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We report on the forestry industrialisation conference this month, and it raises both positive and negative flags.

On the positive side, there is consensus that the forestry value chain has a significant role to play and the time has come for all stakeholders to trumpet the wonderful world of wood. According to Forestry South Africa (FSA), forestry is a multi-billion rand industry, responsible for 11% of the country’s agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) and 5% of South Africa’s manufacturing GDP. With an export value of over R25.8-billion, and a trade balance of R7.2-billion, it is a key contributor to the South Africa’s economy.

Apart from the 11,000 people who plant, nurture and harvest the trees, some 20,000 workers are employed in sawmilling, 6,000 in the timber, board manufacturing, and 2,200 in the mining timber industries. These numbers increase dramatically when we look further downstream and consider the thousands of farmers using “latte” for fencing, the pole industry, and pallet manufacturers.

The furniture industry has also been identified in Ipap (Industrial Policy Action Plan) as an important industry within our economy. This is because it is labour intensive and has the potential to contribute to reducing the level of unemployment, increase exports and contribute to the development of small and medium enterprises. There are 2,200 registered firms involved in the manufacturing of furniture, bedding and upholstery, employing 26,400 factory workers. The furniture industry on its own contributes about one percent to the manufacturing GDP and 1.1 percent to manufacturing jobs.

None of this would be possible without plantation forestry. But, according to FSA’s Michael Peter, the forestry industry has always been last in the pecking order when it comes to the issuing of water use licenses. “Only once human needs, then agricultural and then industrial needs are met, does forestry come into consideration. Why is such an important agricultural activity only allocated 1% of the land and 5% of the water? Why is there not more support from government for this industry?”

It will be interesting to see how proposals to introduce agroforestry projects, like berry production and nuts will fair, when it comes to the issuing of water use permits. Let’s hope short term profitability is not put before the long-term investment in wood.
The Safcol Forestry Industrialisation Conference

The Safcol Forestry Industrialisation Conference, FIC 2017, was held at the Transnet Rail Training Centre near Tembisa in Kempton Park recently and things became quite heated as issues of land claims and transformation took centre stage.

Speaker after speaker, starting with Safcol Chairman Lungile Mabece, urged the forestry industry to transform at a faster rate. Mabece went as far as calling for attendees who wish to become involved in forestry business ventures to add their name to an impromptu list so that Safcol could help facilitate the transformation of the industry.

He also went on to warn businesses that if they fail to transform, they would find themselves more and more ostracised within the industry.

Mabece also warned potential BEE partners that the only way in which Safcol would ever approve such BEE partnerships, is if both parties are actively involved in the industry.

“We need people who are not afraid to get their hands dirty,” says Mabece. “We need patriots in this industry, so do not think you are going to make a BEE deal where you are only the face of the deal. You need to be actively involved in the day to day operation of the concern. We do not condone free rides.”

Mabece went on to outline a plan to introduce agroforestry projects in some Safcol forests, which he said will promote food security as well as profitability.

He detailed the outcome of a review which looked at the production of berries within the forest, saying that preliminary findings indicate that one could make more money from the production of berries than from the actual forestry projects.

Speakers at the conference included the Deputy Minister for Public Enterprises, Dikobe Martin, Deputy Minister of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, Bheki Cele, Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Bulelani Magwanishe, and Deputy Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform Mcebisi Skwatcha.

Another issue that was continually raised is the fact that the forestry industry is finding it difficult to attract young people into the industry. Speaker after speaker raised the fact that the industry is poorly marketed and that more needs to be done to get young people to study toward a career in the forestry sector.

According to minister Martin the industry is teeming with opportunities for growth, yet the general public remains largely ignorant of the opportunities that are available.

He said that the forestry sector has the potential to create jobs, reduce poverty, and transform the economies of rural communities who live in close proximity to forestry operations, yet, despite the fact that forestry contributed significantly to the national agricultural GDP in 2015 as opposed to only 4.5% in 1980, and the industry creating and sustaining in excess of 158 000 jobs, the public is scarcely aware of the industry, or of the other downstream opportunities that it creates.

Other speakers at the event included the executive director at Forestry South Africa (FSA), Michael Peter, Safcol forestry chair at the University of Pretoria, Prof Paxie Chirwa, chief scientist and director, at the bio-refinery industry development facility at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Dr Bruce Sithole, and independent forestry consultant Jeanette Clarke.

Very interesting talks were also held by Richard Stretton, the founder of Koop Design, Werner Slabbert jnr of Ecolog Homes, and Erwin van der Weerd from Greenpods / Perfect Places on the benefits of timberframe homes and modular buildings.

Things became slightly heated when Werner Slabbert snr, a board member of the Institute for Timber Construction South Africa (ITC-SA) took to the podium to lament government’s failure to declare wood as part of their Alternative Building Materials (ABM) list.
Senior board member of the Institute for Timber Construction of South Africa (ITC-SA), Werner Slabbert

Creating an enabling environment for forestry industrialisation: timber frame buildings

Senior board member of the Institute for Timber Construction of South Africa (ITC-SA), Werner Slabbert, gave a fiery presentation highlighting the barriers to market faced by the timber construction industry in South Africa during the recent Safcol Forestry Industrialisation Conference held in Kempton Park.

According to Slabbert, the timber construction industry in South Africa is very small due to a number of issues causing timber not to be seen by the public – or the government for that matter – as a preferred building material.

As an example, Slabbert noted that 300 schools built by government using alternative building technologies (ABTs) were all built in light gauge steel.

“These schools could as easily have been built in timber frame,” says Slabbert. “Why were they not?”

“There is a great misconception of timber out there and we as an industry need to really take on these issues through education and marketing campaigns to ensure that these incorrect perceptions of timber as a sub-standard building material are corrected.”

Slabbert highlighted the ITC-SAs push to try and get timber classified as a government preferred ABT by showing scores of images of buildings that could have been built using timber frame construction, but were not.

“There are so many benefits when you use timber frame construction,” he says. “Timber frame buildings present a much more comfortable environment than light gauge steel and even brick and mortar does.

“If built to the correct specifications, nearly anything is possible, from schools, clinics, libraries and hospitals, to multi-storey student accommodation.

Slabbert says that a part of the role of the ITC-SA is to introduce and train architects to the concept of timber construction in the hope that more and more buildings will be built in timber frame construction.

The architects are the ones that design buildings and decide what materials will be used in the construction of the building.

“It is not that the architects are lazy,” says Slabbert. “It is that they are uneducated. If they were better educated they would design wooden buildings.”
Slabbert says that it takes six years to become an architect, and that during all that time, architectural students only receive one lecture on the subject. From that lecture, they spend a further four to six weeks building a timber frame model as a project."

"The brick and mortar industry has spent so much money trying to discredit other building materials over the years that they have managed to get their arguments to stick."

"From misconceptions about how flammable timber frame is, to incorrect statements about insulation."

Slabbert called on the industry as well as associations to help the ITC-SA initiate a fund to be used for such educational purposes as marketing campaigns and studies into the viability of timber frame buildings.

"It is important to take into consideration the flexibility of timber. Unlike other building materials, timber is enormously flexible. Buildings – especially government buildings – like libraries, clinics, hospital and even accommodation need not be drab and plain when using timber as a building material."

"Over and above this, it is estimated that up to 11% of carbon gasses released annually, is due to the construction industry."

"But, what people fail to see is that every cubic metre of timber stores about one tonne of carbon. It goes a long way toward helping us reduce our carbon footprint."

Slabbert says that timber construction is an ideal solution to help the South African construction industry cut down on the emission of carbon gasses.

"Other building materials, including light gauge steel and brick and mortar cause huge amounts of carbon gasses to be released during the production process."

Slabbert says that since timber frame buildings are pre-manufactured, it also saves a lot of time actually putting up the building on site, and that it can be as little as a third of the time it takes to build a brick and mortar building.

Part of the presentation was also spent highlighting the role of the ITC-SA to the timber construction industry.

"The ITC-SA is a voluntary organisation, put in place to help create and maintain standards within the timber construction industry and ensure that our members adhere to the correct standards when it comes to construction. We also have a huge emphasis on training and skills development."

"One of the ways in which the ITC-SA actively contributes to transformation in the industry, is through education and training."
Trends and constraints within the forestry industry

Executive Director of Forestry South Africa, Michael Peter spoke about challenges and opportunities within the forestry sector at the recent Safcol Forestry Industrialisation Conference, highlighting the effects of declining feedstock on the timber industry in South Africa.

According to Peter, South Africa has in the last 15 years lost 70 000 Ha of pine plantations, while eucalyptus plantations increased with only 24 000Ha.

Peter says that competing land use is becoming a huge problem for the forestry industry, adding that a lot of area has been lost in Limpopo, for instance, to macadamia and avocado production.

“People are converting to these crops as fast as they can,” says Peter. “And it makes sense. Why invest in a long rotation crop when you can invest in a product that guarantees returns on an annual basis?”

“The forestry industry sells their products to sawmills with an average recovery rate of around 49%. That is a lot of value wasted.”

One of the problems facing the forestry industry in South Africa and around the world according to Peter, is the fact that forestry products are not promoted.

“We are not inspired by forestry products,” he says. “The products are consumed without passion. People do not think of the wood fibres used in the production of their clothing, or the roofs that keep the rain out and the chairs that they sit in.

“It is not because there is a lack of interest by the politicians as much as it is the fact that people do not value forestry products until they’re not there.” Another big issue proving to be a huge challenge for the forestry industry, is water.

“We all know that South Africa is not a water rich country and that there are water constraints, but I think that in many cases, we are led to believe that these water constraints are much worse than they actually are.

“The forestry industry has always been last in the pecking order when it comes to the issuing of water use licenses. Only once human needs, then agricultural and then industrial needs are met, does forestry come into consideration. And then we get licenses in areas where the other industries do not want to operate.

“Forestry’s contribution to South Africa’s agriculture GDP has more than doubled since 1980 currently standing at 41.2% of the country’s Agriculture GDP. Why is an industry that generates 42% of the agricultural GDP only allocated 1% of the land and 5% of the water? Why is there not more support from government for this industry?

“The industry provides 22% of all the jobs in the agricultural sector and the export of forestry products grew with 3.3 billion rand last year.”

According to Peter the Department of Water and Sanitation has started carrying out investigations into water usage recently and in some cases, they
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have found that up to 50% of the water allocated to the agricultural industry has not been taken up.

“But when a timber grower, trying to grow trees in that same area wants access to water he cannot because the catchment is closed. This needs to be re-evaluated.”

Other constraints to the forestry industry include a lack of organised labour, which is hindering the industry from getting more government assistance, false perceptions about food security, and the reluctance of government to invest in a long rotation industry.

Another constraint is proposed new land taxes on forestry land. “I understand that government wants to make a plan to generate the extra cash needed for the massive tax shortfall this year, but the answer cannot be taking an industry that works and taxing it until it can no longer work. “If you want to attract investment in this sector then the last thing you need to do now is introduce new taxes.”

Transformation

Peter says that land claims, if handled incorrectly pose another threat to the industry. Land expropriation in the forestry sector will cause absolute chaos not only within the industry, but also in the economy.

“With over R150 billion in land loans against property it will create absolute mayhem if the government wants to start expropriating land and it will also get the banks up against the wall."

