

timber news

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A magazine for SCA's solid wood products customers | www.scatimber.com

2010

Customer and supplier developing together

Customer-focused business development

France banks on wood





timber news

Jan Fryckman, CEO of Norrlands Trä.
Photo: Mats Wigardt

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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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Innovative business development in concert with our customers

It's been a long time since SCA Timber's business concept was to efficiently and cost-effectively turn round wood into square pieces of timber and ship them out to a global marketplace for an unknown use.

Since then, we've started to understand a lot more about our customers' requirements and the potential of our products. From the moment we fell the tree in the forest, or at least when the log is placed on the cutting line, we know what products are to be used for, and we produce an item that meets all specified quality requirements.

It's now time to take development work to the next level, and this will involve working on all fronts. The starting point is, and must be, customers and their requirements. This may result in a slightly improved product, but it also opens the door to the evolution of totally new solutions: product models in which we can work with the customer to eliminate production stages, or business models in which we assume responsibility for elements of our customers' value chains.

In order to work in this way, we must enhance our resources and our expertise in terms of research, development and innovation. We must employ the best technology available in our production facilities. One example of this is our investment in X-ray technology for sorting logs. Using X-rays, we can ensure that we produce the right product from the right raw material, and that we use this raw material in the best possible way with minimal wastage.

We must seek out solutions together in partnership with our customers. This will enable us to create integrated production flows and innovative supply solutions. This is an approach that requires trust and models to share the profits that collaboration on this level will bring.

Backed up by this partnership, we can also invest strategically in facilities that will make these new solutions a reality. Our window component factory in Munksund and our Ikea Gorm shelving production facility in Kramfors are two examples of this. Other examples include the coating line at Jämtlamell sawmill in Stugun and the pressure treatment facility at Bollsta sawmill, which offers new oppor-

tunities to serve the builders' merchant sector in Scandinavia.

We will also be developing our collaborative relationships with production partners and sub-contractors in our efforts to identify the best possible division of labour. Sawmills such as Bollsta will increasingly become nodes in a cluster of wood-related production and service companies that together create competent and efficient processing chains.

In order to drive this development forward, we must collaborate with researchers and innovators more than ever before. One area we must pay close attention to is industrial timber construction, a sector which has undergone enormous change in recent years – one in which SCA's large, efficient production facilities and experience of complex production chains should fit well.

We must make choices, including choosing to discard some development areas. We don't have the volumes or the resources to do everything. Together with development-focused customers and other partners, let's now work to make wise, well-founded and – for everyone involved – profitable choices.

Jerry Larsson,
Technical Director, SCA Timber



Jerry Larsson.

Photo: Per-Anders Sjöquist



A major sea change is evident in Swedish sawmills. The focus is now on customer needs rather than selling large volumes of sawn solid wood products. Photo: Per-Anders Sjöquist

Big challenges ahead for the sawmill industry

It's a big jump going from selling sawn bulk products via multiple intermediaries, not having contact with end users to working in a close relationship with builders' merchants and the wood industry.

"The sawmill industry is on the threshold of some massive challenges," says Staffan Brege, Professor of Industrial Marketing at Linköping University.

The way forward for Swedish forestry lies in the development of products that have a higher added value and in finding new business opportunities based on forest raw materials.

It has become increasingly obvious that more investment is required in order to improve the future outlook for the wood technology industry. There has been a dearth of suf-

ficiently qualified people working in the sector, the value added to products have been too low and there have been very few business opportunities on offer.

However, a major sea change has been noticeable in Swedish sawmills for a number of years. The focus is now more on customer needs rather than on primarily selling large volumes of sawn solid wood products.

It's a well-known fact that many of the major privately owned sawmills realised, much earlier than their company-owned counterparts, the necessity of adopting new approaches. They sought closer relationships with their customers in order to find new models for co-operation. In many cases, they have gone a long way in the development of new products and systems, new services and business models for the common analysis of costs, information flows, stock systems and administration.

"It's no longer just about sawn volumes – it's increasingly becoming about adaptation and responding to what customers actually

>>

want,” says Brege, who has spent many years researching issues affecting the relationships sub-contractors have with their customers.

