsible management can have on our last great forest areas.

This month, the TTJ has graciously given us the opportunity to share our vision for a responsible forest products industry with you. WWF's mission is to help people and nature live together in harmony, and a big part of that depends on environmentally and socially responsible business.

We want the timber industry to be a lasting force of positive change by embedding sustainability throughout the value chain. By sending clear market signals for credibly certified products, you can drive improvements in forest management in regions of the world where it matters most – like the Congo, Amazon and Borneo.

In this section we'll explore some of the problems currently plaguing the industry, from the threats posed by illegal logging and increased competition for forest resources to how responsible forestry can be

applied in both the construction and timber sector as a whole. We envision a way forward in which industry and the environmental community can work together to deliver results against one another's objectives.

Twenty years ago, the UK industry was brave enough to join us on a journey, which led to the global phenomenon that is WWF's Global Forest & Trade Network. Today we continue our work to transform the forest products market into a force for conserving the world's valuable and threatened forests.

But we recognise that we cannot do it alone. Our approach is founded on the cornerstone of serving your needs and helping you realise your goals in order to achieve our own. As we all face an uncertain future, we recognise the enduring need to go forward together.

George White

Transforming the supply chain

It is possible to supply the world's need for timber while conserving the biodiversity of the last, great forest areas, writes George White, head of WWF's Global Forest & Trade Network



As market demand for food, raw materials and fuel increases, so will the impact on our planet's natural resources. Unfortunately, our demands are already exceeding the planet's capacity to sustain us and this is significantly impacting the world's forests. With each passing minute, the equivalent of 36 football fields of forest is stripped to meet growing demand for wood and agricultural products.

And this insatiable appetite is fuelling irresponsible and often illegal logging. Thriving in regions of the world where poor governance, high profits and a pervasive philosophy of "no questions asked" prevails, illegal logging and its associated trade pose some of the most severe and fundamental threats to forests. It also jeopardizes the raw material that your business depends on; causes devastating impacts on the world's climate; and threatens the economic viability of responsible producers by introducing cheap, sometimes substandard, materials into the global marketplace.

In the face of these challenges, how can you be certain you aren't unwittingly contributing to the degradation of the world's forests? The answer lies in a global response, from businesses and governments alike, demanding environmentally and socially responsible products. If forest products are your business, you have a stark choice – to be a part of the problem or part of the solution.

Rising consumer and legislative demands for legal wood and well-managed forests have resulted in a range of solutions to the problem of preventing illegal timber from entering supply chains in key markets, such as Europe and the US, and increasingly further afield.

The European Union's Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) initiative is one response to building demand for legally verified timber. Pending legislation also calls for any operator placing timber or timber products on the EU market for the first time to operate a "due diligence" system to minimise the risk of the material originating from an illegal source (see p30). Correspondingly, the development of bi-lateral trade agreements between the EU and supplier countries through Voluntary Partnership Agreements is shifting global markets toward legal timber with an associated licensing scheme in preparation.

In the same way, recent amendments to the Lacey Act in the US, which prohibits illegal trade in animal and plants, including timber, require importers to prove the origin, species and legality of any forest product entering the country. This burden of proof has resulted in increased pressure exerted throughout global supply chains, requiring suppliers to trace and verify the source and legality of their timber. While the mechanisms of the Lacey Act and the EU regulation vary, the end result will be the same. Therefore, you have to know the law and be confident you have complied.

Encouraging and rewarding transparency and responsibility in the world's supply chains, legal frameworks, like the Lacey Act and FLEGT, are having a profound impact on the timber sector as companies seek to demonstrate their ability to exercise due care in sourcing legal wood. But achieving legality is only a stepping stone in safeguarding the world's forests.

If the negative impacts of illegal logging and associated trade are to be truly eliminated it is surely the responsibility of all players to work together. Governments across the world are waking up to the issue. NGOs such as WWF, and others, are increasingly developing practical approaches and there are numerous service providers who can do the checking. But this all relies on the industry itself to act. Legality is not enough though, as in most parts of the world legal compliance is a long way from sustainability. By using the stepping stone of legal forest operations and trade to later achieve sound forest management and responsible wood sourcing, it is possible to supply the world's need for timber while also conserving the biodiversity of the world's last, great forest areas, such as Borneo, the Congo Basin and the Amazon. Simply, legality is good but it is not enough.