“The fact is that the land is not the answer. Land, if not properly utilised can become a liability very quickly, especially when the government starts demanding that you pay land taxes and rates.”

Forestry ownership figures currently show that 50% of the forestry sector is in the hands of the corporate sector, while 17% is in the hands of private growers, 3.7% (to the tune of approximately R17.6 billion) of this being black owned. Another 11.7% is in the hands of ex Safcol corporations like MTO and Safcol owns 10.5%.

Transformation is certainly an issue that we have to take on in this country. It is an issue that people are passionate about, and many people are disgruntled by the apparent slow rate of transformation within the industry.

“But people forget that ownership is just one of seven elements of the BEE scorecard. I think we should concentrate more on the other elements of the BEE scorecards as they address the future of the industry.

“Things like the uptake of the youth into the forestry sector, as well as the uptake of women and people with disadvantages.”

Peter also spoke about the entrance of black investors into the timber industry, saying he believes that the real equity within the industry lies more in solid wood processing than in pulp and paper. “The global benchmark for the establishment of a new pulp mill is somewhere between three and five billion rand. So it does not make sense to invest this kind of money in a country where we are already switching off pulp mills.

“I believe the opportunities lie more in the solid wood sector where people can invest in both new and existing entities.”

Trends

Peter says that he expects feedstocks to continue declining, partially due to competing land use and conversion to cash crops. This will lead to stiffer competition from alternatives such as light gauge steel and concrete.

He also believes that, without intervention from government, forestry and even further processing in South Africa will continue to see very low levels of investment.

“Two of the biggest companies in the South African timber industry, Sappi and Mondi now have less than 10% of their operating capacity in South Africa.

“The fact is that other countries like Mozambique and Swaziland seems to be much more business friendly and are much less expensive to operate and do business in.”

There is some good news too though. The decline in feedstock is likely to have as an effect, albeit forced, a renewed need within the processing sub-sectors to be more efficient and to strive for better recovery rates.

He also sees opportunities within the timber fibre based bio-based products and green chemicals industries.

The proposed carbon tax can, according to Peter also only be good for the timber industry as it will likely attract more investment into low carbon industries like the timber industry, as opposed to carbon heavy products like concrete and steel.
Nelson Mandela University (NMU) forestry students, Zamadlamini Dlamini and Tertius Venter, were chosen by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) to attend the 14th International Junior Forest Contest 2017 in Moscow. Students from Europe, Asia, the Commonwealth of Independent States, Africa, North and South America were given the opportunity to present their research work.

Dlamini presented her research on “Peat fires of Zululand,” and Venter presented his research on “Testing different growing media to improve clonal production.” Both students are in their third year at NMU, and were highly commended for their inputs and received Merit Diplomas and a medal for their presentations.

The Junior Foresters’ Competition, an annual event hosted by the Russian Federal Forestry Agency, brings together young people between the ages of 14 and 22 from nations around the world. It rewards young scientists for their interest and efforts in the environmental field and encourages international dialogue on forestry issues.

Twenty-eight countries were involved in the contest and 35 participants presented their findings and unique forestry related research. Apart from the research presentations the delegates took part in team building activities and were also taken on excursions in and around the central city of Moscow.

The students were accompanied by their lecturer Muedanyi Ramantswana and DAFF’s deputy director for Sector Capacity Development Irene Mathabela. Representatives from South Africa’s embassy in Russia, Tshisikawe Nekhuzhiga and Inna Zinovyeva, spent time getting to know the students and also attended their presentations.
The use of vermicast, or earthworm castings in the seedlings industry is nothing new. As a matter of fact it has been used far and wide for a number of years now and it has proven to be highly effective in promoting good growth and root development in seedlings.

It is widely used in the production of forestry and fruit seedlings. Vermicast is also a natural pest deterrent which, to an extent, helps protect seedlings during early development.

In recent years, the practice has become popular in South Africa’s fruit industry to help replenish the soil in plantations of natural biological nutrients. The burgeoning macadamia industry is most likely one of the biggest users of vermicast in South Africa.

But, seeing as vermicast is so effective in replenishing natural biological nutrients in soil, why is it not being used more extensively in our commercial forests?

In a forest that will be growing for 15 or more years before trees are ready to be harvested, it makes perfect sense to use vermicast to ensure that the soil is fertile and has the optimum qualities needed to grow strong healthy trees.

The main reason, according to Nicholas Ings from Optigrow, a leader in the natural soil restoration industry, is cost.

“Forestry plantations cover vast areas of land,” says Ings. “The fact is that to treat all that land with vermicast will be a massive expense. It is not only the cost of the vermicast, but also the transport of the vermicast and the actual spreading of the vermicast over the area to be treated that would have to be considered.

“Meanwhile, at Optigrow we have decided to take another route to try and achieve the natural organic restoration of forests.

“We purposely leave small earthworms as well as cocoons in our vermicast, so that if a pine tree, for instance, is planted out in a five litre bag, and our vermicast is part of the mix in which it is planted, the worms will, by the time that the pine tree is planted out into the forest, have turned a large portion of that organic mix into vermicast.

“They will also likely have reproduced, meaning that there is now a lot more worms and cocoons in that bag. So when the tree is eventually planted out into the forest, the worms end up in the forest as well.

“This then starts a natural cycle, with the worms feeding on decaying organic material, turning that material into vermicast and thereby naturally replenishing the soil with much needed microbes and other biological nutrients that will result in much healthier trees.

“In time, this system will grow as the worms reproduce and spread throughout the forest, to the point where it will become a completely natural self sustaining system.”

According to Ings, Optigrow already supplies some of the larger nurseries in the Nelspruit area and they are currently in talks with one of the largest nursery companies to supply vermicast to them for their forestry seedlings.

“Nature has developed a very efficient system that works really well,” says Ings. “The use of chemicals alone can lead to build up of chemicals and an imbalance in the soil. The use of natural methods to support the underlying function of the soil can keep the environment at its best to support our trees.

Earthworms are actually known for their resilience to chemicals and their ability to naturally rid the soil of unwanted chemical buildup over time.”

Optigrow, established in 2010, makes use of the Eisenia fetida, also known as the red wriggler or tiger worm for the production of their vermicast.

The company also has a macadamia nursery, as well as farming operation where they produce garlic.
Elna Morris and Claudio Morris, both of Ezigo Karatara Nursery were at the Knysna Timber Festival to demonstrate different aspects of forestry. Elna explained the art of tree grafting while Claudio drew the crowds when he showed how to use the tree bicycle to climb pine trees in order to harvest pine cones for their seeds.

With six nurseries in South Africa and one in Swaziland, Ezigo is one of the leading companies in the seedlings industry in South Africa, producing Eucalyptus, wattle, and pine seedlings and clones, as well as a wide variety of vegetables, fruit, Macadamia, Avocado, and indigenous trees.

It is also at the forefront of clonal and hybrid species production, producing on average around 35 million forestry seedlings per year, as well as approximately 12 million in Eucalyptus clones and pine clonal stochybrids.
The Nukor Group held its much anticipated Timber Processing Conference at the Randpark Golf Club from 25 to 27 October and according to Cobus Richter from the Nukor Group, it was a resounding success.

With 15 international speakers, all experts in their various fields, the impressive turnout of the South African sawmilling community in attendance had access to first hand information on the latest products, services and technologies by some of the world’s leading suppliers.

According to Richter, the Nukor Group Timber Processing Conference, which was last held in 2008, will definitely become a more regular feature on the company’s events list.

"With the resounding success that we’ve had and all the overwhelmingly positive feedback from both our customers and our suppliers who attended and spoke at the event, we are definitely looking at making it a more regular event.

"Obviously with the size and scope of an event such as this, and within an industry like sawmilling, it would not make sense to have it every year, but we are currently looking at hosting a Timber Processing Conference every three years."

The event was attended by some of the foremost sawmilling companies in South Africa, as well as by some smaller scale sawmillers. It featured speakers from companies like Microtec, Valon Kone, Springer, Linck, EWD, Hildebrand, Mills, Vollmer, Bruks, Urban, the Weinig Group including Dimter, Luxscan and Grecon, Raimann, and Weima.

"The accumulative machine manufacturing experience between the suppliers exceeds 1,263 years. To be associated and exposed to all this knowledge does make one proud, a feat that is only achieved by having a true passion for wood," says Richter.

"Due to economic and political uncertainty, as well as socioeconomic factors, not only in South Africa, but across the world, companies have been forced to work more efficiently and find ways of operating their production lines in a more economically viable way.

Nukor Group hosts successful Timber Processing Conference
"This conference made huge strides toward exposing local companies to the new products and technologies that help them do exactly that.

"The Nukor Group is well-known in South Africa as suppliers of world leading equipment, with the ability to complete turnkey projects. This conference helped us showcase some of the world class product manufacturers that we have represented in South Africa since 1960."

Over and above the promotion of the Nukor Group’s impressive range of products, it also afforded them the rare chance to meet, in a more relaxed setting than the everyday grind, with their customers and suppliers.

"It was good to be able to sit down with our customers in a less formal setting," says Richter. "It allows us to get to know them better and really build on the relationship between ourselves and the customer.

"It is also a good way to keep your ear to the ground and find out what the trends and issues within the industry are."

The different product suppliers who participated also benefitted handsomely from the event as it is rare for an overseas equipment manufacturer to have direct contact with such an assembled group of existing and potential customers.

According to Richter one of the most frequently shared compliments of the Timber Processing Conference received from suppliers, was that, as suppliers, it is not every day that one has such direct contact with other suppliers within the industry and the event enabled them to have many and varied discussions on the industry and the state thereof.

Valon Kone

Nukor Group Supplier, Valon Kone did an impressive presentation on their wide range of debarking solutions, featuring among others, the VK 26SX, which can run at a feed speed of up to 40 metres per minute, the VK26SMX, which operates at a feed speed of 60 metres per minute.

The presentation also touched on what is very likely the most sold small log debarker in the world, the iconic, VK450, which can run at a feed speed of up to 100 metres per second, as well as the VK90, 100 and 110 series, which ideal for short and crooked logs.

Valon Kone further showcased their impressive VK5000 and VK8000 high speed debarkers, that feature modular frames sporting either two or four feeding rollers and can run at a feed speed of up to 170 meters per minute with 1,2 or 3 debarking rotors.

The company also discussed their range of VK centering conveyors, the VK Fibremax feedrollers, the VK Flare reducers and the VK variable flare reducers.

Springer

The parent company of both Micreltec and Woodeye did two interesting presentations, one on each day of the Timber Processing Conference, showcasing their
superior log processing and timber sorting solutions, as well as their mechanisation solutions for planing mills with speeds up to 1 000 metres per minute. An overview was also given on handling solutions for CLT (Cross laminated timer) manufacturing.

One of the key components of the presentations, and a focus at the event, was their log processing and sorting solutions, which features one significant departure that sets it apart from other systems: it uses a screw feeder system instead of the widely known traditional step feeder.

Springer’s screw feeder system can feed a wetmill at a rate of 45 logs per minute from a single feeder, or up to 50 logs per minute from a dual feeder. Unlike the traditional stepfeeder, which at times can be prone to stoppages due to bark and other debris landing up in between the steps.

Log lengths from 2.4 – 18m and diameter ranges from 80 – 800mm can be handled.