He goes on to point out that many of the major company-owned sawmills are now seriously developing products in close collaboration with builders’ merchants and industrial customers. This has resulted in many intermediaries being dropped in favour of almost daily customer contact with a clear focus on the end user.

“The differences are definitely being evened out,” says Brege. “The differences that do remain are between individual companies, not primarily between different categories of sawmills.”

In the process of moving towards more customer-centric production, it is a distinct advantage to have the backing of a large and financially stable organisation. Customer requirements in respect of price, quality and logistics mean that sawmills may be forced to sacrifice short-term financial efficiency in their production processes in favour of better business in the long term.

Business that is stable and attractive to customers opens the door to mutual benefit and fewer hold-ups along the way, with significant long-term opportunities for both increased revenue and reduced costs. And greater confidence between the parties.

However, Brege believes that large volumes do not always go hand in hand with higher levels of customised adaptation. He states that it requires planning, patience and thorough analysis to get the logistics and finances to come together so that everything works.

“But,” he emphasises, “I believe that establishing long-term, stable relationships with customers will always pay dividends. New, customer-centric business models are just as important as technology and product development if the business is going to be mutually beneficial.

But transforming the Swedish sawmill industry into a modern production process for developed input goods will naturally require not only a more customer-oriented perspective, but also goal-focused development work and advanced research into methods and technologies.”

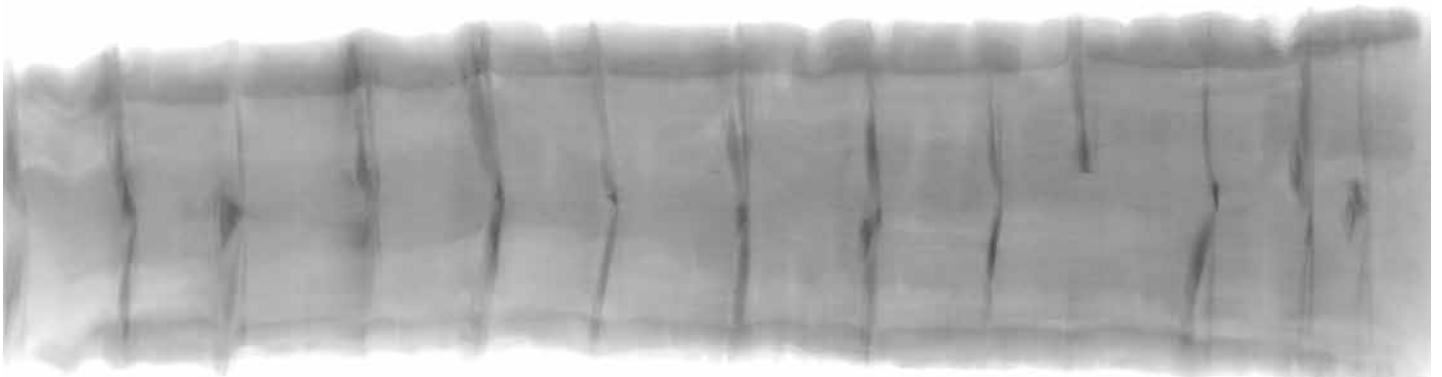
A key role in this work will be played by research institute SP Trätekt, which works in collaboration with the industry as a whole to develop expertise throughout the wood technology finishing chain, from sawmill to furniture and finished timber house.

Examples of areas in which work has focused include methods for controlling the quality of logs and sawn products, timber drying, wood stability, wood constructions and various processes that would allow sawmills to finish their own products in a cost-efficient manner.

This work has resulted in the de-



“Thanks to X-ray technology, we can get the greatest possible value from our wonderful raw pine,” says Dan Olofsson, Process Optimiser at Munksund sawmill.
Photo: Per Pettersson



Using X-ray technology, the team at Munksund sawmill can examine the interior of logs. Density, proportion of heartwood and knot-free wood are just a few of the characteristics that can be seen.

Photo: SP Trätekt



Reliable raw materials sorting, using X-ray technology, is the basis for the focus on window components at Munksund sawmill. Photo: Per-Anders Sjöquist

development of a number of reliable methods for measuring the moisture content of wood, techniques that use thinner saw blades and require fewer saw changes, and projects for the development of timber grading related to strength.

