



## Nordic wood at home in China

Timber triumphs in turbulent market

Successful builders' merchant initiative





## timber news

Chinese solid wood product entrepreneurs Guo Xian Yang and Simon Wang on a visit to SCA Timber.  
Photo: Olle Melkerhed

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SCA Timber is one of the largest sawmill companies in Europe and includes seven sawmills, wood-processing units, distribution and wholesale operations. The total production of solid-wood products amounts to 1.8 million cubic meters.

SCA Timber is part of SCA's Forest Products business area, which produces publication papers for newspapers, magazines and catalogues, pulp and forest-based biofuels. SCA Forest Products also manages SCA's extensive forest holdings, supplies SCA's Swedish industries with wood raw materials and offers cost-efficient transport solutions to SCA's units.

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# Is the roller coaster ride over yet?

**Both suppliers and customers are probably suffering quite a bit of motion sickness at the moment, following the roller coaster that the solid wood products industry has been riding over the past two years.**

**A**fter a long period of boom with increased demand, production and prices, the solid wood products market suffered a downturn at the end of 2007, primarily due to a dramatic reduction in new build construction in the USA. During 2008 and into 2009, solid wood product suppliers attempted to adapt their production to cope with significantly reduced demand. The imposition of production limits and a series of sawmill closures last spring brought a degree of balance, but solid wood products are now actually in short supply in some segments.

**The strong market** we are currently experiencing is not so much the result of increased demand – even if there are positive signs in this direction – but rather suppliers' reduction of their production volumes. Normally, such a strong market would quickly drive up production – and signs of this are being seen. Yet production development is being held back partly by access to raw materials at a reasonable price and partly the potential to dispose of by-products: the pulp and paper industry has also suffered a significant downturn in demand.

**A further influential** dynamic is that some parts of the solid wood products market have not been affected by the downturn as badly as others. For instance, the repair and renovation sector has not been squeezed nearly as much as the new build sector. In many areas, wood continues to pick up market share from other materials, not least as a result of wood having significant environmental benefits compared to plastics, steel and concrete.

**SCA, as a supplier** of solid wood products, is finding a less pronounced fall-off in demand in areas where we have developed strong partnerships with customers, increasing supply chain efficiency and providing more refined products. These partnerships do not deliver the same price upturns on a strong market, but nor do they suffer as badly when the solid wood product market weakens.

**SCA's substantial forest** holdings also mean that the company has a secure base to work from in terms of raw materials supply.

**With regard to** future trends, we believe that the market will strengthen and demand increase as the global economy starts to come out of the recession forced on it by the financial crisis. We also believe that wood will continue to pick up market share from other materials. What is more difficult to determine is the extent to which it will be possible to mobilise raw materials to satisfy growing demand.

**We want to continue** to work on developing partnerships in both good times and bad. Both we and our customers benefit from a more stable and predictable market. We can work together to develop products and delivery chains instead of chasing prices and deals, sometimes with one party on top, sometimes with the other.

The roller coaster ride will probably continue, but we don't have to travel in the front seat.

Jonas Mårtensson  
President, SCA Timber



Jonas Mårtensson.  
Photo: Per-Anders Sjöquist



During its first year of life, BM Scandinavia has succeeded in selling and distributing wood products from SCA to the builders' merchant sector in Norway and Sweden. "It's really taken off," says Urban Wiklund, head of BM Scandinavia. Photo: Michael Engman

## Successful initiative in Nordic builders' merchant sector

**In the space of just nine months, sales by the business operation BM Scandinavia, SCA's Nordic builders' merchant sector initiative, have exceeded this year's target with room to spare. In the run-up to 2010, focus will shift to delivery quality, which must meet customers' expectations to an even higher degree than before.**

The changing pattern of selling building materials in the Nordic region – more stringent requirements on cost effectiveness, new materials and methods, reduced production costs, a growing DIY sector, etc. – means that many smaller sawmills and timber yards are disappearing.