With Springer’s screw feeder system, there is no step and the screw is open, meaning that there is nothing that can cause a blockage or stoppage.

Springer also highlighted their highly flexible sorting lines, stackers and the E-cut beltless trimmer.

Linck
The Nukor Group’s oldest supplier, Linck, that also happens to be the largest European sawmilling equipment manufacturer, represented by Daniel Betzold, presented a brief history of the company as well as a brief introduction to some of the products that has made this company what it is today.

Out of the top 20 lumber producing sawmills in Europe, 17 are Linck customers. During the first 150 years of the company’s existence, it has supplied over 5 000 gangsaws globally, and it has installed in excess of 150 profiling lines since 1977, with some of those first machines still running to this day.

The company produces state-of-the-art sawmill machinery as well as plans, produces, and installs complete sawmills for some of the biggest sawmilling companies in Europe.

The Linck range of machinery available in South Africa includes chipper canters, profiler units, universal circular saws, circular resaws, double arbour gangs, sorting and stacking plants, and conveyancing equipment.

EWD
EWD, represented by technical sales engineer, Thomas Lang, held an interesting presentation during the Nukor Group’s Timber Processing Conference highlighting their impressive range of bandsaws, as well as their optimising board edgers.

With over 150 years of experience designing, building and supplying sawmilling machinery, EWD is one of the most established equipment manufacturers in Europe.

In addition to their thin kerf bandsaw technology, the company also focused its presentation on its wide...
range of optimising board edgers, and its range of custom design lumber handling systems.

**Mill Industries**

Brazilian equipment manufacturer Mill industries has proved to be a favourite among sawmilling operators in South Africa, due partly to the fact that they are known for the robustness of their machines and the fact that they seem ideally suited to South Africa conditions.

According to Mill Industries Director, Lucas De Zorzi, the company has supplied 10 complete sawmill lines in South Africa, and has approximately 140 machines currently running in South Africa.

The company focuses on building machines that are sturdy and long lasting. They are known for their narrow band saws, and bigger wheels that ensure a high blade tension and a very stable cut.

According to De Zorzi, their system is not a fast running one, topping out at approximately 30 metres per minute. The other side of the coin though, is that it is a continuously running system, with an average production volume of one to three thousand cubic metres of lumber per month.

**Bruks**

Brugs, represented by Managing Director Kersten Beib and area sales manager Patrick Harf showcased their wide range of machinery and equipment for the bulk materials handling industries.

The company owns legal entities on three continents and has agents and distributors in 80 countries, specialising in the pulp and paper industry, sawmilling industry, pellet mills, bio energy industry, and board mills.

Some of the machines that they supply to the South African market via the Nukor Group includes horizontal drum chippers, gravity fed drum chippers, and mobile chippers for fibre production.

The company also specializes in waste disposal lines for the timber industry.

**Urbas**

Bioenergy industry leader Urbas presented their range of energy systems for the intelligent use of biomass fuels at the Nukor Group’s Timber Processing Conference, concentrating specifically on CHP (Combined heat and power) plants that generate heat and energy from waste wood, based on steam cycle or wood gasification.

The combined generation of heat and electricity ensures maximum efficiency in the utilization of biomass fuels.

The company designs and builds complete biomass plants based on both environmental and economical objectives.
The annual South African Saw Doctors Educational Association (SASDEA) conference and AGM took place in Kempton Park on 19 and 20 October and was a great success, with guest speakers covering a wide range of topics relevant to the industry today.

Recent times have seen saw doctoring becoming a more and more professional designation and with trends pointing squarely in the direction of optimisation, modernisation, waste management and efficiency, speaker after speaker pointed out the importance of having properly trained and experienced staff in the saw shop.

Presentations ranged from the very technical, discussing everything from trouble shooting on circular sawblades, chip formation and its influences on cutting forces, framesaw and bandsaw calculations, and TCT sawblades and tooth geometries, to larger industry issues including current and projected trends in the sawn timber industry.

As expected there was also a strong focus on training, with well-known trainer, Abel Sibanda from Tirhani Skills Training weighing in on the state of training in the country, and Dianne Marshall reporting on the progress of the Sawdoctor qualification development.

The two-day conference was concluded with the SASDEA AGM on 20 October, conducted by Chairman, Fanie Smit, who, along with treasurer, Amanda Pretorius, was once again elected to their respective positions for the coming year.

New office bearers voted into place include regional representatives Fanie Kruger for the Mpumalanga region, Ashleigh Volker for the Eastern Cape, Herman Jordaan for the Western Cape, and Flip van Eeden for KZN.

Robert Welsch from Saw Specialist’s tenure as suppliers’ representative was also extended by another year.

According to SASDEA chairman Fanie Smit, the conference and subsequent AGM had gone off without a hitch. “I was very impressed with the quality of the speakers and the topics that they covered, which reaffirmed the need for an association like us, to help ensure the promotion of training within the industry,” says Smit.

Dates and other details for the 2018 SASDEA conference are yet to be finalised.

According to Smit, the SASDEA conference celebrates its 20 anniversary next year and there are plans afoot to ensure that the occasion in an unforgettable one.

“We are looking at possibly securing some international speakers and even incorporating some site visits into the conference programme,” he says.

“We did not finalise arrangements for the upcoming 20th anniversary conference as there are numerous issues that need to be ironed out, among which the financing of the event, the site visits that we would like to incorporate, a possible change of venue, and the international guest speakers.

“These issues will be discussed internally with our members in the coming months and as soon as a decision has been reached, it will be communicated.
Proudly supporting SASDEA in their quest to bring excellence to a proudly South African industry.

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- Planer Blades
- Wear & Protector Parts
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- Pressure Lips
- Knife Holders
- Wear Shoes
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- Guide Rails
- Clamping Ledges, etc.
Choosing the right blade for your application

In today’s depressed economic circumstances, it has become essential for the processors of timber to ensure that they work as efficiently as possible. The focus on value adding throughout the timber supply chain does not start and end with the woodworking sector alone.

It starts right at the beginning of the processing function in the field and thereafter continues on into the sawmill and beyond.

One of the ways in which to ensure that timber is processed with utmost efficiency is to make sure that you use the optimal tool for the job. Using the optimal saw blade for the processing of timber will not only ensure that wastage is kept to a minimum, but it will also keep costs down in terms of tool life.

Robert Welsh from Saw Specialists presented an interesting talk at the recent South African Saw Doctors Educational Association conference highlighting the complexities that go into the design of carbide tipped sawblades in order to achieve the ideal solution for specific cutting applications.

There is a saw blade available for nearly every conceivable application, and in order to identify the one that is best for your application, it is important that you know and understand what goes into the design of saw blades and which saw blades are best for different applications.

According to Welsh there are a number of factors that are taken into account during the saw blade design process, including the material to be cut and the specifications of the machine for which the blade is being made.

There is no saw blade in the world that will cut everything. Every saw blade is made for a specific cutting application, thus things like the number of teeth, carbide grade and tooth geometry are all calculated for a specific application.

The method of machining used, the machine used for cutting (the saw), the material to be cut, the depth of cut and grain direction of the material to be cut all need to be taken into account when designing a saw blade.

Choosing the right blade for your application

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The grade of carbide used on the saw blade also correlates directly to the material to be sawn.

Cemented carbide is a hard material with mechanical properties that can be adjusted within a very wide range, given its composition and microstructure, to suit the cutting application.

Cemented carbide is a powder metallurgical composite consisting of one or more hard material phases (like tungsten carbide) and a binding material (like cobalt). It is an extremely hard material, characterised by high wear resistance and thermal stability.

It is used in various fields that require tools or components to be particularly wear-resistant. Cemented carbide improves the quality of tools and components, gives them a longer service life and ensures a constant performance.

By varying the grain size of the tungsten carbide, binder content and alloy components, the performance characteristics of the cemented carbide, such as hardness, transverse rupture strength, fracture toughness or corrosion resistance can be optimised according to the application.

The grade of the carbide used, the specification of the binder, the carbide grain size, hardness, fracture toughness and transverse rupture strength (the stress in a material just before it yields in a flexure test) are all factors that need to be taken into account when designing a blade for a specific application.

Saw Specialists make use of the Ceratizit range of carbide saw blade tips for their locally manufactured saw blades.

The performance characteristics of carbide are determined by hardness, transverse rupture strength and fracture toughness.

With regard to their application, important parameters for the optimisation of these characteristics are the cobalt content and the grain size of the metal binder phase. The tungsten carbide grains have an average size of less than 0.2μm, up to several micrometres (μm).

The cobalt fills the gaps between the carbide grains. When extremely high toughness is required, the cobalt content can amount to as much to 30%, whereas, for maximum wear resistance, the cobalt content is reduced and the grain size decreased to the nanocrystalline range of < 0.2μm.

Ceratizit produces more than 100 different cemented carbide grades, particularly for wear parts and cutting tools, thus offering a customised solution for every application.

“In today’s world with the CNC profile grinding machines, any tooth geometry can be profiled,” says Welsh. “The variable is understanding the parameters and how they work together to give a saw tooth which gives the required cut quality, tool life, and meets the customer’s expectancy in every way.

“Finding a partner who understands this is key”

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**Grades for wood sawing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Binder</th>
<th>Grain size</th>
<th>Hardness [HV10]</th>
<th>[HRA]</th>
<th>Fracture toughness (SEVNB) [MPa*m^1/2]</th>
<th>Transverse rupture strength [MPa]</th>
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<tr>
<td>KCR02+</td>
<td>2,0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1570</td>
<td>91,6</td>
<td>10,0</td>
<td>3000</td>
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The importance of the saw doctor in the workplace is frequently overlooked, according to Tommy Tesnar of TJ Tesnar Consulting, who presented a talk on the value of the saw doctor in the sawmill during the South African Saw Doctors Educational Association conference.

The fact is that the saw doctor is an integral part of the production process and having an experienced, knowledgeable saw doctor can save a sawmill thousands, if not more in terms of production quality, reaching production volume targets, fibre recovery, and by reducing downtime, curve, deviation, variation and vibration, to name a few.

According to Tesnar it is essential that the saw doctor is consulted by management on any new developments, new machinery, production increase decisions, and for the increase of the recovery rate at the mill.

A saw doctor should be able to make the correct tool choices, based on knowledge and experience, depending on the product currently being manufactured and the raw material that is being used. The saw doctor should also know every machine that is being used within the production process – not just the machines in the saw shop.

Thus knowledge of every machine’s task within the production process, the capability of the machine, the Kilowatts or horsepower of the machine, cutting speeds, feed speed, drives, and the minimum and maximum sizes that the machine can handle is essential for a saw doctor to be effective in the workplace.

As the saw doctor, is generally in charge, or responsible for machine and blade maintenance, his importance within the sawmill, his importance within the company cannot be overstated.

Well maintained machines and blades will help to reduce vibration, deviation and curve and ensure the best possible cutting surface.

It will also ensure a longer cutting cycle, higher feed speed, reductions in noise, dust, stoppages and energy usage.

The saw doctor’s knowledge of the workings of the different machines, raw materials, and blade settings, tension, and maintenance will also prove valuable in terms of making production decisions and problem solving, which will further help to increase overall productivity.
Leitz launches Diamaster line of profile router tools

Leitz Tooling Systems has developed a line of standard, off-the-shelf, precision diamond-tipped router tooling to support the MDF cabinet door industry.