“We play a pivotal role as a link between universities and companies,” says Charlotte Bengtsson, Head of Section at SP Trätekt. “For example, when you talk about increased industrialisation in construction it’s important to make clear where sawmills fit into the process.”

Bengtsson believes that there are several good examples of instances where sawmills have produced strategies to get closer to their customers, thereby increasing the value of their products. This requires new ways of working, new forms of collaboration and new technology.

“One example is a sorting technology that optimises raw materials use and enables components to be produced for manufacturers of both windows and doors,” she says.

Another important player in the production of new products, systems and services within the Swedish wood technology industry is TräCentrum Norr, which is linked

to Luleå University of Technology, and numbers several major sawmills amongst its stakeholders, including SCA.

“It’s a publically-financed development workshop,” says Programme Director Olle Hagman.

One of the prioritised areas of work for TräCentrum Norr is measurement techniques and process control for customer order-controlled production in sawmills.

“In collaboration with SP Trätekt, we’ve developed a technique that X-rays logs so that SCA’s sawmill in Munksund can supply raw material for laminated wood beams that are durable and which you can rely on to look good in the finished product,” says Hagman.

“And,” he adds, “it would not have been possible to produce window components from the same sawmill without using a reliable method of sorting raw materials.”

Today, X-ray sorting technology is widely used in many Scandinavian sawmills. Advances in GPS technology have also made it easier to keep a track of logs that have been stock-piled.

Hagman also believes that, within five years, technology will have advanced sufficiently to produce a three-dimensional image of the in-

terior of a log. This will provide an accurate picture of which logs are best suited for each end product, irrespective of length or diameter.

“In the future, sawmills will be able to control their raw materials much more efficiently,” he says. “The result will be greater accuracy and better quality. The right log for the right product for the right customer.”

Hagman also believes that the new technology will bring a more dynamic process to sawmills. Key concepts such as ‘traceability’ and ‘quality’ require the development of new measurement techniques. And, once planning has been moved into the virtual world, it will be easier to move piles of timber around and be more precise when picking out the required raw material.

But even Hagman acknowledges that, as sawmill processes become more automated and industrialised, there is still a need to work closely with customers on developing new models and forms of collaboration that can ‘spice up’ deals in a way that delivers mutual benefit and increased expertise.

One possible route is outsourcing the finishing stage for a consumer-ready product. Another route is the delivery of large volumes of developed raw material to a wood facility that has a long-term assignment for a specific end customer.

“Good examples of this include how Träteam in Kramfors and Hedlunda in Lycksele turn timber supplied by SCA into furniture for IKEA,” says Hagman.

Mats Wigardt

Also see:

- www.ltu.se, click through the site to visit the TräCentrum Norr page
- www.ltu.se/lwe
- www.sp.se
- www.trastad2012.se



BM Scandinavia's distribution centre is located at Stugun, where the company has also recently built a new warehouse.

Development and service for construction products from SCA

Despite last year's financial crisis and some difficult market conditions, SCA's BM Scandinavia succeeded in exceeding its targets by a good margin. In 2010, the aim is to reach a volume of 120,000 cubic metres and to improve the reliability of deliveries.

When SCA Timber launched BM Skandinavien in 2009, it was to strengthen the company's presence in the regional builders' merchant sector in Southern Norrland and south towards Mälardalen, as well as in the Norwegian regions of Trøndelag and Vestlandet.

With operations at SCA's sawmills in Vilhelmina and Stugun, BM Scandinavia has managed to satisfy its customers' solid wood product needs. Company management is based at Stugun, which is also home to the main distribution centre and a recently-built warehouse.

"We're delighted to have managed to deliver some 97,000 cubic metres of solid wood products during our first year of operation, de-

spite the fact that the organisation had some 'teething troubles' in a few important areas," says SCA Timber's Marketing Director Anders Ek.

"For 2010, the goal is to offer a developed concept that is delivered by staff who are better trained. BM Scandinavia shall be a more cutting edge supplier, with full IT support and improved delivery reliability," promises Ek. The budget has been set so that growth of an additional 20–30 percent can be achieved during 2011.