If we are to capitalise on the inherent characteristics of wood we need to be able to compete with other building materials. Until the hurdle of legality is crossed, it is hard to make more headway against what are obviously less sustainable materials. By sending consistent market signals for legal and credibly certified timber, you can play an integral role in positively transforming the nature of the global forest products supply chain and, consequently, its impact on forest resources around the world. ■

SUMMARY

- Illegal logging jeopardizes the future of the timber trade.
- A global response is needed to tackle the problem.
- New EU legislation to combat the illegal timber trade is pending.
- The industry's marketing should focus on legal and credibly certified timber.



Far left and left: legal logging isn't necessarily the same as sustainable logging

Above: George White is head of the WWF's Global Forest & Trade Network



Relations between NGOs and the timber trade are far better than they were, but both could benefit from an even closer links, says Betsy Hickman, communications manager for the WWF Global Forest & Trade Network

Working together

GFTN has helped forest management Inset: Betsy Hickman

SUMMARY

- The timber trade has a central role to play in the war on illegal logging.
- Environmental groups can help businesses eliminate illegal wood from their supply chain.
- The WWF Global Forest & Trade Network has shown that sustainable timber sourcing is good for business.
- The WWF is an observer on the Timber Trade Federation's Forests Forever committee.

In the past, there were occasions when relations between the timber industry and the environmental community were strained, and business and conservation seemed diametrically opposed.

However, growing awareness of one another's needs and an increase in social and environmental consciousness among consumers and businesses have led to mutual recognition of the importance of working together. Certainly, in the UK, work on the EU regulations to limit the illegal timber trade has seen more fluid dialogue on forest and business issues between all stakeholders.

For both the timber sector and environmental communities to really achieve positive and lasting results, an understanding of how much progress on forest resources issues has been made so far and how much is left to do, is essential. WWF wants a future where companies make a net positive contribution to the well-being of society and the planet, and we're pretty certain this is the way many businesses see it too. Business is part of the solution.

In the past, misunderstandings arose primarily when companies have not had full visibility of supply chains, fully disclosed information, or misjudged the interest of stakeholders. Long term though, a responsible trade and a solution-oriented environmental lobby both want to level the playing field to support sustainably produced forest goods. This would leave less room for average performers to benefit from a market that doesn't yet adequately distinguish between products.

There is a lot to do to achieve this state of play though. The job is not yet done for UK plc when it comes to the trade from the most threatened forest habitats. It is hoped this is where joint action on key issues and a more thorough understanding of the trade can deliver change.

Concerted effort

The timber industry may well find that the environmental community has more visibility within a particular supply chain in forest producer countries and this can be a great help in reaching a mutually agreeable plan to eliminate poorly sourced goods. Working together, there is a path to overcome risks both to business reputation and threatened forest resources. WWF's Global Forest & Trade Network (GFTN) provides long-term evidence that reviewing supply chains and trading in certified products help create a vital, healthy and responsible timber industry.

Over the past 20 years, the GFTN has helped thousands of companies overcome forest management and responsible purchasing challenges and to progress towards certification.

Recognising that we cannot achieve our objectives alone, we look to timber traders to direct the GFTN to where further change needs to happen to stop the most devastating impacts on our planet.

For our part, we will carry on working to influence the people you supply – asking them to prioritise responsible purchasing, trying to raise awareness and pressure them to change and monitor their forest footprint. At the same time we're helping identify key gaps in products traded to support producers delivery into the market.

We value our presence on the Timber Trade Federation's Forests Forever committee as an observer. This is a way of connecting with the trade and appraising our goals against its views.

Improving communication

Forest products businesses' supply chain connections give them a good idea of what is happening on the ground and, going forward, it would be great to see them providing more stories about developments in the trade globally. What are buyers' experiences of what's happening in the forest? How have problems been overcome and transformed into success? What challenges remain?

Developing this dialogue together with the environmental community would be a great leap forward in mutual understanding and drive market change where it matters most. Forest producers respond to what the market asks for – but they need support from that market too. Industry purchasing power can transform forest management far faster and more effectively than any other form of intervention, so governments need to hear the industry's calls for change, alongside the NGO's.