“This selection of contemporary tools is much more economic, offering significantly longer life and the possibility of multiple re-sharpenings when compared to insert tooling,” the company said in a statement. “Profiles can be mixed and matched to create a wide variety of door designs. Economic custom profiles are also available upon request.

This new Diamaster line of profile router tools for MDF doors complements an already strong product offering ideally suited for kitchen and bath cabinet door manufacturers, which includes insert spoilboard surfacing cutters, solid carbide boring bits, diamond-tipped nesting router bits and ThermoGrip shrink chucks.

Manufacturing and servicing of tools and blades.

Our Leitz’s approved service centres are equipped to handle a variety of specialised tasks, these include enlarging the bore on saw blades and cutter heads, altering tool configurations for special applications such as cutting acrylics or aluminium and added key ways, pinholes to saw blades and cutter heads.
The fastest lumber scanner worldwide is running in Australia at AKD Softwoods. Microtec installed a Goldeneye 800 Multi-Sensor Quality Scanner, running at a possible feed speed of 1200 meters per minute. It performs fully automatic grading of Radiata pine lamellas according to local standards and is equipped with state-of-the-art technology, such as the new Microtec X-ray source with low voltage.

“Upgrading the dry mill at our Colac site in Victoria is an important component of growing our company and ensuring that we are internationally competitive,” says AKD CEO, Shane Vicary.

The heavy-duty Goldeneye 800 is designed for high speed scanning a feeding speed of up to 1200m/min.

Featuring the most advanced technology, such as low power generation X-ray, the scanner identifies all external and internal wood defects. Next generation cameras and sensors developed in-house at Microtec assure the highest performance and grading recovery.

AKD’s structural framing material is produced according to the AS/NZS1748 Standards of Radiata pine grown in sustainable plantations. Goldeneye complies with those standards and makes machine grading profitable by providing added value to the wide range of products.
Goldeneye sensors scan lumber at high speed with unprecedented precision. In a fraction of a second, knots, cracks, pitch pockets, holes, stain, decay, wane and other board defects are recognized and localized. New X-ray technology thoroughly engineered for durable scanning and optimization ensures high performance and accuracy at feed speeds of up to 1200 meters per minute.

“Ruggedness, speed and measurement precision are key for high performance planer mills and manufacturers of construction lumber products. We have made sure that our customers have no need to compromise in terms of either throughput or reliability, and certainly not in terms of function,” says Microtec CEO Federico Giudiceandrea.

**Board tracking solution ID Scan, strength grader and moisture meter**

AKD also installed Microtec’s lumber tracking solution ID Scan that traces every board through the production process. A Microtec Viscan Strength Grader has been placed after the scanner to reliably determine the modulus of elasticity (MOE) of lumber. Together with the Microtec M3Scan moisture meter, all data is sent to the Goldeneye for final optimization.

“We chose Microtec as our supplier for this project because of the success of the previous Goldeneye and our confidence in Microtec due to their commitment to our success,” explains Vicary.
The annual South African Saw Doctors Educational Association conference, held during October at Kempton Park, boasted a number of interesting talks by various leading industry experts.

One of the presentations, by Mandy Allpass of Crickmay & Associates, looked at past and current economic trends in the sawn timber industry.

Despite production costs over the past 20 years having gone up by as much as 2,000%, or approximately 7% per annum, sawmills today, are on average, more profitable than ever.

This, according to Allpass, is due to the ever increasing focus on efficiency and increased volume and value recovery in the milling process. Allpass again highlighted the value of one percent in improved volume recovery.

For a mill with a daily intake of 100 m³, an increase in recovery of just one percent can result in a gain of R716 750.00 per annum, at a net sales price of R3 050.00 per m³.

Trends over the past 20 years

The past 20 years has seen average growth in the volume of sawn softwood timber sold of 1.6% per annum in total, and approximately 1.3% per annum for structural mills.

Of concern is the decline since 2015 in volumes of sawn timber sold from structural sawmills into the local building market.

End use lumber sales have declined significantly since 2015 as have local building lumber and packaging lumber sales as this is the predominant market for volumes from structural mills.

Overseas lumber exports, from a relatively high point in 2002, when export volumes were 15% of total sales, have declined significantly, and constitute approximately 1.3% of current sales, reaching a low point in 2011.

Exports declined during the World recession and although there has been some growth in the market since, export sales have not gotten anywhere near the levels seen in 2002.

Sales to neighbouring countries, excluding Lesotho, has shown small but steady growth over recent years, except for a sharp decline in 2016 following a similar trend to sales to our local building sector.

Sales seems to have bounced back though, with 2017 to date set to be a record year.

Gauteng remains the best performing local sales territory for sales from structural sawmills in South Africa, followed by the Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and the North West Province and Limpopo region.

The Free State and Lesotho region followed by the Eastern Cape are the lowest sales territories in South Africa for sales from structural sawmills.

South Africa has imported approximately 14 210 m³ in the past year, which is less than 1% of our total local demand for lumber thus far in 2017.

Countries of origin are listed as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Zambia, Zimbabwe and ‘other’ neighbouring countries. This figure excludes Swaziland and Lesotho.

Production costs have always been a sore point in South Africa, and has played a large part in mill operations with operators choosing to optimise and mechanise their production processes, both in an attempt to maximize recovery and throughput, and save on fixed monthly expenses like salaries.

Structural sawmill production costs, not adjusted for inflation, have risen with an astonishing 2 000%, or approximately 7% per annum, since 1997 to approximately R2 600 per m³, driven mainly by significant increases in round log cost.

The average industry round log cost at roadside has risen from around R130 per m³ in 1998, to currently just under R650 per m³, an annual increase of approximately 9%, emphasizing the need for continuous improvement in volume and value recovery rates.

Unfortunately, the average recovery rate in the country has not improved all that much in recent years, actually showing a decline in 2016 and 2017. The average recovery rate in the country currently sits at just over 44%.

Despite a log mix that theoretically yields a lower volume recovery than the log mix mills cut 20 or 30 years ago, mills have done well to improve recoveries although on the face of it they seem to have remained relatively constant in and around 48%.

Structural mills have also made significant improvements in value recovery, measured by improvements in product mix, which are largely driven by market demand and over the past 20 years has seen a focus by mills to supply timber to the local building sector, whilst reducing sales to the ‘remanufacturing’ and ‘packaging and other’ sectors.

The average industry round log cost at roadside has risen from around R100 per m³ in 1998, to just under R700 per m³ in 2017. This further emphasises the need for continuous improved recovery rates.

According to Allpass, over the past 20 years structural mills on average have managed to keep net timber sales above the total cost of production, which has meant that mills on average have managed to maintain reasonable profits. However, looking back over the past 12 months, year-on-year changes in average selling prices achieved by sawmills fell below year-on-year changes in inflation.

Structural lumber sales have shown quite strong growth, with KZN leading the pack in the way of sales, followed by Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo.
Focus on Standard Working Procedures

Industry stalwart and longtime skills training provider, Abel Banda, from Tirhani Skills Training, presented a very interesting – and entertaining – talk at the annual South African Saw Doctors Educational Association conference.

With his years of experience in the field of training saw doctoring and woodworking students, he has a unique insight into establishing practical and viable safe working procedures (SWP) in the workplace.

The first thing, according to Banda, is to ensure that your workers know how the equipment works and what their specific responsibilities are, adding that there is no way that a worker will make something work if he does not know from the outset how it works.

“All that the SWP is at the end of the day, is a prescribed way of performing a task or tasks to ensure safety and efficiency in the workplace and improve product quality,” says Banda.

The absence of practical and viable SWPs is likely to result in some substantial costs for the company in the form of lost production hours, possible medical costs due to injury, repairs or even replacement of damaged equipment, accident investigation costs and even legal costs, not to mention the loss of morale among staff members.

According to Banda, establishing SWP’s in the workplace must adhere to a number of factors in order to be effective. First and foremost, SWPs must adhere to all relevant safety regulations.

It is also important to ensure that SWPs are user friendly and easy to follow, and be task specific, conforming to a practical sequence of procedures required in order for the staff member to perform the specific task at hand.

When establishing SWPs, it is important to ensure that they conform to the specific equipment manufacturer’s specifications and recommendations.

Thus a good knowledge of the applicable safety regulations and the equipment used for specific tasks, is essential.

“It is also essential to get input from experienced personnel that have knowledge of the specific sequence of procedures required for a specific task, as they can provide valuable insight when drawing up SWPs,” says Banda.

One has to firstly identify the specific task and the different steps that it will take to complete said task. One has to identify possible hazards and have set counter measures for each of the potential hazards.

Banda also emphasised the importance of observing personnel in the workplace to identify any potential hazards due to staff negligence.
Both narrow and wide bandsaw blades have specific benefits. A sawmilling solution that can fill the gap between the two blade types, opens the door to the versatility needed to build profitable sawmilling businesses. Wood-Mizer’s TITAN Hybrid range is this solution.

The TITAN Hybrid range resulted from the idea to bridge the gap between narrow band and wide band technologies in the small to medium sized sawmilling sector.

This allows for a sawmilling solution that gives sawmillers the flexibility to either run wider blades for more performance or narrower band profiles for those looking for a simpler saw doctoring process.

The versatility that this solution offers, has a number of secondary benefits that adds to the utility of the TITAN Hybrid range.

A general overview
The Hybrid range consists of primary and secondary breakdown solutions with both designed to run narrower or wider bandsaws.

- From a price point and compared to other offerings, the range offers heavy duty sawmilling capacity at very affordable price. This makes it accessible to small and medium sized sawmills
- The affordability of the range, the customisation possibilities that it offers and the productivity that it gives, empower sawmillers to widen margins and extend efficiencies
- The ability to run blade widths that vary in size from 32 to 80 mm can be customised further with the choice to run spring set, swage set and Stellite tipped (65 to 80mm wide) saws on one head rig
- If clients want to run narrower (38 or 50mm) wide saws, this can also be done
- Heavy duty feed mechanics is standard for the entire range
- The range is simple to maintain and operate and can easily slot into existing lines with minimal disruption
- The Hybrid range also slots in neatly between Wood-Mizer’s narrow bandsaw portable and industrial ranges and the TITAN 4 & 6-inch wide bandsaw range with sawmillers benefitting from the wider choice.

The range unpacked - TVS
The Wood-Mizer TITAN Hybrid TVS range is an efficient and affordable twin vertical solution to break the log into a two-sided cant. The range offer two models, the TH-TB and
INTRODUCING:

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Hybrid Twinband & Resaw Range

TITAN Hybrid – Industrial Strength now made more Affordable.

Blade Widths – 32 mm to 80 mm

TH-TBLT TITAN Hybrid Twinband

TH-R TITAN Hybrid Resaw

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Tel +27(0) 11 473 1313 | enquiries@woodmizerfrica.com

www.woodmizerfrica.com
TH-TBLT. Both are suitable for log diameters of between 120 – 400 mm and up to 4 m in length.

Features that can be highlighted are feed speeds of up to 40 m/min, pressurised feed rollers to ensure a stable cut, heavy duty construction for high strain sawing and electronic cut size control.

With the automated cut size control, the operator simply selects a cut size and the machine will automatically adjust to that size. This removes the need to sort the logs before sawing.