SCA's investment in a treatment facility adjacent to the company's sawmill in Bollsta will help further strengthen BM Scandinavia's competitiveness. In addition, the decision to build a facility at Stugun to handle



Anders Ek, Marketing Director, SCA Timber.

the surface treatment of facade timber (cladding) makes SCA an even more attractive proposition for its customers in the builders' merchant sector.

"Our joint venture with Persson Invest, which is manifest in the shape of recently formed company Gallo Timber AB, also gives us immediate access to new capacity and expertise," says Ek, before outlining the company's future direction: "Quality, logistics, development and service," he summarises.

Mats Wigardt

Bollsta sawmill invests in X-ray sorting of sawlogs

SCA's sawmill in Bollstabruk is investing in new equipment for sorting sawlogs using X-ray technology. The investment also includes introducing a new and extended log sorting line and will cost SEK 49 million. The new equipment will be installed during the summer.

“X-ray sorting will allow us to utilise the unique quality of our Nordic pine wood resource in the best possible way,” says Sawmill Manager Katarina

Levin. “We can match the right log to the right product during the sorting process. This means that we’re able to maintain a high and even level of quality and reduce

the amount of waste produced and rejected products that aren’t compliant with the customer’s specifications.”

Container Express to the Continent

SCA Transforest will regularly operate on the Rotterdam-Stockholm-Umeå-Sundsvall route. This new route satisfies the growing need for container shipments between Sweden and continental Europe for further transport to and from the rest of the world.

Despite the recession, the flow of container goods between Europe and ports in Northern Sweden continues to grow. These transports increase both the volume of exports leaving Northern Sweden and imports of goods for consumers and industry in the region.

In order to meet these growing needs, SCA Transforest will introduce the Rotterdam-Stockholm-Umeå-Sundsvall route in June. The ship runs on a fixed timetable with a 10-day cycle.

“The container ship method enables us to efficiently switch be-

tween sea, rail and road transport and connect to the world’s major goods flows,” says Nils-Johan Haraldsson, Marketing Manager at SCA Transforest. “We’ve been using container shipping for 15 years now, and have seen needs continue to grow. The volume of goods coming into and leaving Northern Sweden is now so high that we’ve had to invest in a full-blown container ship in order to be able to satisfy the increasing demand.”



The flow of container goods is increasing. SCA Transforest's now regularly operates on the Rotterdam-Stockholm-Umeå-Sundsvall route.



Norrlands Trä is currently one of the biggest suppliers of solid wood flooring and coated indoor panelling (matching) in Sweden, says company CEO Jan Frycklund (left). Pictured next to Jan is Sören Lundberg. Photo: Mats Wigardt

Long-standing relationship: the key to reliable deliveries

The relationship between SCA and Norrlands Trä has never been better. The majority of the raw material used, which is turned into flooring and panelling at Norrlands Trä's factory in Älandsbro, comes from SCA sawmills. And this collaboration is set to develop further.

“SCA has always been a natural partner for us,” says Jan Frycklund, CEO of Norrlands Trä.

Right on the edge of Älandsbro, where the town becomes the country just a little way north of Härnösand, flags fly marking the entrance to Norrlands Trä.

In the office, CEO Jan Frycklund provides a summary of the results of recent investments: Norrlands Trä is currently one of the biggest suppliers of solid wood flooring and coated indoor panelling (matching) in Sweden.

Norrlands Träförädling was started in 1964 by Tage Frycklund. In the early 1970s, a planing line was built, from which finished timber was delivered to house-builders

throughout Sweden. When the bottom fell out of the Swedish construction industry in the 1980s, Norrlands Träförädling looked to the export market, to customers in the Netherlands, Germany the UK and Italy.

When the construction market in Sweden started to pick up again, the company bided its time, ready to make its return to home soil.

In 1994, Jan and Mats Frycklund took over the business from their father.

“It was in no way an obvious decision to make,” says Jan today.

“But in hindsight we can probably say that, fortunately enough, we've succeeded in developing the company.”

In conjunction with this generation shift, the brothers took the strategic decision to go a step further along the finishing chain in order to increase the value of the company's products, and by doing so, improve its long-term profitability.