In their place, major players, who can supply a wider range of products, have come knocking at the door.

After enjoying several successful years in the British builders' merchant market, SCA launched BM Scandinavia in 2008, with the aim of strengthening SCA's service to the Norwegian and Swedish builders' merchant sector.

The head of the new unit is Urban Wiklund, seconded to SCA's Jämtlamell sawmill in Stugun. Together with a team of 10 or so co-workers, he will work to satisfy customers' solid wood product needs.

"Stugun is the heart of the operation," he says. "BM Scandinavia's management is located here, along with our distribution centre. Another part of the puzzle is the sawmill in Vilhelmina."

In spite of the fact that 2009 began with the market in a difficult position thanks to a combination of the financial crisis and a shrinking construction sector, BM Scandinavia has succeeded in selling and distributing solid wood products from SCA's sawmills to customers in both Norway and Sweden.

The budget has been gradually adjusted upwards to the point at which it is now set to be 95,000 cubic metres by year end.

"It's really taken off," claims Wiklund.

Sales managers Kent Andersson and Patrik Pettersson have focused their activities primarily on customers with operations extending north from Mälardalen. In Norway, the focus has been on the builders' merchant sector in Trøndelag.

"We've focused on a range comprising planed spruce and pressure-impregnated timber, which is the reason why SCA has invested in an impregnation facility at Bollsta," says Wiklund.

Ahead of next year, he is looking forward with great interest to a major initiative to develop BM Scandinavia's logistics solutions, the aim of which is to be able to launch a more reliable system for stock management and delivery planning.

"Our ambition is that 2010 will be the year we can ensure the quality of our deliveries," says Wiklund.

And because there is increased demand in the Norwegian and Swedish markets for surface treated wood products, there are also plans afoot to establish a surface treatment facility for facade timber adjacent to SCA's sawmill in Stugun.

"It's a matter of trying to satisfy customers' requirements in all respects," summarises Wiklund.

Mats Wigardt

# Smart solutions for IKEA shelves

During the spring, SCA will start delivery of Gorm shelving units to IKEA stores. In February, all installations will be complete. Thereafter, at least one million finished shelves will leave SCA's partner TräTeam in Kramfors every year.

When SCA Timber and IKEA signed a six-year contract for the delivery of the classic Gorm storage shelving system to IKEA stores in Northern Europe, it heralded the start of an extensive programme of investment at TräTeam.

First to arrive on site were the German fitters with the cutting equipment. At the same time, the Danish fitters started work on the chipping facility. In addition to this, the premises have been adapted to accommodate the new operation and a 2,000 square metre storage tent has been erected.

"Yes, it's been hectic," sighs Sten-Åke Nyberg of TräTeam in Kramfors.

Following the installation of a new planing line and a chip baling machine with a capacity of 300,000 bales per year, the final process of fitting equipment intended for the production of IKEA's shelving is now underway. The total investment will be somewhere in the region of SEK 45-50 million.

At least one million wooden shelving units will be produced every year. Completion of the premises and final fitting of the equipment is underway. Everything will be ready by February.

Photo: Mats Wigardt



TräTeam's Sten-Åke Nyberg, Jimmy Söderström and Lars-Erik Frage are up to the task – manufacturing wooden shelving units for IKEA. Photo: Mats Wigardt

"It's about finding smart solutions that will keep costs down," says Lars-Erik Frage, TräTeam's site manager.

Early next year, 10 or so of the company's employees will start the process of converting 45,000 cubic metres of pine timber into IKEA shelving.

The timber goes straight from the planing mill to the new cutting line. The quality of the timber is assessed in a scanner and is then cut to the appropriate lengths.

Once the sections have been sorted into bundles for legs and shelves, they continue their journey to an automated nailing line built

by a local design engineer.

"Using hydraulics, the machine can fire 300 nails a minute," says Frage. "That's about 66 million nails per year."