Ultimately, we look forward to a situation where more companies exercise due diligence to cut the risk of handling illegal timber, and service providers and suppliers differentiate themselves through guarantees of being able to deliver on sustainability. WWF can help the trade by communicating the multiple benefits of better forest resource management for conservation and development, not just in the UK, but in producer and processing countries too. Together we can collaborate to lead the forest industry into a new era of responsible management, environmental and social stewardship. ■

One of the most powerful forces in preventing forest destruction and irresponsible management is the marketplace for timber products, yet most conservation tools work outside or are at odds with it.

WWF supports a different approach, using credible certification as a means of getting the marketplace to advance forest conservation. By contributing to the greater recognition of the importance of environmentally and socially responsible forestry practices, credible certification is helping to clean up the timber industry by engaging producers, retailers and consumers in this positive effort.

However, some argue that differing approaches between various certification schemes have resulted in market confusion. Some believe this confusion has slowed the uptake of certification and, consequently, the improved management of the world's forests. However, the problem is rather whether clear market signals are being sent through the whole supply chain to indicate a preference for credibly certified products.

Fragments of demand

Throughout the world there are still a number of forest sectors that are not willing to play by the rules of the modern industry. Unwilling to give clear signals, they continue to purchase timber that comes from inappropriate sources. The primary markets for the "empty spaces" on the certification map are by and large still not sending the message for a preference for certified products, or even for legal timber. The only message that is coming through is price and that is where the mismatch lies.

There are simply not enough buyers asking for any sort of certification. Those that are asking are in the minority, and they do not tend to source from all of the places that the wood is available. Rather, they tend to mainly buy wood from regions in close proximity, resulting in the majority of certified markets being in North America and Europe. Conversely, markets in Asia do not seem to be pushing for certified material, resulting in signals becoming fragmented and watered down. As a result, this leaves big gaps in important forest areas like the Amazon, Congo Basin and Borneo.

If the timber sector is to drive positive change on the ground and improve the sustainability of the industry,



A clear call for certification

Timber certification will only progress if it's clearly specified through the supply chain, says Ian Gray, WWF Global Forest & Trade Network responsible forestry co-ordinator

clear market signals must be sent throughout the entire supply chain to demand credibly certified products.

Rather than avoiding tropical regions because of a perceived risk, responsible purchasers need to engage suppliers in these regions to ensure that market incentives drive positive change on the ground. Otherwise, unsustainable demand will always be there to perpetuate the destructive cycle of irresponsible and illegal logging.

Likewise, it is key for all stakeholders, whatever their interest, to scrutinise the certification schemes they are buying from to make sure that they are delivering on their sustainability promises for the future of forest resources and the people and biodiversity that depend on them. We must accept that all have improvements to make at the global level, whether in truly balancing how diverse stakeholders are able to participate, or ensuring adequate implementation of the standards on the ground. Then the bigger job for us all is to get the huge remaining percentage of production forests in threatened forest regions under better management practices.

Certification

So WWF continues to believe that credible certification is the primary tool to create such an incentive for producers and a choice for consumers – one that leads to results that cannot be created through legislation and regulation alone. And while there is still considerable room for improvement in all schemes, we believe Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification to be the credible choice in promoting improved forest management with transparency, international consistency and balanced multi-stakeholder governance. Performance on the ground matters and over time we expect to see other schemes raising their standards across all performance areas.

And we are not alone. Many significant players agree that this is an agenda worth sharing. Approximately 300 companies have joined with us through WWF's Global Forest & Trade Network, asserting that the FSC is the right choice in managing forests to not only provide timber, but also a range of environmental and social benefits.

When the market sends really clear signals, companies listen and respond because it makes good business sense. As long as responsible buyers challenge their suppliers to get certified products or move to those that can, the market for responsibly produced timber can effect real change.

If the timber sector is to become truly sustainable, we must continue to work the message down the supply chain to achieve certified product. Some companies think that they are too small or distant from the source to effect change. But your request for credibly certified material, when added to other responsible buyers, could mark the tipping point for your supplier to commit to certification. A decision that could save the world's last great forest areas. ■

SUMMARY

- Poor forest management will continue if buyers don't clearly stipulate certified timber.
- Price is still the principal market driver for some supply chains.
- Buyers must scrutinise certification schemes to ensure they're delivering sustainability.