Through-put and processing capacity can be improved further with heavy-duty mechanized log loading and log turning options on the TH-TB Twin and sharp chain options on the TH-TBLT Twin.

Additional options are also available.

The range unpacked – Resaw
Wood-Mizer’s TITAN Hybrid TH-R Resaw is a high-performance, industrial capacity resaw that is available in a single or back-to-back twin-head configuration.

It is suitable for processing sideboards and cants or blocks measuring up to 350 mm wide and 290 mm high.

Factors that contribute to its productivity and efficiency Include:
• Feed speeds of up to 40 m/min
• A heavy-duty head rig construction for high strain, high speed accurate sawmilling
• Pneumatically assisted powered hold-down rollers
• Heavy-duty in and outfeed slat-chain bed with variable speed.

The unit can easily integrate into existing lines. Low power consumption adds to the utility of the product.

Rocklands Sawmill
Peak Forest Products trading as Rocklands Mill is a mining timber mill located in Swaziland.

It was established in mid-2010 in conjunction with local partners to provide a higher value take-off for burnt and fresh timber at Peak Timbers after the devastating fires of 2007 and to produce high quality products for local and exports markets to the benefit of Swaziland.

The mill’s key output is mining timber with a wet-off-saw line also kicking into gear in 2013 to supply pallet components to manufacturers in Swaziland and South Africa.

The wet-off-saw line is built entirely around Wood-Mizer TITAN’s Hybrid and 4 & 6-inch range.

Primary breakdown is done with a TITAN Hybrid Twin. Sideboards from there are fed to two resaws, a TITAN Hybrid resaw and a TITAN 4 Twin resaw.
The sideboards and two-sided cant exiting the TVS are edged and ripped with four TITAN edgers.

Current input into the mill of mainly 2.5 and 3.1 m Eucalyptus logs stand at 500-600 logs per day. Although daily and monthly output was undisclosed by management, recovery figures are estimated at between 48 and 50%.

Speaking to Rocklands Mill Manager Jaco Fourie, he said the line’s compact design and flexibility makes it possible to achieve the output that they’re achieving from it currently.

Jaco concludes that he is confident that the line has not reached its limit yet and that it can be improved significantly into the future.
Lonza’s national 2017 road show, themed ‘Overcoming Industry Hurdles’, proved to be a successful two-week journey around the country. The road show kicked-off in Limpopo and then moved to Mpumulanga, KwaZulu-Natal and concluded in the Western and Eastern Cape. Judging by the positive feedback and compliments received, the topics presented provided valuable insight to all who attended.

“The road show was a terrific opportunity to connect with our customers and help them get to grips with the latest compliance requirements affecting our industry. We have much experience in this area and want to share our knowledge with all our customers,” said Doug Sayce, Lonza’s general manager.

The agenda took an in-depth look at environmental management plans, waste management and pressure equipment regulations in order to gain a better understanding of the impact each of these issues on their customer’s timber treatment operations.

The presentations were conducted by Lonza’s general manager, Doug Sayce; sales manager, JJ du Plessis and engineering co-ordinator, Shaun Schouten - who collectively brought more than 40 years experience to the road show and once again highlighted the company’s depth of knowledge.

Gumpro Executive Director, Dave Hempson, complimented Lonza by saying: “This was a most informative road show that has forewarned us as to what is expected of us moving forward”.

Leani van der Watt from Kareedow Kreosot Werke added that the presentation on environmental management plans was an eye-opener. “We had no idea as to the procedures that needed to be in place and will be making good use of Lonza’s template to implement this plan in our business. The template also means that we don’t have to waste any time starting from scratch,” she said.

Leonie Engelbrecht from MTO George concurred, “The road show was overall very enlightening. In particular it provided us with much-needed assistance in aligning ourselves with the current legal vessel certification requirements. We now have a better understanding of what is required in terms of maintaining log books and testing every 36 months”.

Graeme Freese at Poles Galore in KwaZulu-Natal, felt that the topics discussed were very important and had not been taken seriously enough up until now. “We had all heard about these issues, but Lonza’s presentation pricked us on the importance thereof,” said Freese.

With various government departments stepping up audits in the timber preservation industry, Lonza believes that the road show has been successful in providing its customers with vital information and the necessary support to overcome any industry ‘hurdles’ on their road to compliance.
It’s all about confidence
A choice of tried, tested and trusted preservative protection for timber.
AWPA members bid a fond farewell to Dave Mullin who retired from the position of chairman of SAWPA in September, and welcomed his successor, David Bergman. Mullin was awarded honorary membership of SAWPA for his role as past chairman and his more than 37 years dedication to the timber treatment industry.

Bergman started his career working for the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut (AHI) for ten years. He served on various statutory and non-statutory bodies during his term in office, and was also a member of the Metrification Advisory Board under the auspices of the SABS, implementing the changeover from the imperial to the metric system of measuring.

Since 1987 Bergman was involved in the timber treating industry and commissioned the first CCA treating plant in the Pretoria area under the watchful eye and scrutiny of the late Colin Bundy, who represented a chemical supplier and was a well known personality in the treating industry.

Bergman started his own company in 1998 as sole owner of Xcell Treated Timbers operating and managed its CCA treating plant in Pretoria until 2011. He was an active member of SAWPA during that time, serving on the Executive Committee of SAWPA as chairman of the Gauteng Region until retiring from the industry in order to pursue other business ventures.

He is currently President of Centurion Rugby Club, Vice President and member of the Executive Committee of the Blue Bulls Rugby Union and is serving on various sub committees of the Union.
PROMOTING TREATED TIMBER AND THE USE OF TREATED TIMBER PRODUCTS PRODUCED BY SAWPA MEMBERS

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Launching a new product into the structural timber market, more specifically the roof truss market, which for years has been dominated by the South African pine industry is no easy task, but one that has seemingly been accomplished by market newcomer, Biligom,

According to Biligom sales manager JD Botha, the brand has found its space within the highly competitive market and is growing steadily, winning scores new converts to wet-off saw hardwood along the way.

Biligom uses moist eucalyptus, which is cut, fingerjointed and pressure treated with Tanalith E before being sold for the manufacture of roof trusses or other structural applications.

“During the last three years we have seen remarkable growth,” says Botha, adding that the tough economic conditions in the country and the fact that the construction industry is under pressure has, to some extent, helped to hasten the uptake of Biligom within the industry.

“The fact is that the economy is not where it should be and the construction industry is under severe pressure,” says Botha. “This has had as an effect that the industry has become more and more competitive.

“Biligom is proven to be structurally stronger than SA Pine, meaning that with the correct design, roof truss manufacturers can on average achieve a saving of between 20 and 30 percent on a complete roof truss system.”

In some cases, architects, initially weary about using the Biligom product, are now specifying the use of Biligom in their designs, not only for roof truss systems, but also for other purposes like decking in some cases, architects, initially weary about using the Biligom product, are now specifying the use of Biligom in their designs, not only for roof truss systems, but also for other purposes like decking.

And Botha foresees even bigger growth over the next five years.

“We have just sent out loads to both Botswana and Namibia, which means that we have reached our goal to penetrate these markets before the end of 2017.”

Biligom has also recently started shipping timber to Willemstad in Curacao, an island in the southern Caribbean Sea.

“We have plans in place for an additional production plant should the volumes justify it, so we are ready and geared for growth.”

According to the manager of Pretoria based Biligom distributor O2 Wood, James Scott, Biligom was a tough sell when they first started distributing the product around three years ago.

“It took a while for the product to be taken up in the market,” says Scott. “But with the market being suppressed and highly competitive, they tried it because of the obvious price advantage. Now it is at the point where it is being requested in preference to SA pine.”

Scott is full of praise for the Biligom product range, saying that specifically their 50 x 50 and their branding have proven to be wildly popular.

Scott says that most roof truss manufacturers still use both SA Pine and Biligom as this is how they achieve the most savings. But in exposed roof trusses, Biligom is the firm favourite.

“I think it is an excellent product and it has a bright future in South Africa,” says Scott. “The uptake of the product into the market has been very good despite a tough start and I think it will keep growing strongly.”

According to Scot the recent sharp fall in the price of SA Pine, mainly due to market saturation and the recent fires in Knysna, has had effect on Biligom.

“Biligom has made huge strides in terms of the quality of their product and I believe we’re not yet scratching the surface in terms of where this product can go, especially since it takes a much shorter time to grow eucalyptus than it does Pine.”

According to Western and Southern Cape distributor, Dirk van Vuuren from Robustrade, there is definitely a future for the Biligom product in South Africa.

“The fact is it gives designers options as the product is stronger and the trusses can thus be spaced further apart. Due to the fact that smaller volumes are needed, once again due to the strength of the product, it allows manufacturers and installers of roof trusses to quote more competitively, so that they have the upper hand over their competitors.”

Van Vuuren says that Robustrade, unlike O2 Wood, did not really have any issues introducing this product to their market.

“Yes the industry is loathe and slow to change, but we did a lot of work behind the scenes, introducing and educating our customers about the merits of using Biligom.”

“There is still a way to go, but I think the product has been well received by our customers.”
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Financing a timber structure and incentivising a green economy

How does getting financing for a timber structure differ from other construction types? Is a timber structure a financially sound investment and how will this be impacted by South Africa’s pending carbon tax law?

Timber construction is a traditional, yet modern method of building sturdy structures that can play a profound role in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. It offers the homeowner and property developer an environmentally intelligent building option that has been tried, tested and has performed exceptionally well over centuries.

“Seventy percent of the developed world’s population live in timber frame houses,” says Werner Slabbert, managing director of Eco Log Homes. “This includes the USA, Canada, Scandinavia, Europe, New Zealand, Australia and Japan.”

The benefits offered by timber construction are becoming better known, however there are still a few misconceptions around this building methodology that fuel the misunderstanding that building with timber is far less accessible than it really is. Among these is the notion that accessing finance to build a timber frame home or structure is difficult.

Accessing finance

According to the Institute for Timber Construction South Africa (ITC-SA), major South African banks use the same approach to finance a timber frame home as they do a brick and mortar home. If the applicant qualifies for a bond in line with the financial institutions’ basic credit requirements, and the structure is built according to all national building standards and regulations by a qualified timber frame builder, there should be no problem with getting a bond.

Timber frame building is included in the National Building Regulations as a pre-approved building method and is specified under the South African National Standard (SANS) 10082, which governs timber frame buildings.

Wimpie Potgieter, property asset management head at FNB, says the bank finances all homes built in accordance with the national building regulations. “However, confirmation from a registered engineer (engineer’s certificate) that the structure is built in accordance with the relevant codes is required,” he explains.

“The application procedure for applying for a bond to build or buy a timber home or structure is thus the same as applying for a brick and mortar structure. The only exception is that an ITC-SA membership certificate, denoting the builder’s competence in the practice of timber frame construction, as well as a registered engineer’s certificate confirming that the structure has been built to standard, should be provided,” says Potgieter.

Valuation of a timber frame home

When it comes to accessing finance to buy an existing timber frame home, there are a few obstacles to overcome. “Timber home valuation should be as standard as evaluating any other type of home, but given the current market share of timber construction due to its exclusivity, it is not surprising that there is some room for improvement,” Slabbert comments.