Once the units have been packaged and loaded on to trucks, they are taken straight to one of IKEA's stores. TräTeam's chief financial officer Jimmy Söderström believes that Gorm will double the company's turnover.

"We've perhaps not yet fully grasped the scope of this investment," he says. "The pressure is on, but we're convinced that our collaboration will produce a positive outcome."

Mats Wigardt

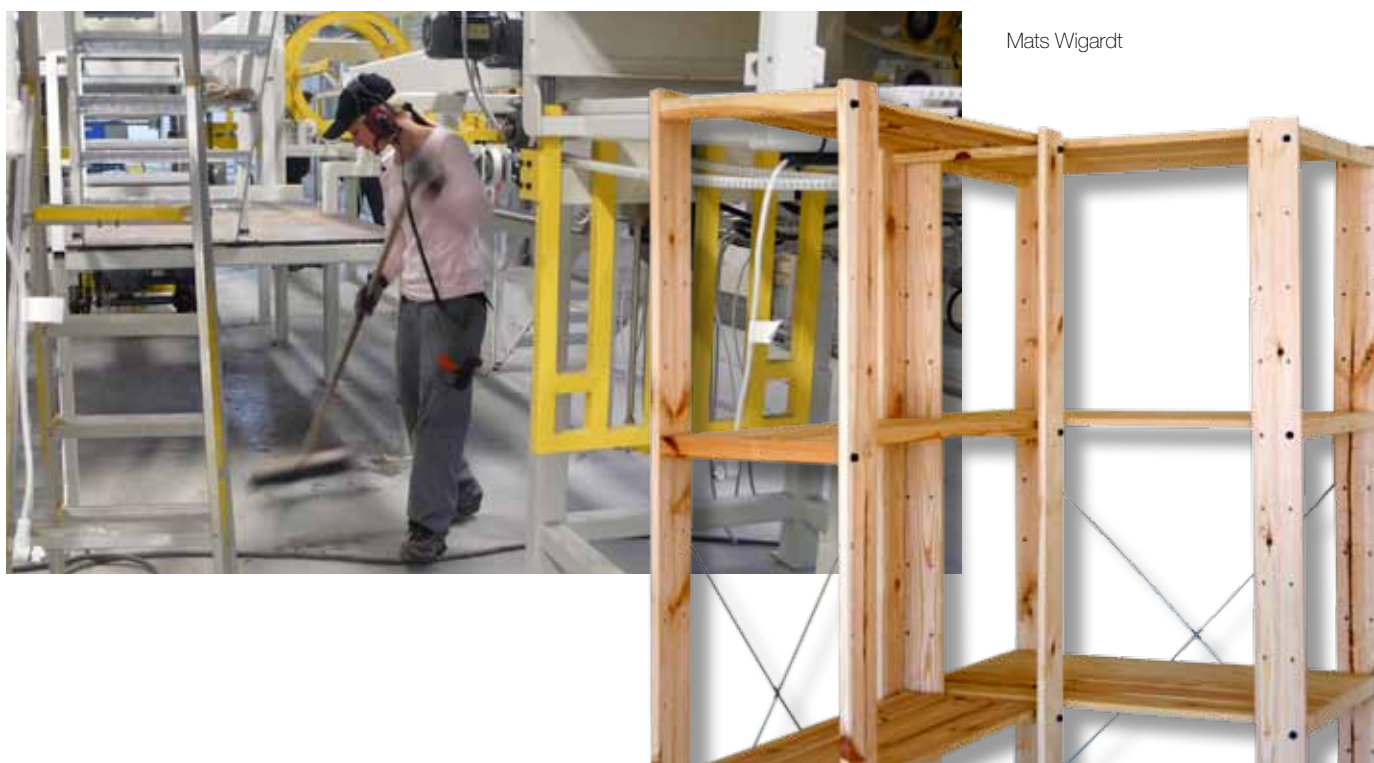




Photo: Juliana Yonci

## Owning a forest is worth its weight in golds

**When supplies of raw material cannot increase at the same rate as anticipated demand for sawn products, the result will be higher log prices and an increased interest in developed products.**

**“In such circumstances, it’s strategically very advantageous to own your own forest,” says Lars-Göran Sandberg of consultancy company Timwood.**

The market for sawn solid wood products has undergone a turbulent period. After several years of rising demand and record-high prices, the financial crisis forced the market into a nose dive at the end of 2007 that hit the sawmill industry full in the face during the second half of 2008.