Ian Gray: "we must work the message down the supply chain"

Energy issue hots up

The growing wood energy market needs ground rules to ensure fair competition for fibre and that fuel is sustainably sourced, says Laszlo Matthe, bioenergy co-ordinator for WWF International

The bioenergy market is quickly becoming a chief competitor for wood material, and recent, legally binding renewable energy targets in more than 50 countries, give it still greater impetus.

In general, WWF does not take a position on potential wood end uses but focuses instead on ensuring raw materials are produced responsibly. However, it is unquestionable that in the face of this shifting landscape certain sectors will have to adapt.

Large forest products companies have already recognised this as another market that they need to respond to, and the signs indicate it has the potential to affect the industry as a whole.

The largest impact will be on those buying cheap timber for panel products and pulp wood, as prices are predicted to inflate due to rising competition for this fibre supply.

But this is not all bad news. In some parts of the world, the price of fibre used by the panel board or the pulp and paper sector was kept artificially low and the higher prices forest owners are now receiving due to the competition can result in positive environmental and social implications. In the same way, it could also bring more investment into forestry, leading to better management and reinforcing the need for better quality, sustainably-produced, forest products.

But while WWF supports renewable energy, there are also serious challenges in ensuring that climate benefits are delivered without harming nature. Unbridled additional timber demand could drive low-cost, poorly managed plantations or practices such as stump extraction and whole tree harvesting. The aim is to recover more fibre, but the practice requires careful analysis with regard to its impact on long-term biodiversity, productivity and carbon.

Against this background, what is needed are some ground rules in the bioenergy field, stipulating credi-



ble certification and responsible purchasing, for instance, to ensure that forests are managed properly, regardless of end use.

The EU recently failed to set such rules. While it recognises potential environmental and social concerns – especially related to imported material – it fell short of proposing a robust and practical system to ensure that biomass production and use are truly sustainable. Instead of a legally binding EU-wide solution, demanded by more than 90% of stakeholders, including commercial operators, it proposed a voluntary, national system which is likely to maintain an inadequate status quo.

Looking to the future, fast-growing plantations need to be carefully established and managed to ensure the maintenance or enhancement of ecosystem services and conservation values. And support measures should be carefully designed to avoid perverse incentives. We need to address wasteful consumption and aim to use resource efficiently to maximise benefits and minimise environmental and social impacts. And regardless of wood end use, forest management should follow internationally agreed sustainability principles, such as the FSC's. ■

SUMMARY

- The wood fuel market could ensure fairer prices for wood fibre.
- IT could also drive poor forest management practice.
- Rules are needed so that bioenergy environmental benefits aren't at the expense of nature.



Above left: the bioenergy market has the potential to affect the forest products industry as a whole

Above: Laszlo Matthe is WWF International's bioenergy co-ordinator

Below: the Norwich Open Academy

PHOTO: KEIR

GREEN BUILDING BONUS

WWF construction sector adviser Sam Hall says working with builders on certification is good for the timber trade

Before starting the SI Partnership consultancy, I ran sustainability strategy delivery for construction companies, building project teams' awareness of the use of low impact materials. I made the point that materials like low carbon concrete and recycled steel always come second to timber in terms of sustainability: steel recycling uses a lot of energy and low cement concrete still has a relatively high carbon footprint.

There's a limit to the volume of materials that can be replaced with timber in a building, but there is still potential to develop its use if clients and designers are properly informed and engaged. Much of the drive though needs to come from the timber trade. It has the knowledge of the material and, if it wants to see change in construction, it has

to make certified timber easy to use.

The challenge is that the construction industry isn't just looking at sustainability. Its overriding concern is building profitably. Using credibly certified timber should add little or no extra cost. But extra expense can be incurred through suppliers or subcontractors being unfamiliar with chain of custody (CoC) management, buying certified material and the related business process requirements. So anything the timber trade can do to help buyers understand these issues is welcome. The good news is that companies often tell us that gaining CoC certification improved business administration and made them more efficient and profitable.

Many main contractors and some developers are also starting to specify FSC-certified



buildings using the FSC Project Certification procedure. And the BREEAM and Code for Sustainable Homes standards also encourage contractors to specify certified timber. So there is increasing market pressure towards certification in the timber supply chain. Any construction company going for the FSC Project Certification needs a reliable supplier of certified timber that can provide the CoC paperwork automatically and easily and there's a growing market advantage for companies that can do that.