“Some of the challenges faced when having a timber home assessed include the fact that many people do not understand the construction method, know how to identify the attributes of a home built in strict accordance with SANS 10082, or appreciate the difference between a high-value timber structure versus a low-value structure, like a Wendy house,” he explains.

Werner Slabbert
Institute for Timber Construction South Africa (ITC-SA)

BUILDING A TIMBER HOME?

ADVANTAGES OF TIMBER BUILDINGS

✓ Act as carbon sinks
✓ Environmentally friendly & therefore ideally suited to mountain-side plots and eco-sensitive areas
✓ Minimal disturbance to existing vegetation
✓ Materials used in the construction have fire ratings of up to 2 hours
✓ Aesthetically appealing
✓ Energy efficient
✓ Built with structurally graded and treated timber

✓ Require much lower processing energy
✓ Warmer in winter & cooler in summer
✓ Well suited for building on unstable soil conditions or inaccessible plots
✓ Erected & completed in a third of the time it takes to build the same structure with brick & mortar
✓ Quicker alterations & extensions
✓ Lightweight, strong & durable
✓ Built in accordance with SANS 10082

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“But these challenges are easily overcome with the help of a professional body like the ITC-SA, that can provide an inspector qualified to evaluate an existing timber home to ascertain whether or not it has been built to standard. The ITC-SA can also provide a list of registered timber frame builders and engineers that understand, and are competent in their professions in relation to timber frame building.

Carbon tax

South Africa’s Carbon Tax Bill, which is yet to be promulgated, proposes an incentive to producers and consumers of carbon intensive products to encourage investment in cleaner technology and reduced emissions.

“While energy-intensive industries may be feeling a measure of discomfort from the pressure of the pending Carbon Tax Law, which now looks to come into play by early 2018, this is an opportunity for these sectors to innovate and take confident, environmentally lighter steps towards a more sustainable future,” says Slabbert.

“The bill signals South Africa’s approach to honouring its Kyoto commitment and, once in full swing, will usher in renewed and enhanced engagement with the green economy. Industry will not only have to adapt how it operates, but it will have to explore new avenues in mitigating its carbon emissions.

“Timber construction, most often seen as an investment available only to the wealthy, represents low-hanging fruit for public and private sectors to invest in lessening – and mitigating – their environmental impact. Timber-built staff housing and public buildings are just two such examples of how big business and government could offset their greenhouse gas emissions – and resultant carbon tax burdens – through essential infrastructure. This makes timber building not only financially viable, but a financial imperative,” says Slabbert.

“The carbon tax law represents a necessary impetus for the shift in attitude towards a greener approach to doing business and will make a significant impact on the local green economy. Consumers and the trade will become ever better informed – and make better choices – about their impact on the environment and as such, the timber construction and supply industries, from plantations and sawmilling to construction and carpentry, are well-positioned to be leveraged to, build greener homes, businesses and public buildings.

“The potential opportunities for job creation, globally transferrable skills development and profitable off-shoot micro-enterprises are innumerable. Not least, a healthier green economy will see an upswing in international investors, who will look more favourably upon a nation interested in taking care of its environment and people. And this is just the beginning,” Slabbert notes.

While there still exist a few misconceptions around the viability of financing timber construction, these will slowly but surely be eroded through education, awareness, and legislation that will make a turn to greener construction methods an essential aspect of sustainable business, government and lifestyle practices in South Africa.

From page 38

Financing a timber structure and incentivising a green economy

Kreg’s Rip-Cut tool makes it easy to hold the edge guide against the edge of board, and make straight, accurate and repeatable cuts.
The Institute for Timber Construction South Africa (ITC-SA) is South Africa’s professional body for the timber construction sector and has worked tirelessly in service of both the trade it represents and South African consumers for over 40 years.

As a professional body, the ITC-SA’s vision is to create and maintain the highest standards in the engineered timber construction industry by monitoring its membership, continuously improving standards, promoting and marketing engineered timber structures, and overseeing the training and development of its members.

What is a professional body?
In 2013, the ITC-SA became a South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) accredited professional body, holding professional membership. In this capacity, the Institute must comply with the requirements set out by the National Qualifications Framework Act (NQF Act 67 of 2008) as amended.

A SAQA-accredited professional body must be a legally constituted entity with the necessary human and financial resources to undertake its functions, governed either by a statute, charter or a constitution and be compliant with and adhere to good corporate governance practices.

The importance of the ITC-SA for the industry
It is essential that an accredited professional body like the ITC-SA regulate and monitor its members’ individual profiles and performance with regards to training undertaken and completed for professional recognition. This training is in line with the criteria set by the ITC-SA and is approved by SAQA, and is key for the promotion and monitoring of continuous professional development (CPD) for members to meet the relevant professional designation requirements.

All professional members recognised by the ITC-SA must abide by the Institute’s published Code of Conduct as well as its mechanism for reporting and investigating members who are alleged to have contravened this Code.

The ITC-SA works to ensure that the industry’s viewpoints are accommodated and protected in the compilation of all documents on grading specifications, design codes and matters affecting National Building Regulations. The Institute’s Timber Engineering Advisory Committee (TEAC) maintains its status as the official drafting committee.
committee for the code of practice for the Design of Timber Structures.

The ITC-SA ensures the continued existence of the Standards, Inspections and Audits Committee to regulate and control safe and consistent standards within the industry. The Institute will pursue and assist in the enforcement of the ‘A19’ process of the National Building Regulations through all local authorities by offering the ITC-SA Accredited Engineers and appointed Inspectors to fulfil the role of Approved Members of the structural system to comply with statutory requirements.

The ITC-SA carries out random inspections of truss manufacturing plants to uplift and maintain desired quality standards in the industry. The Institute works to ensure close liaison with the education sector and training authorities in the development of unit standards for the manufacture of nail-plated timber roof trusses, for the erection of timber roof trusses, and to facilitate training in these disciplines, in compliance with the Skills Development Act.

The ITC-SA also works closely with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and particularly with the Disaster Prevention Department.

The ITC-SA works to establish a Certificate of Competence for truss estimators/designers, to promote a code of ethics for roof truss fabricators, to monitor the contractual obligations of systems and licensees and ensure adherence to agreed procedures, and to continuously update bracing and erection manuals in order to disseminate correct procedures to members and to the industry at large.

How does the ITC-SA protect the consumer?

A professional body like the ITC-SA has the intent to protect the public interest in relation to the services provided by its members and the associated risks. Recognised and accredited professional bodies like the ITC-SA are mandated to develop, award, monitor and revoke its professional designations in terms of its own rules, legislation and/or international conventions.

The role of the ITC-SA is to ensure consumer protection in the use of timber engineered products in contracts entered with the ITC-SA membership and to regulate the professional conduct of its members. Where prima facie evidence confirms professional misconduct, to protect the consumer and the reputation of the industry, the ITC-SA shall apply proper sanctions.

With the ITC-SA, both the trade and consumer can enjoy the peace of mind and protection that come with a safely erected and inspected timber frame home, roof or deck structure. The Institute encourages queries and engagement from both the trade and the public and will assist where possible to help inform and educate the market on timber construction best practice.
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Engineers and architects around the world are re-evaluating the use of timber as the prime construction material for high-rise buildings.

Wood is the oldest of construction materials. It’s elemental, and humankind’s relationship with it runs deep, but in a very literal sense, we’ve been burnt by it one too many times. After the Great Fire of London wiped out 80% of the city, the London Building Act of 1667 asserted all houses were to be built in brick or stone. Since then, steel, concrete and glass have all come to dominate our city skylines, but timber is set to make an unlikely return.

Something old, something new

A number of high profile architects and engineers are trying to recast wood as a material fit for the 21st Century. In large part, that’s down to the emergence of cross-laminated timber (CLT), a type of wood panel made from multiple layers of solid-sawn lumber. “The wood products architects are using today are very different from the material we’ve used throughout the rest of history,” explained Richard Harris, an honorary professor of Timber Engineering at the University of Bath with 25 years’ experience as a structural engineer to his name.

The allure of CLT stems from the fact that each layer in a panel is orientated with the grain running perpendicular to adjacent layers; much like plywood, but with thicker laminations. Rather than flammability, timber’s main weakness has always been its sensitivity to moisture content changes – nobody wants a tall building prone to warping and distortion. The cross gluing in CLT overcomes this, providing each panel with exceptional dimensional stability. This stability augments timber’s inherently high strength to weight ratio, meaning CLT performs more like steel than regular wood panels or beams.

In combination with high-precision digital manufacturing processes like CNC milling, CLT allows architects to design and build with timber at scales unthinkable a century ago. Panels can also be cut offsite with great precision, speeding up the entire build considerably and lessening the overall impact to neighbouring residents and businesses.

Harris is one the few people unsurprised by CLT’s rapid rise to prominence: “CLT has been commercially available for at least 20 years, but the construction industry is very conservative in accepting innovations,” he said. “The industry has only adopted CLT into the mainstream in the last five years as cost has dropped. Now we’re beginning to see the material’s limits explored in exciting ways.” Those experiments are gathering pace.

Head in the clouds?

The height of the tallest timber building has doubled in the last nine years. The University of British Columbia’s 18-storey, 53-metre-tall Brock Commons student
OFFERING COMPLETE SOLUTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE WOOD SANDING
residence currently holds the record for the highest inhabitable structure. However, Europe has plenty of plans to go higher.

Construction of Amsterdam’s 21-storey (73 metre high) Haut building is due to start this year and the 84 metre high, 24-storey HoHo building in Vienna should open in 2018. Other, even more ambitious projects on the drawing board include the 40-floor Trätoppen (“Treetop”) in Stockholm and the 300 metre high Oakwood Timber Tower ‘plyscrapers’, proposed by PLP Architects for London and an as-yet-unconfirmed location in The Netherlands.

PLP’s London offering is 80-storeys, leading many to question the likelihood such a structure would be granted planning permission. According to PLP’s Kevin Flanagan, the Oakwood Timber Tower project isn’t designed with immediate construction in mind, but to demonstrate its technical feasibility. As an expert in tall buildings, he understands better than most where more research needs to be done: “A 200 metre building doesn’t behave in the same way as a low-rise,” Flanagan explains. “The dead load of a building is overtaken by loads like wind and torsion.” Innovation is one thing, but regulations are there for a reason, and it’s important that they both respond to, and challenge, emerging trends …which brings us back to fire.

The burning question

Received wisdom says fire risk should rule timber out as a structural material in tall buildings. What many people don’t realise is large timber panels and beams burn slowly and quite predictably. Size is important here, because wood resists heat penetration by the formation of self-insulating char. The char rate of CLT has been tested at a respectable 0.67 mm per minute. As such, these panels are capable of the 30-, 60- and 90-minute resistance times required by many building regulations. Steel, by contrast, loses structural integrity very quickly in certain contexts. The takeaway here is not that timber is more fire resistant than steel – it’s not – but performance varies according to such factors as load and temperature distribution. The point is that, in the realm of sensible fire regulation, context is king.

Arup's Global Timber Specialist Andrew Lawrence is a long-time champion of timber construction. It’s for that reason he wants to ensure conversations around tall timber are appropriately nuanced. Lawrence’s worry isn’t the misconception that timber is highly flammable, but rather the claims that it is doesn’t pose a fire risk at all: “The fact mass timber chars slowly is completely true, but if you use a combustible material as the building’s core, it’s also true that the fire load [which dictates a fire’s potential severity] is greater.” The key is to understand that both of those facts can hold true, rather than one at the expense of the other.