Consumption fell, production tumbled and there were brutal cut-backs in both capacity and personnel in many places.

In the USA, the bottom dropped out of the building sector, resulting in a historically low level of house construction. European markets also suffered a dramatic downturn,

with a failing building sector, huge price falls, contractors being declared bankrupt and reduced felling as a result.

Several major sawmills have been shut down or mothballed in anticipation of an eventual improvement in market conditions. In countries such as Finland, Austria, Germany and Russia, sawmill production fell by as much as 30%.

In Russia, there is still a degree of uncertainty concerning the country’s high log export tariffs. Foreign investors are hesitating before committing themselves to the Russian sawmill sector.

In Finland, log prices went into

freefall from the middle of 2007 until the first quarter of 2009 and procurement volumes collapsed. During the past year, both Finnish and Baltic sawmills have halved their export volumes to the rest of Europe.

The situation in Germany and Austria is not much better, with exports to the USA almost non-existent and a sawmill capacity that vastly exceeds the availability of raw materials.

**“However, Swedish** sawmills have managed to cope reasonably well during the crisis, thanks to the currency benefits afforded by the weak krona,” explains Jan Wintzell of consultancy firm Pöyry. “They have succeeded in making progress in Europe and increasing their market share compared to Finnish sawmills.

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Figures from Danske Bank show that Sweden's market share in places such as the UK has increased from 35% to 60%. Even in countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany and France, Swedish sawmills have seen their market share increase."

**According to Wintzell**, it is still unclear whether the underlying demand for solid wood products has turned the corner, but with the support packages available within the EU, demand may recover as early as 2010, albeit from low levels. Ahead of 2010, it can be said that many sawmills in Sweden will continue to have a positive order book.

By 2011, many observers believe that a gradual recovery may slowly begin. Construction is then also expected to show signs of recovery, although this will principally focus around renovation work.

"But with increased market shares in Europe, Swedish sawmills are already working in a higher gear despite the increasingly higher log prices," says Wintzell.

**Timwood's** Lars-Göran Sandberg believes that the Swedish wood mechanical industry has a completely different outlook compared to just a few years ago. Today, many Swedish sawmills are on a par with the very best in Europe, with highly integrated production and developed products.

"SCA has well and truly put wood mechanics on the map and come a long way in terms of new collaboration partners and system solutions for customization and finishing," he says.

But access to raw materials introduces a factor of uncertainty into the picture. Log prices are increasing throughout Europe, whilst the amount of log harvesting is reduced. In addition, an increased commitment to the environment has seen more and more people and organisations imposing demands on raw materials from forests and the large Swedish stockpiles from storms Gudrun and Per have reduced.

Therefore, if you want logs, you have to be prepared to pay for it.

"The availability of raw materials dictates who will be winners

and who will be losers," writes Danske Bank in its newsletter.

**In order for Swedish** sawmills to retain their market share, they must be able to offer attractive, value-for-money products, even in the face of rising raw material prices and a waning in the currency benefits experienced in Sweden.

Less wastage, lower costs, more finishing, better service and higher efficiency are factors that will become more important as demand for sawn solid wood products increases again in Europe and North America. In addition, logs must also be traceable.

"I therefore believe that SCA is in a good position heading into the future," says Sandberg. "By owning a high volume of forest, they can efficiently control the flow from stump to finishing and delivery. And customers can be certain where the raw material comes from."