One last thing, if anyone can supply FSC-certified trusses let me know. Constructors are crying out for them.



Above: timber is specified for low carbon housing
Right: Rougier operates certified concessions



James Jones was named Scottish Environmental Hauler of the Year 2010



Far right: SCA has appointed a team of eco experts to its conservation team

From carbon neutral to chemical free

Timber businesses are taking an increasingly all-round approach on environmental performance. Mike Jeffree reports

Mention environment in the same breath as timber and what instantly springs to mind are eco-certification and the battle against illegal logging. Of course these are critical issues for the wood sector. But, as TTJ's soundings of a cross-section of businesses highlights, they increasingly form only a part of the industry's environmental story. Businesses are adopting ever more holistic green strategies, covering every aspect of their operation. The aim is not only to supply products based on sustainably sourced raw material, but to make maximum use of the timber resource, minimise waste and pollution, and help end users reduce their environmental impact.

Highlighting just how integral green issues have become, Finnish timber and forest products giant UPM has officially rebranded itself as a "Biofore" company. The term underlines the range of its activities using "wood-based biomass to create value from renewable, recyclable materials in fibre-based, energy-related and engineered products businesses". That means everything from timber to bioethanol.

"As the front runner of the Biofore industry we intend to lead this integration into an innovation-driven future, creating value from fibre-based products which are sustainable throughout their life cycle," says the company.

This approach is underpinned by a corporate responsibility policy covering sustainable sourcing, climate, water, forests and waste. All UPM's wood procurement and production sites have chain of custody, its mills have cut hazardous waste output by 60% since 2006, energy self-sufficiency has increased 40% since 1997 and 60% of its fuel is now biomass-based. It has also committed to responsible water use by signing the United Nations Global Compact Water Mandate.

At SCA in Sweden a clear green marker has been laid down by the recruitment of Tomas Rydkvist. He's the first of five eco experts being taken on to expand the

company's conservation team. SCA has 4,000 operational harvesting sites and Mr Rydkvist and colleagues will be monitoring all aspects of forestry and timber production. The aim is to minimise disturbance to habitats and ecosystems, which even means replicating the naturally regenerating effects of forest fires.

"Environmental protection is more than excluding areas from active forestry," said Mr Rydkvist. "Natural disturbances, such as wildfires, create important habitats so we must recreate the role of 'disturbance agent'."

The detail to which forest product sector environmental policy goes is illustrated at fellow Swedish timber producer Södra. To meet its objective of "chemical-free forest regeneration", it is researching a non-toxic method of dealing with the pine weevil.

The weevil is the biggest cause of damage to forests in southern Sweden where Södra is based. About 80% of seedlings unprotected against the insect die, but currently chemical insecticide is the main weapon.

Working with university researchers and biologists, Södra aims to develop a physical protection device.

"As well as its effectiveness against the weevil, we're looking at its impact on the seedling and planting and its degradability," said project team leader Andreas Alvehus.

The green strategies at BSW's mills at Fort William and Dalbeattie are equally comprehensive, a fact recently recognised with accolades from the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA). Dalbeattie was commended for its water management systems, while Fort William received a SEPA rating of excellent, covering its all-round pollution prevention and control. To build on this performance, it recently installed a low environmental impact low pressure treatment tank to produce Easi-Edge construction timber.

James Jones & Sons has just picked up an eco award too: Scottish Environmental Hauler of the Year 2010. It

SUMMARY

- UPM has cut hazardous waste output by 60% in four years.
- SCA is building up its own conservation department.
- BSW has been given a Scottish Environmental Protection Agency 'excellent' rating.
- James Jones is Scottish Environmental Hauler of the Year.
- International Timber and Pasquill worked with Nottingham University on the H.O.U.S.E. solar-powered eco home.
- Rougier's environmental management plans cover 2 million ha of West African forests.



Last year 95% of Richard Burbidge's timber was PEFC or FSC certified

won the Transport News Rewards title for its adoption of the TireBoss system. This automatically adjusts truck tyre pressure to suit the surface, minimising damage to roads and forest and, in cutting fuel and tyre consumption, help James Jones meet ISO 14001 emission targets.

Other central features of timber industry environmental policy today are transparency and communication; companies know they must be seen to be green and support their claims with solid, credible evidence.