Lawrence is keen to challenge a typical metaphor used in discussions around timber and fire safety: “We know that once the fuel stops burning, the timber will too if only a limited amount of timber is exposed to the fire,” he says. “The common example given is to consider the difficulty of starting a fire using just a single large log. However, this comparison may not hold in a building where compartments are made entirely from CLT— it’s the equivalent of a pile of large timber logs which might fuel one another through their surface heat.”

With a wealth of experience, caution is the name of the game for Lawrence: “You can build tall buildings safely using timber, but only if you ensure most of the timber can’t become engaged in the event of a fire,” he asserts. Ultimately then, if engineers and architects can continue to educate themselves with the latest ongoing research, we may yet see forests of safe tall buildings flourishing in our cities.

Source: https://www.theengineer.co.uk/timber-towers-wooden-skyscraper/
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Allwood Technology moving with the times with new premises and new agency

Spartan based Allwood Technology is a family run business specialising in the supply of industrial woodworking machinery for both the automatic board panel processing industry as well as the solid wood industry in the South African market for the past 17 years.

They have recently relocated to their impressive new premises in Spartan, sporting a total of 4 000m², with a 1 600m² showroom, and plans are afoot to further develop the premises.

According to Jane Myles, her late husband, Scott, and his father before him, were both from a woodworking background. Scott started the company in 2000 after spending years working in the South African woodworking machinery market.

Both their sons, Scott and Roy, grew up in the business and learned it from a very young age, each entering the business as they finished their schooling.

Upon Scott senior’s sudden passing in 2007, eldest son Scott, a naturally talented salesman, took over the reins while younger brother, Roy, took over control of the technical division of Allwood Technology, due to his keen understanding of the technical side of things.

The company has gone from strength to strength since then and, boasting an impressive catalogue of machines, Allwood has become a force to be reckoned with in the South African woodworking machinery industry.

According to Jane, the company has soared under Scott’s leadership. “He has kept up good relations with all his father’s old clients and he has shown a remarkable talent for recruiting new clients, and identifying needs for new machines within the market.

The company has also managed to build strong relationships with overseas machine suppliers, holding numerous agencies and even having standard machines redesigned and changed to suit the South African market. In a country where economic conditions are tough, it is good to see that through hard work and innovative ideas, Allwood Technology is standing strong.

Hard work and innovative ideas are exactly what Allwood Technology is all about. According to Jane, one of the main reasons that Allwood Technology has managed to stand strong despite challenging economic times, is the fact that there is a strong work ethic present in both Scott and Roy.

Scott will come up with new and innovative marketing ideas, like for instance actually showing prices on advertising material as well as on the website, and making sure that our machines are prominently branded. This is not something you will see other woodworking machine suppliers do.
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In his turn, Roy ensures that the back-up and service department is second to none, delivering excellent after sales customer service to all their clients, and carrying at all times the full range of replacement parts for every machine to ensure there is no delay in case something does go wrong.

The company also focuses on sourcing the right machinery for the South African market, keeping in mind that the country’s economic growth is not very strong and that the machines do not only need to be competitive in terms of quality, but also in terms of price. The company has recently signed a new agency, and now stocks and sells the Excitech range of CNC machines.

The Excitech E6 CNC sports nine vertical drills and six horizontal drills, with a saw blade for grooving, an eight position auto tool changer and an Italian HSD 9.6 kilowatt router.

The machine allows for double loading and supports workable sizes of up to 3050mm x 1250mm x 80mm. It also sports a goose neck support.

Another popular machine, the EB265 edgebander sports front and back, as well as a top and bottom radius, with buffers. The machine can run at up to seven meters per minute.

Allwood Technology carries a wide range of woodworking machinery including panel saws, beam saws, a wide range of edgebanders, CNC machines, thicknessers, multi borers, overhead routers, spindles, feeders, planers, cross cut saws, cut off saws, pot hinge borers, band saws, extractors and extraction systems, radial arm saws, spindles, glue spreaders, single end tenoners, moulders, mortisers, wide belt sanders, hot presses, hydraulic cold presses, finger joint shapers, finger joint presses, and even round bar making machines and wrapping machines.

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School children unleash their creativity at the world of wood show

The only way to ensure the future of the woodworking industry is to encourage youngsters to experiment with making things out of wood.

An intriguing competition, initiated by the wood technology lecturers at Nelson Mandela University (NMU) formed part of the Working with Wood show recently held in George.
The woodworking teams from three George high schools show off their prizes with some of their coaches from NMU, Vermont Sales and the George Woodworkers Guild.

Teams of interested learners from three local high schools participated in a competition during the show. Each team was supplied with timber and equipment and given three hours to design and construct a wooden product.

They were coached and mentored by show exhibitors and woodworking enthusiasts, many of whom are members of the George Woodworkers Guild. Timber was measured, cut, joined and sanded and polished into the most remarkable items, which ranged from picture frames, boxes, small tables, shelves and even a beautiful hand drawn and cut out map of Africa.

It was impossible to judge a winner and all competitors left with a small woodworking gift sponsored by Vermont Sales for their respective schools, and a new passion for the wonderful world of wood.
It has taken Johan Breunissen only three years to transform a struggling timber merchant business based in Strand near Cape Town, into a leading joinery company that designs, manufactures and installs quality kitchens, bedroom cupboards and vanities.

BTM Joinery Specialists operates from premises of over 1400 square metres, and is equipped with a range of production machines including a Biesse Selco EB-120 Active beam saw, and its latest addition, a new Biesse Akron 1440-A edgebander. The edgebander produces top quality edged high gloss boards using polyurethane (PUR) adhesive technology.

Johan says he was faced with difficult decisions when his business partner withdrew three years ago. “Instead of shutting down the company, I decided to heed the advice of John Sculley, the ex-CEO of Pepsi and Apple, who said stop worrying about finding the right answers, ‘Instead, embrace uncertainty and challenges’.”

He decided to draw on his commercial banking and legal studies background and embarked on market and product development and technology research. “The success of a business is built around the need for its products, and we all want quality products at the right price. At the same time people want to do business with people and the hands-on approach is the best,” Johan says. He targeted construction companies working on new residential developments and it took many months of determination and hard work before the orders started to come in.

At that stage the factory was equipped with traditional machines for solid wood processing and a panel saw and two small edgebanders. “Chris Hugo of Austro helped me along this journey with sound advice on basic machines and technological developments. When the order book began to overflow, and it was time to invest in new technology, Chris knew exactly what we needed,” comments Johan.

BTM Joinery’s Biesse Selco EB-120 Active beam saw is equipped with a self-loading system. A forklift deposits up to 30 boards on the loading bed and the saw can be programmed to cut and optimise up to five boards at a time with very little waste. “The transition from a panel saw where an operator can cut a maximum of 40 boards a day with many offcuts that cannot be used, to the beam saw that we have used to process 300 – 400 boards in one day, is massive,” he says.

Johan believes that a company and its products is only as good as its employees and that it is therefore important to have a team with shared values and dedication. “I believe business owners must be hands-on. I personally interact with and visit every site we work at, and I try to empower team members by giving them opportunities to grow and to take responsibility.”
The Biesse Akron Series offers a full line for entry level businesses to medium enterprises with European technology and many features normally only found on larger machines. All Akron Series machines are equipped with an industrial gluing system with a precision glue roller and an end trim unit on precision guides with pneumatic tilt feature.
When PG Bison launched its high gloss boards Johan saw another business opportunity. “PG Bison’s high gloss boards are a game changer,” he explains. “Any edgebander can edge these boards using the usual EVA adhesive, but the quality is discernibly poor. Once again Chris had the answer and we recently installed the Biesse Akron 1440-A edgebander that can apply either EVA adhesive or, at the click of a switch, it can apply PUR adhesive.”

Hugo explains that there are two types of hotmelt adhesives used for edgebanding. Both adhesives are based on plastic: Ethyl-vinyl acetate (EVA) hotmelt and PU/PUR hotmelt that is based on polyurethane. “EVA is still the most commonly used glue in South Africa, whereas in Europe most of the market is using PU/PUR. EVA hotmelt has a low re-melting threshold and in summer months when products are stored in hot factories and containers the EVA tends to soften due to these high temperatures and the edging then comes loose from the bonded edge,” he says.

With PU/PUR based adhesive systems, chemical cross linking occurs after they physically set. Therefore, a much higher temperature (-30° C to 150 °C) and moisture resistance is achieved compared to that of EVA. “PUR hotmelt adhesive systems react with moisture from the material to be bonded or the working environment, e.g. the air, meaning in addition to the physical effect through the hardening of the liquid adhesive, there is also an additional chemical reaction which positively influences the bond properties. With regards to the bonding properties or water and temperature resistance, PUR hotmelt adhesives are hard to beat,” Hugo explains.

If the joints need to be particularly water or heat resistant, then Hugo recommends using PU/PUR adhesive as this has a significantly higher water and heat resistance than EVA. A PU/PUR hotmelt adhesive is chemically cured, meaning it cannot be reactivated, and the application of PU/PUR adhesive is now almost as simple as using EVA adhesive.

Hugo explains that with PU/PUR-hotmelt the edgebander works at a lower temperature and you can achieve a thinner bond line, stronger adhesion, as well as excellent heat and water resistance between the edging and board. He warns that what is very important when using PU/PUR adhesives is the need to purge the adhesive melt tank and applicator because once the adhesive has cured, unlike EVA adhesive, it will not remelt.

For this reason, the edgebander must always be cleaned with a suitable PU cleaner after using PU/PUR hotmelt. What at first sounds complicated is relatively straight forward in practice, especially at BTM Joinery. Johan says part of doing the basics right is housekeeping, and at the end of each day the factory and its machines must be clean. The Akron’s glue tank and gluing system is specially designed for PU hotmelt adhesives, and can be stored in a special nitrogen storage tank to prevent the adhesive curing overnight.

Johan is an avid reader and Steve Jobs (Apple) John Sculley (Pepsi and Apple), Phil Knight (Nike) and Elon Musk (SpaceX and Tesla) are just a few of the entrepreneurs and innovators that he recommends. An innate feature of these business leaders is their ability to get the best out of the people while knowing exactly what they wish to achieve.

When asked what the future holds for BTM Joinery, Johan quotes Elon musk: “Work like hell. If other people are putting in 40-hour work weeks and you’re putting in 100 hour work weeks, then even if you’re doing the same thing, you know that you will achieve in four months what it takes them a year to achieve.”
Preparations for the largest trade expo in Africa dedicated solely to the timber and woodworking industries are in full swing, and should be diarised for 11-13 July 2018 at Gallagher Estate in Midrand, near Johannesburg.

WoodEX for Africa is the timber-focused trade exhibition that offers an exclusive business and networking event to connect and grow the African timber, tooling and machinery industries.

Stephan Jooste is the WoodEX for Africa organiser. He says that for the past five years WoodEX for Africa has had growing support from local and international exhibitors and visitors.

“Feedback since last year’s event has been overwhelmingly positive, with a strong indication that the exhibitors were particularly satisfied with the quality of visitors, networking opportunities and the sound business leads they sourced at the event.”