**However**, the solid wood products industry is turning quickly. There is a danger of the market for sawn solid wood products recoiling once state-implemented measures designed to keep unemployment down during the financial crisis come to an end.

Many people consulted about the future of their jobs have not been made redundant. When people are unemployed, they don't



By 2011, many observers believe that a gradual recovery may slowly begin. Construction is then also expected to show signs of recovery, although this will principally focus around renovation work.

Photo: Christer Häggström/Norrlandia



Bengt-Göran Sandberg, Timwood.  
Photo: Bengt Alm



Jan Wintzell, Pöyry.  
Photo: Heimo Fürst

have money in their pocket to spend on planks and boards. A quick but short-term increase in demand may be replaced by a similarly quick downturn.

“I don’t think that we can breathe easy yet,” says Wintzell. “It remains to be seen just how the underlying demand for sawn solid wood products will develop. In addition, the effects of lay-offs and reduced consumption may continue to have a negative impact on the market. Against this background, there is reason to believe that there will be structural changes in the sawmill industry in the future.”

**Anders Ek**, SCA Timber’s marketing director, has a very positive view of the future. He says the sales in the past six months have been extremely good and, as a result, sawmills have been operating at full capacity. The problems of the outside world have benefited SCA’s sales in all areas. The fact that SCA Timber’s market focus is heavily oriented on the renovation sector has been an advantage.

Window components from Munksund are selling well, construction product initiatives in Sweden and Norway have been positive and deliveries to Italy, the

UK and North Africa are increasing. In addition, Finland has become a new market for sawn products from SCA.

“We think we’ve managed to strike a good balance between availability of raw materials and

demand for our products,” he summarises. “It’s never been so good to own your own forest as it is today.”

Mats Wigardt



Photo: Per-Anders Sjöquist

#### Facts about SCA’s raw material assets

- SCA is the biggest private forest owner in Europe, with a holding of 2.6 million hectares of forest, of which 2 million hectares are used for timber production.
- Spruce constitutes 40% of the company’s forest reserves, pine 43%.
- The large forest holding forms an important base for establishing a stable flow of raw materials of the right quality to SCA’s industries in northern Sweden.
- SCA’s forestry operation was certified in 1999 to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standard.

# Chinese solid wood product customers seek **strategic partnership**

During a week-long visit to northern Sweden, several of SCA's customers from China expressed the hope of establishing a close collaborative relationship with the aim of securing long-term and reliable supplies of raw material.

"Service and stability are important criteria when choosing a supplier," says Guo Xian Yang of Shenzhen Sampo Furniture.

The tour around Tunadal Sawmill excited and interested the visitors. The state-of-the-art technology used in the new automatic sorting mill is a world away from the Chinese visitors' every-day experience.

"This is the first time I've seen such a big and modern sawmill," says an impressed Simon Wang of Zhanjiang Huapin Wooden Products.

Along with Guo Xian Yang from Shenzhen Sampo Furniture and Li Tuan from Jiang Men Gao Hong, he was invited to visit SCA's facilities in northern Sweden. Part of the visit involved tours of the company's sawmills in Tunadal, Bollsta, Rundvik and Munksund.

Hosting the visit was Mathias Fridholm, SCA's sales manager in China. Joining them on the trip was Fridholm's colleague in China, Edmund Tong. He talks about how the use of wood is increasing significantly in China, partly due to IKEA starting operations there.

"The lighter Nordic wood varieties are seen as modern and trendy amongst young Chinese," says Tong. "Spruce and pine from Scandinavia have increasingly replaced dark wood varieties in furniture and interior design."

**Between 2000 and 2005**, Chinese timber imports tripled from 10 million cubic metres to 30 million cubic metres. The import of sawn solid wood products also experienced a similar trend. During the second quarter of 2009, China was the world's second-biggest importer of sawn



Alexander Post, product engineer, explains the barcode system to Simon Wang and Edmund Tong.

softwood products. The biggest volumes originate from Russia and Canada; imports from Europe remain relatively modest.