For instance Stellac Thermowood, supplied by International Timber as ZeroClad and ZeroDeck, is backed by an audited energy and carbon trail covering harvesting, processing, transport and replanting. The emission figures from this are offset against biomass generated in Stellac production for a final carbon footprint calculation.

Panel products specialist Norbord is also focused on stating its environmental case, recently revamping its www.betterbyfar.org website where it not only details the eco credentials of all its products, but also lines up facts and figures to "challenge assumptions about forestry and wood products industries".

Green R&D co-operation

Given the complexity of the issues and importance to overall environmental performance of sustainable supply chains, cross-industry collaboration in green R&D is also vital. The timber sector is playing its role here too, notably in its work with the construction sector.

For example, Saint-Gobain Group companies International Timber and engineered timber products and systems specialist Pasquill worked with Nottingham University architectural and engineering students to develop the zero carbon H.O.U.S.E. This timber cassette-based, wood-clad experimental eco-home is the University's entry in the international Solar Decathlon contest to develop a house reliant on solar energy alone. The building featured at this year's Ecobuild show, as did the RuralZed eco-house from ZedFactory architects, which was also created with products and technical input from International and Pasquill.

And in Scotland, collaboration between RTC Timber Systems and the Timber Systems Division of James Jones has resulted in the country's first house design to achieve the Passivhaus energy-efficiency standard. The affordable housing features Jones' JJI-joists as vertical studs in its closed panels, enabling the use of extra insulation to create an ultra-energy efficient Passivewall.

Another R&D focus is to make greater use of more prolific and lower grade or less robust timber species. A central role is being played by wood modification and the process is being increasingly widely applied. For instance, the acetylation method used by Accys Technologies to create Accoya (radiata pine with the properties of a hardwood), is now being applied to softwood fibre to make more durable, dimensionally stable sheet materials. The first result, Medite Tricoxa exterior MDF, developed with Coillte Panel

Products, was launched at Ecobuild.

The aim of Weyerhaeuser to offer products that "have minimal impact on the environment and maximum commercial benefit" is illustrated by its development of a hardwood and plywood range using plantation-grown eucalyptus.

Supporting forest regeneration

The Lyptus brand lumber, veneer, plywood and flooring produced by the US company's Brazilian arm are based on trees that can be harvested in 14-16 years from plantations on degraded former agricultural land. It also contributes to forestry regeneration, by planting native species alongside the eucalyptus.

"The environmental commitment follows through to manufacture, with the mill using virtually every portion of the log and using the residuals for bio-fuel and charcoal," said European commercial director John Guerin.

Plantation-grown eucalyptus forms part of Timbmet's range too, in the form of FSC-certified red grandis from Uruguay. This clear durability class 2 timber is billed as suitable for a range of uses and can be finished to resemble other species, from oak to meranti. And, according to FairOak Timber, which is trialling its use for windows, its appeal goes beyond environmental merit. "It's an excellent alternative to sapele, but less expensive," said production manager Chris Johnson.

Underpinning these diverse initiatives, the timber sector continues to press on with its best-known environmental strategy: wood and forestry certification. As our quick survey for this article showed, it's being pursued worldwide and all along the supply chain, from forest to factory. Balustrade and mouldings producer Richard Burbidge said that 95% of its timber last year was certified under the PEFC or FSC schemes, a figure set to rise this year, and importer distributor James Latham highlighted its work with African suppliers to help them verify supply chain legality and move towards certification. The result is that most of Latham's timber from the continent is now Verified Legal Origin, and a proportion FSC certified. Its panel business has worked with a Chinese mill to help it achieve FSC certification.

French hardwood and plywood specialist Rougier, meanwhile, continues to pursue FSC certification of its forest concessions, with three in Cameroon achieving the FSC Controlled Wood standard last year and the company's subsidiary, SFID, gaining chain of custody approval. Across the Congo Basin it now has environmental management plans covering 2 million ha of forest.

A trader commenting for TTJ's hardwood report this week (see p14) said that one in four customers now specifies certified timber, and rising. That indicates that the environmental pressures on the industry are, if anything, set to grow. But it also highlights that, exploited to the full, as the sector is increasingly doing, timber's superior green credentials give it an inherent marketing and commercial advantage. ■