After conducting detailed analyses of both the market and the various opportunities available, the decision was made for the company, as one of the first planing mills in Sweden, to start surface treating, including coating, a large part of the 55,000 cubic metres of timber finished each year by Norrlands Trä, as the company is now known.

The technology had to be produced in-house, and now a large part of the flooring and wall panel-

ling produced by Norrlands Trä is either waxed, lacquered, oiled or stained. The company has also installed technology that brushes and sands solid wood floors in order to make them more durable and easier to clean.

“Of course it was a gamble – untested technology and an unfamiliar market – but it’s been one that’s undeniably paid off,” says Jan.

Denmark, Sweden and Norway make up the company’s biggest markets, but a significant proportion of Norrlands Trä’s production is also exported to DIY stores and professional outlets in other countries.

The raw material used is mainly slow-grown, live-knot pine from Northern Sweden. Spruce constitutes only a small proportion of the company’s output.

Most of the raw material is supplied by SCA. In 2009, this amounted to a little over 40,000 cubic metres.

“Our relationship with SCA is longstanding, with the sawmill at Bollsta being our primary supplier,” says Jan. “We’ve always felt that they’re a natural partner for us. It’s reassuring to know that we’re supported by such a large and stable company.”

Anders Marklund, SCA Timber’s Sales Manger Scandinavia, says that

Norrlands Trä has been one of the company’s biggest customers for several years.

“It’s about quality, knowledge, logistics, delivery reliability and personal chemistry,” he summarises, “and mutual trust.”

Jan Frycklund agrees. Norrlands Trä employs a very restrictive access policy when it comes to gaining entrance to its production facilities. However, the relationship established with SCA has seen a rolling exchange of knowledge going on, with delegations from Bollsta sawmill paying regular visits to Älandsbro. And vice versa.

“This lets the shopfloor employees meet each other so that they can get a better insight into the conditions in each production facility,” says Jan.

The deal between SCA and Norrlands Trä runs with volume reconciliations every six months and pricing adheres to an agreed model that is devoid of much of the small print reservations that can appear in other long-term collaboration agreements.

For Jan Frycklund, a handshake, or a gentlemen’s agreement, with the right partner is very important. A close customer/supplier collaborative relationship such as this benefits both parties as they are allowed to develop together.

For his part, Marklund chooses words such as ‘trust’ and ‘informal partnership’ to describe the deal.

“Norrlands Trä is without doubt one of our top priority customers,” he summarises.

In order to underline the relationship between the companies still further, SCA has appointed Tony Öhman from Bollsta sawmill to act as coordinator for deliveries to Norrlands Trä.

Once the sales plan has been signed, Öhman will be responsible for ensuring that the customer’s stores are stocked on time, regardless of whether the timber is sourced from Bollsta, Munksund, Holmsund or Jäntlamell. For certain products, SCA has assumed fully supply responsibility, which is a major undertaking.

“In order to ensure that everything actually works, I have direct contact with Norrlands Trä on a daily basis,” says Öhman. “I’ve online access to their stock balances and I make frequent visits to Älandsbro. I always know when stocks need to be replenished.”

According to Öhman, the set-up between SCA and Norrlands Trä is unique. There are similar concepts that he knows about, but none involving another customer. It’s also equally unusual to have such a high proportion of raw material sales secured with one major supplier.

“But we’ll probably be seeing more examples of SCA growing together with selected customers,” believes Marklund.

Mats Wigardt



SCA has appointed Tony Öhman from Bollsta sawmill as coordinator for deliveries to Norrlands Trä.

Photo: Mats Wigardt

Facts – Norrlands Trä

Turnover approx. SEK 200 million

Number of employees: 63

Planned volume: approx. 55,000 cubic metres

In the factory there are two planing lines, a band saw and a paint shop. The company also has a facility to convert wood by-products into fuel pellets. There is also a well-stocked builders merchant outlet.

Also see www.norrlands.com.

Moving on...



Margaretha Gustafsson



Gustav Eriksson



Marina Nyfors



Anders Marklund



Lars-Ivar Eriksson

On 1 April 2010, **Margaretha Gustafsson**, former Sawmill Manager at Holmsund sawmill, took up the role of Terminal Manager at SCA's logistics company SCA Transforest, based at Interforest Terminal Umeå.