During the first six months of this year, almost 30% more sawn solid wood products were imported than during the corresponding period in 2008.

"These figures will continue to climb," assures Tong. "We've not been affected by the financial crisis in the same way as you have in the West."

**Since 2005**, SCA Timber, working in collaboration with a wood finishing company in Southern China, has licensed the manufacture of window components from Swedish raw material for distribution to

customers in Italy and the United Kingdom. However, the focus has recently shifted to the sale of sawn timber to companies who produce items for the local market. The 1.3 billion Chinese, who are rapidly garnering an increasingly higher standard of living, constitute what is an almost insatiable market.

**One such company** is Shenzhen Sampo Furniture, the owner of which CEO is Guo Xian Yang.

"I previously worked for a company that manufactured pine furniture for the Japanese market," he says. "I learned a lot about the technology and raw materials, and in 2002 decided to start my own com-



Mathias Fridholm (left) is SCA Timber's sales manager in China. He acted as host during the Chinese solid wood product manufacturers' visit, which included a tour of Tunadal Sawmill.



"This is the first time I've seen such a big and modern sawmill," says Simon Wang (right). Pictured here together with Edmund Tong and Alexander Post, Tunadal Sawmill.

pany producing children's furniture."

When demand for furniture in Japan fell, Yang decided to focus on the domestic Chinese market instead. Today, his company has more than 70 stores in 20 or so Chinese cities. In a few years, he estimates he will be selling his furniture in more than 500 stores.

"I work from the conviction that each store will generate sales of USD 100,000 a month," notes Yang delightedly.

His relationship with SCA Timber is comparatively new. The first delivery of spruce timber from Tunadal was made as recently as May this year. But Yang believes that future deliveries from SCA will easily cover half his raw material requirements. And with FSC certified timber.

"SCA knows the Chinese market and our specific requirements," he says. "If we are to succeed with our business plan, we need a long-term and strategic partnership where we can work together to solve any problems that arise."

**Another customer** category in China being prioritised by SCA is those companies which manufacture products for the export market. Simon Wang is CEO of Zhanjiang Huapin Wooden Products, whose 300 employees produce doors made from pine, primarily for customers in the UK and Ireland, but also for customers in the Middle East.

"We make around 150,000 door sets per year," says Wang, "both in solid and veneered woods. But we're now also taking a look at furnishing components such as panels and mouldings, made from both pine and spruce."

The local market is also attractive.

There are more than a thousand major towns and cities throughout China where there is a constant flow of new build home construction. The problem is that there is no common standard for doors or windows. In one apartment, there can be six doors, each of which has different dimensions and a different appearance...

Wang first came into contact with SCA four years ago. He had bought pine timber from several other sawmills, but wasn't completely satisfied with the quality and level of service offered.

Now he would ideally like SCA to cover all the company's raw material needs.

"SCA knows what we want, but unfortunately is unable to completely satisfy our requirements," says Wang.

**A third customer** category for SCA in China is timber wholesalers and distributors on the domestic market. One of these companies is Jiang Men Gao Hong, which will soon be celebrating 10 years of importing wood raw material intended for use in sauna furnishing and furniture manufacture. Li Tuan is a part owner and CEO, but had to travel back to China at the time of the Tunadal visit.

"It can be difficult for Chinese companies to obtain import and export licences," says Edmund Tong. "Many smaller companies prefer to purchase their timber from a wholesaler in order to avoid having to wade through the mass of bureaucracy that surrounds the importation process."

**The tour continues** through the sawmill, from the automatic sorting mill to the planing mill to the timber store to the loading of a ship destined for France. In

the planing mill, the visitors show considerable interest in the off-cuts removed from the timber that will become window shutters for French customers. Instead of converting these into chips for the local district heating network, they would be more than happy to have the pieces sent to China.

"Imagine what we could do with pieces like this in our furniture factory," says Yang excitedly.

A new business concept is born...