Jooste says the organisers have received an unprecedented number of inquiries about WoodEX for Africa’s 2018 event from past visitors and exhibitors. “This makes the fifth WoodEX for Africa a milestone of which we are tremendously proud.”

What to expect
WoodEX for Africa 2018 will showcase innovative:
• timber and woodworking services
• woodworking machinery
• fixtures and fittings
• decking
• flooring
• structural timber
• timber preservatives and treatment
• sawmilling equipment,
• forestry equipment
• composite boards of all types
• solid wood
• veneers

“WoodEX for Africa is the ideal platform for everyone operating in associated with the forestry sector to connect, get in touch with other specialised dealers, stay in tune with the latest trends and products, secure new business contacts and strengthen existing ones, and to access special trade deals,” says Jooste.

Timber Talk
At the heart of WoodEX for Africa is the event’s exciting Timber Talk programme, which comprises short presentations by industry influencers. These compact sessions are a dynamic and interactive learning experience for visitors and exhibitors alike, and bring together some of the timber industry’s leading system designers, contractors, manufacturers and thought leaders who address pressing industry issues and hot topics from across the timber world.

WoodEX for Africa’s Timber Talk sessions are free to attend and no bookings are necessary.

A win for exhibitors
With its strategic and targeted marketing activities, WoodEX for Africa will offer a host of digital and social media marketing opportunities for exhibitors and sponsors to reach a highly-focused and lucrative market in Africa before, during and after the show.

African trade makes up 60% of international trade visitors, hailing from Swaziland, Angola, Mozambique, Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These numbers support WoodEX for Africa’s growing status as the gateway to the timber trade in Africa.

“WoodEX for Africa has come of age and represents an invaluable targeted marketing platform for the local and international timber trade and woodworking sectors looking to connect and build fruitful relationships,” says Jooste. “As the only exhibition solely dedicated to timber and woodworking machinery on the African continent, WoodEX for Africa has forged itself as the place to connect and inform the timber trade where it matters most.”
The increase in demand for square laminated beams prompted the owner of Knysna Leisure Industries, AJ Wilson, to upgrade his production process by installing a high frequency (RF) adhesive curing machine.

Knysna Leisure Industries is a long established business based in the southern part of the Western Cape. The company manufactures and supplies wooden products including laminated beams and wood for decking, cladding, furniture, ceilings, and floors. Products for external applications are CCA or TBTN treated by the company’s own accredited treatment plant.

As with all timber processing businesses, Wilson says the company has had its ups and downs, and the signs are that demand for square beams and decking is increasing. “We do offer saligna products, however the market for pine decking and beams is picking up because the consumers are realising that local pine is a competitive product that, if looked after well, is an excellent alternative to imported hardwoods,” explains Wilson.

The bulk laminator was supplied by High Frequency Heating (HFH), the South African manufacturer of high frequency (RF) machines for a wide range of industries. The machines are purpose built for each customer to accommodate their individual needs.

The bulk laminator at Knysna Leisure Industries can accommodate beams up to 3.6m long and a maximum height of 150mm. The machine is producing beams of 65x65mm, 96x96mm and 138x138mm, and it cures the Rystix supplied waterproof adhesive in an incredibly short period of time, between 1.5 – 3 minutes, depending on the thickness of the laminated materials.

Wilson opted for the manual through feed system for his factory. The components are pre-glued, assembled and pushed into the machine by the operator.

The laminator’s pneumatic clamping system senses the size of the charge and applies the right amount of pressure during the RF process and automatically releases the product when the curing time is finished. After a short cooling off period the operator feeds the next charge into the machine and the laminated product is pushed out of the machine and is immediately ready for further processing and treating.
The return on investment is therefore measured by throughput and the huge saving on time, space and effort when compared to the traditional laminating system involving clamping systems that require the laminated products to be left to cure overnight. The machine is changing the way we operate and the support we receive from HFH is helping us to adapt to this increase in productivity,” explains Wilson.

Radio frequency heating is a technology that is currently being employed worldwide providing industry with the opportunity to improve energy utilization, increase production and enhance product quality. High frequency electromagnetic energy is used to uniformly generate heat within a product thus reducing thermal stress. Radio frequency is well suited to satisfy process heating requirements in a number of sectors. One such sector is the timber industry, where it is often used for drying and gluing applications. Radio frequency wood bonding is being increasingly employed to improve production rates by reducing adhesive setting times from hours to minutes.

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Alpine Lounge expands its state-of-the-art production line

Alpine Lounge, one of South Africa’s largest lounge furniture manufacturers, has expanded its product range to include headboards, occasional chairs and ottomans and the company is investing in competitiveness and productivity enhancing programmes that include the purchase of a new Homag Weeke CNC nesting machine.

Alpine Lounge was founded in 1969 and the company’s name has become a brand associated with a reputation for high quality leather and fabric furniture. The company’s buying team travels extensively overseas to ensure that it can provide the very latest trends, styles, fabrics and leather furniture to its customers in Africa, the UK and the USA.

Alpine Lounge forms part of the Bravo Group’s lounge division and is located in Cape Town where it provides full time and seasonal employment for approximately 700 people. Employees receive training to ensure that quality remains at a high standard.

Alpine commenced implementing lean manufacturing principles approximately three years ago and is on a journey of continuous improvement. From January 2018 Alpine will begin to roll out its ISO 9015 quality management system. Unlike its sister companies, Alpine Lounge occupies a fairly small footprint and the space constraints make it imperative that productivity improvement systems are well planned, and all employees are trained to implement them.

The latest addition to the production line is the Homag Group’s Weeke BHP-100 Vantage CNC machine that was supplied by Donald Fuchs Woodworking Machinery. This is Alpine’s second Weeke CNC machine and, Karl Roberts, the Mechanical Engineer, says the decision to buy the new machine was based on the positive experience Alpine has had with Donald Fuchs Woodworking Machinery over the years.

The Weeke Vantage 100 CNC gantry-style processing centre is designed so that the processing tools can reach the entire working field. This facilitates nesting of product components so that the full board can be optimised with as little waste as possible, in line with the zero-waste philosophy instilled by lean manufacturing. Alpine has included an automatic loading system on the machine, which will be put into operation during the next phase of the plant improvement programme.

The men responsible for putting the new Weeke Vantage 100 through its paces at Alpine Lounge are, from left: Shaid Dalwe (mill manager), Andre Sass (operator) and Karl Roberts (mechanical engineer).
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The Knysna Timber Initiative decided at its first meeting after the fires that the festival would go ahead, even though both the venue, Timber Village, and the festival manager’s home and office with all the festival documents and records were completely burned to the ground.

“It was a massive effort, but the spirit of cooperation and the incredible support we received from everyone paid off on the day, says festival manager, Picca de Bruin.

The Knysna Timber Initiative decided at its first meeting after the fires that the festival would go ahead, even though both the venue, Timber Village, and the festival manager’s home and office with all the festival documents and records were completely burned to the ground.

“The Knysna Timber Initiative decided at its first meeting after the fires that the festival would go ahead, even though both the venue, Timber Village, and the festival manager’s home and office with all the festival documents and records were completely burned to the ground.

“…”

The event was created by the Knysna Timber Initiative to revive interest in the timber economy of the Garden Route, which has suffered the closure of numerous sawmills, plantations, and factories - and the resultant loss of thousands of jobs - over the last two decades. The fires were, for many, the last straw.

“There was an incredible atmosphere throughout the festival - and it’s clear that everyone’s willing to work together to preserve our timber heritage, and to re-grow the industry in the future,” says the Knysna Timber Initiative’s Alistair “Jock” McConnachie.

The iconic Timber Village, part sawmill and lumber yard and part artisan workshops and show room for bespoke contemporary furniture, was raised during the fires. The “master” craftsman of the former sanctuary for woodworkers, Jock, says it is hard to accept that everything is gone.

“We were concerned that the government owned land would be used for other purposes following the fire, but we were delighted to be told that our contract has been renewed and we could rebuild,” explains Jock. He has, however, decided to retire and is handing over the reins to former employees, Karl van Lith and Daniel Hennessy. They have bought the goodwill and are re-employing the staff that made the business an institution within the Knysna community.

The cost of rebuilding whilst gaining new business and income is challenging, and Karl says they are grateful for the support in the form of donations and equipment that is helping them rebuild the Village’s essential infrastructure such as workshops, show and training rooms as well as homes, which were all destroyed in the fires.

“The support from our local community and South Africans everywhere is a blessing. We still have a way to go, but we are already paying it forward,” says Karl.
The Knysna MakerSpace at Kluyts & Co is a collection of artists, craftsmen and product makers who are individual businesses that collaborate and share their knowledge and expertise. “We enable makers by networking, equipping, resourcing and supporting them,” says John Noble, of Kluyts & Co. He seen here with the wooden bicycle built at the 2016 festival.

Jonno Schultz of Studio Fu (a symbol for good luck) is a design artist and laser work specialist who is the latest creative to move into the Knysna MakerSpace.

The inspiration behind the Bjorn collection’s design came from a week-long trip to a quaint Swedish town, Tibro. A simplistic, yet artful, approach reveals itself in the collection by way of simple straight lines combined with understated elegance.

JB Furniture Manufacturers, formerly J&B Furniture, has been a Knysna based company for many years. Russel Burland (above) and Kimberley Snook keep abreast with local design trends and styles and market needs.

Touw Meubels, a George-based manufacturer, had a key spot at the entrance of the exhibition tent, and Lenn Clark says he is pleased with the response from visitors to the festival.

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The Working with Wood (WWW) team worked hard at the Knysna Timber Festival to demonstrate their support for the rebuilding of Knysna and its rich heritage of woodworking.

The organisers of the festival are a group of local businesses who see Knysna as the centre of woodworking in South Africa, largely due the deep, rich heritage and history of timber-related activities in the area.

WWW collaborated with their retailers, and will do so going forward, for future shows. The full WWW/Vermont Sales team were on hand to introduce and demonstrate new products to the unprecedented number of people who supported the festival.

Strand Hardware promoted the SawStop table top saw, which is a key product for manufacturers and hobbyists and is the safest saw in the market today. Bessey’s and Armor Tool’s latest clamping systems were on show as well as the new Cadex range of pneumatic nailers.

Turf and Trees from Knysna marketed the Festool range and used the occasion to launch the latest Festool sliding compound mitre saw KS60E as well as the unique Festool range of dust extraction systems. The Festool Domino joining system was extremely popular amongst the woodworkers at the show.

Tool and Trade demonstrated the Howard woodcare range and the latest offerings from the Kreg group, such as their new mobile project centre, drawer slide jig, concealed hinge jig and the cabinet hardware jig.

Demonstrations also included products from Triton, Kreg, Alpen, Imperial, MEC blades, Air Craft products, Olfa Drill Doctor and Howard Woodcare.

"Overall, it was a great platform to introduce our brands and product ranges and launch the new products to the Garden Route, says Daniel Melin, Western Cape’s sales manager for WWW and Vermont Sales. “There was a huge interest from the continuous flow of visitors, and great weather conditions allowed the woodworker/hobbyist to enjoy everything on offer. The WWW/Vermont Sales team will be back again next year," says Melin.

Visitors impressed by demonstrations

Fabian Mayer puts the new Festool sliding combination mitre saw through its paces at the Knysna Timber Festival.

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