Gustav Eriksson has succeeded Gustafsson as Sawmill Manager at Holmsund sawmill. Eriksson was previously Production Manager at the sawmill.

Marina Nyfors has been appointed Product Manager at Holmsund sawmill. She took up her new role on 1 April 2010.

Anders Marklund, Sales Manager Scandinavia with special focus on the timber industry, has been appointed Deputy Managing Director of Uni4 Marketing. Marklund will take up his new position on 1 August 2010.

On 1 October, Marklund will succeed Uni4 Marketing's incumbent Managing Director Carl-Henrik Sandström, who will be moving to a part-time position of Senior Adviser ahead of his retirement on 1 May 2011.

Lars-Ivar Eriksson, Manager Strategic Sales Scandinavia, will succeed Marklund as Sales Manager Scandinavia.

Successful French wood campaign

Interest in wood and wood products is growing steadily in France.

"Of course, we'd like to believe that our efforts have contributed to this increase in interest," says Jan Söderlind, Chairman of the management group for the French campaign organisation 'Le bois, c'est essentiel'.

Since 2004, the campaign has worked tirelessly to improve attitudes to wood and increase timber construction know-how in France.

Advertising campaigns, TV commercials, exhibitions, an internet presence, seminars, brochures, trade publications and competitions have all been used by the campaign as channels reaching out to the general public, decision makers, architects and builders, putting forward the arguments in favour of using wood.

The campaign is a collaboration between the Swedish Forest Industries Federation and CODIFAB, an organisation that represents the interests

of the French wood finishing industry.

CODIFAB became a partner in the campaign in April this year, taking over from CNDB. Finland has also renewed its involvement in the campaign. It was involved during the first three years, and now intends to be involved again for the next three years through the auspices of the Finnish Forestry Board.

"It's difficult to say exactly how great an impact the campaign has had in increasing interest in wood and wood use. But what we can say is that a lot has happened in France since we started six years ago. The campaign website currently attracts 7,000 visitors a day, and we're noticing a significant interest in our seminars and publications from architects," says Söderlind.

"At the same time, the French people have become more environmentally aware in recent years and so, to a certain extent at least, we're



Le bois c'est essentiel

www.bois.com

surfing that wave. More and more people are realising the environmental benefits of wood."

The 'Le bois, c'est essentiel' campaign is currently gearing up to launch two specific product drives – laminated wood and timber houses.

Working in conjunction with French laminate organisation SNBL, the drive will aim to increase the market share for laminated wood. On the timber housing side, the campaign will be working with organisations representing timber house builders to encourage construction companies to use more mixed designs, e.g. wood and concrete.

Environmentally friendly rot protection at Bollsta

A new pressure treatment facility has recently been built next to SCA's sawmill in Bollsta, where dried and planed timber is turned into the raw material for timber decks and other garden products. This initiative is part of the strategy to increase sales of finished solid wood products.

It took just a little over five months for the facility at the Bollsta site to be built and approved. At a cost of SEK 25 million, SCA has a modern, highly automated centre with a closed system that imparts rot protection to the timber.

The timber packs are placed in a red steel tank (an autoclave), where a vacuum is created before the treatment fluid is poured in. A water-soluble, copper-based agent is used,

chromium and arsenic-free and approved by the Nordic Wood Preservation Council (NWPC).

Under high pressure, the timber is impregnated with fluid throughout the entire sapwood. Some 24 cubic metres of timber can be treated in one batch.

After two hours, the process is complete. The concentration of the treatment fluid varies depending on whether the timber is to be used on

the ground or just a little above ground.

After treatment, the timber is allowed to stand and drain for 24 hours before being dried. Environmental considerations take a high priority in the new facility and all fluid that drains or leaks from the treatment chamber is collected and returned into the process.

A significant proportion of the 65,000 cubic metres of timber that will be pressure treated at Bollsta is set to be sold to the builders' merchant sector through SCA's BM Scandinavia.

Mats Wigardt

Limited production produced a spring rally in the market

Demand for sawmill products has been good for some time now, despite the fact that consumption has been relatively low due to a heavily limited number of new-builds. The reason for this robust level of demand is that the production of solid wood products has been limited. After remaining stable throughout the winter, prices have been increasing during spring.