Mats Wigardt  
Photo: Olle Melkerhed



The off-cuts are interesting. "Imagine what we could do with pieces like this in our furniture factory," says Guo Xian Yang.

# Automatic sorting mill in operation at Tunadal sawmill

Work on constructing the automatic sorting mill installation began at Tunadal just over a year ago. The new mill was built around the old facility and supplied by Austrian firm Springer.

“We haven’t made any compromises in this procurement, in fact we’ve bought the best machines on the market,” says Ville Huittinen, sawmill manager at Tunadal.

The new facility uses cameras that scan all planks and boards to check quality levels. A computer then determines what must be cut away. In the past, this assessment was performed by the operators. Similar equipment has already been in use at Rundvik and Munksund sawmills for some time.

“In addition to camera sorting, the new facility also features acoustic durability grading and a new cutting system. The new equipment will give us a better level of quality in our products and less wastage,”



Tord Hammarström, operator, Jerry Larsson, building project manager and Ville Huittinen, sawmill manager, in the new automatic sorting mill at Tunadal sawmill. Photo: Per-Anders Sjöquist

says Jerry Larsson, project manager for the construction of the new facility.

According to the schedule, production will be gradually increased and reach full capacity in December.

The new facility can also be supplemented with a planing mill.

“But when one of those will be built depends on the results we succeed in achieving, so that we have the confidence to make further investments,” says Larsson.

The new technology is considerably more efficient than its predecessor and therefore does not require the involvement of so many employees. As a result, the number of operational personnel in the automatic sorting mill has been reduced from 14 to 7 people per shift.

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## New name for Severn Timber Products

In September, Severn Timber Products officially changed its name to SCA Timber Supply, Welshpool.

The change serves to further emphasise the fact that the Welshpool-based wood finishing company has now become part of SCA Timber’s British subsidiary, SCA Timber Supply. The company also has a distribution centre in Stoke-on-Trent and a wholesale operation in Hull.

Two years ago, SCA Timber bought British wood finishing

company Severn Timber Products. The collaborative relationship between the two companies in respect of finishing, distribution and sale of solid-wood products had been going since as far back as 2000. The acquisition enabled SCA to further strengthen its position as a supplier to the professional builders’ merchant trade and, as a result, its share of finished

products. “Working under the SCA Timber Supply umbrella has allowed Welshpool’s potential to develop in several respects. Despite the tough economic climate this year we’re delighted to have achieved record production volumes in both planed and treated products, in addition to increasing our sales,” says Jonathan Bower, Operations director at SCA Timber Supply, Welshpool.

Ingrid Löfqvist



# New pressure treatment facility to Bollsta sawmill

**Bollsta sawmill** invests SEK 24,4 M in a new pressure treatment facility for the production of pressure-treated wood products for the building material merchants.

The facility will have a capacity of 65 000 m<sup>3</sup>/year and will be in operation in March next year.

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## Reduced production in Europe results in shortage of sawn solid wood products

*Despite the constant presence of the global financial crisis, demand for sawmill products has been high since last spring. The reason for this robust level of demand is that the production of solid wood products has fallen more than consumption. Prices have risen as a result of low stocks and the difficulty in meeting the needs of the market.*

The financial crisis continues to have a significant effect on the construction industry in the West, although the recession in construction activity appears to have bottomed out. In fact, some markets are now showing signs of cautious recovery. However, in the USA, which is the biggest solid wood products market in the world, the rate of new builds is still at its lowest since the depression of the 1930s.

National support programmes, such as Sweden's repair, rebuilding and extension (RMI) grant, have helped to counteract the generally negative trend. For the wood sector, this is mainly indicated by renovation activity in many of our markets being higher than we expected.