From the very low levels of recent years, construction of new housing stock has slowly started to pick up again.

However, construction volumes for all OECD countries continue to be historically low, which in places such as the US and the UK means that you have to go back 70–80 years to find comparable levels. In contrast, construction volumes have remained at good levels in the major markets in North Africa and the Middle East, as well as in many of the major markets in Asia.

Over the years, renovation has evolved into the main outlet for solid wood products in Europe. National support programmes, such as Sweden's repair, rebuilding and extension (RMI) grant, have seen renovation activities in many

of our markets being of a higher level than we had expected.

Production levels in the five major European producer countries – Germany, Russia, Sweden, Austria and Finland – during the winter of 2010 remained at the lower level established in 2008–2009. Compared to the peak year of 2007, this represents a reduction of around 25 percent, or 18 million cubic metres of sawn solid wood products. As the profitability of the sawmill industry has increased, a tendency to increase production has emerged. But in contrast to previous years, the sawmills have no stockpiled timber to deliver to customers as stocks had already been slashed during the preceding 12 months.

During 2009, Finland experi-

enced an extensive programme of permanent closures. As a result, the five biggest Finnish companies have had to operate for a considerable period of time at a production level some 25–35 percent lower than during 2007. The main reason for this downturn is a lack of access to logs, as supplies from Russia have all but dried up.

After a period of stability during the winter, the price trend for sawn solid wood products headed upwards during the spring. The most substantial increases have been for spruce.

SCA Timber, along with other Nordic producers, has a low stock level, which serves to reinforce the belief that the market will continue to be stable to strong for the foreseeable future.

Anders Ek,
Marketing Director, SCA Timber



Demand for timber is expected to increase dramatically in France following the introduction of directives requiring new-build houses to contain a higher proportion of wood.

More wood in French houses

In France, the proportion of wood used in new-build houses is set to increase tenfold, and will continue to increase even further. All of this has emerged as a result of a series of environment round-table discussions – ‘Grenelle de l’Environnement’.

“It goes without saying that demand for sawn timber will increase dramatically,” says Otto Bosch of Wood Consult.

A few years ago, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, eagerly supported by Environment Minister Jean-Louis Borloo, issued a long list of directives that were designed to regulate both the transport sector and the construction industry, the ultimate aim of which was to reduce France’s CO2 emissions.

For construction companies, these directives mean that the statutory proportion of wood used in new houses will, as of 1 December this year, increase from 0.07 cubic ft* to 0.7 cubic ft per square metre** of floor space.

It is intended that the use of wood in other types of building will be significantly increased as well, albeit not quite at the same

rate as in the residential sector.

After a year, i.e. as of 1 December 2011, the proportion of wood required per square ft of floor space will be increased to 1.24 cubic ft. It has already been announced that there will be an additional phase comprising requirements to increase the proportion of wood used still further.

At the moment, the minimum amount of wood required in order to obtain a building permit in France is just 0.07 cubic ft.

“Although the proportion of wood in new-build houses is increasing from a level that is very low, compared to the rest of Europe at least, we’ll be seeing a massive upsurge in demand for sawn timber,” believes Otto Bosch, who is a consultant focusing on developing and promoting wood consumption in France.

Traditionally, most houses in France are built of stone, brick or concrete. It is only in some alpine areas that wood is the more common building material.

Compared to the US, where 90 percent of all single family dwell-

ings are made of timber, or the Nordic countries where that figure is 60 percent, the proportion of timber houses in France is just 8 percent, equivalent to 15,000 units per year.

“But the number of timber houses being built is increasing markedly,” says Bosch. “Timber is trendy. The exclusive interior design magazines are packed full of images of timber houses.”

It’s a trend that seems likely to gather momentum. However, because French sawmills do not currently have the capacity to satisfy an increase in demand for timber, all eyes have turned to the sawmill industries of Germany and Scandinavia.

“If everything goes according to plan, the French construction industry will be demanding large volumes of timber,” says Per Oredsson of consultancy company Timwood.

Mats Wigardt

* 1 cubic foot ≈ 0.03 cubic metre

** 1 square metre ≈ 10.76 square feet