**During the period** from January-October, production in the 'big five' European pro-

ducer countries (Germany, Russia, Sweden, Austria and Finland) was 15-16% lower than for the corresponding period in 2008. From the peak year of 2007, the reduction is approximately 25%, or around 18 million cubic metres of sawn solid wood products. Much of this unused production capacity has been temporarily mothballed. Only in Finland are more extensive permanent closures happening as the result of the industry structure being adapted to fall in line with the national capacity to supply timber (the import of Russian logs is discounted as a long-term source of supply).

The major issue now facing producers is the ability to acquire sufficient quantities of logs without driving up prices to an excessively high level. This is a particular challenge in Finland, as well as in Russia, where major difficulties are being experienced in getting raw materials out to sawmills.

As a result of the raw materials problems faced by producers in the north, the ability to supply product from the northern pine forest belt is limited, whilst the available supply of raw materials from the southern Swedish/central European pine forest area is higher.

**After experiencing** rapid growth last spring, the price trend for sawn solid wood products has slowed. Prices of products from sawmills in the northern pine forest area are expected either to remain unchanged or to rise slowly in the run-up to next year. However, prices from producers in southern Sweden/central Europe came under pressure during October-November. This pressure led to producers immediately moving to limit their output.

**In my opinion,** the first six months of 2010 will see prices remain stable at current levels. The current low sawmill stock levels (primarily in the north) makes it easy for sawmill owners to hold their prices. What will happen beyond next summer is more difficult to predict as it will depend on how consumption develops. However, the output of sawlogs from forest owners in the north will probably continue to be limited at current price levels as they are significantly below 2007 prices. Limited log output squeezes production and helps stabilise the market.

Anders Ek, Marketing Director, SCA Timber

Photo: Mårten Wikner



# A symbol of life

Persåsen-based Leif Wikner has a life-long passion for wood. This passion has become manifest in the shape of a resort with a six mile wide view over Storsjön. Amongst all the objects and works of art created in his workshop, the egg has a prominent position.

Throughout his life, Wikner has been fascinated by the scent, shape and potential of wood. Forty years ago, he laid the foundations for what is now an ‘experience centre’ that has wood, nature, playfulness and craft as its cornerstones.

**At Persåsen**, visitors get to see work going on in the workshop. You can christen your children or get married in egg-shaped function rooms. You can even enjoy a meal, stay for the night or stage a conference. Visiting children can also see an egg take shape as it grows out of the lathe.

But perhaps the most exciting thing is hearing Wikner talk about his passion for eggs.

Throughout the ages and in all cultures, the egg has been a symbol for life and fertility. This is something Wikner latched on to. The egg, along with a cocky rooster, has become the symbol for Persåsen. Over the years, Wikner has crafted hundreds of eggs from various types of wood.

“Everyone understands the shape of an egg,” says Wikner. “They may look different, but they are always soft, calming and good to hold.”

“The egg,” he says, “symbolises fertility, imagination and creativity. Yes, the egg is a symbol of life itself, for everything that awaits us. For the exciting and the as yet unknown.”

**Wikner** brings out a box of eggs he has made. It contains eggs of various colours, shapes and patterns that have been glued together from bogwood, birch, apple tree twigs, elder, laburnum or Jämtland pine.

Each egg has a character of its own, feels good in the hand and is beautiful to look at.

But the most beautiful of all are the eggs that have been carved from a single piece of wood. They have a life all their own. A prime example of this is the egg crafted from a piece of storm-damaged birch, which Leif and his son Mårten found when out walking one autumn day at the end of the 1970s.

Another example is the egg created from an apple tree once planted as a memorial by a couple visiting Persåsen. Or eggs fashioned from fire-damaged pine, spalted mountain ash or several thousand-year-old bogwood.

“You never know what you’re going to get with a spalted egg, but the result is always beautiful and powerful,” says Wikner.

Mats Wigardt

Footnote:

There is a Latin proverb – “Omne vivum ex ovo” – which means “All life comes from eggs”.

For more information, visit [www.persasen.se](http://www.persasen.se)



Leif Wikner has a passion for wood – particularly wooden eggs.

Photo: Mats Wigardt