

Latvian focus... continued

exporter of resources. Despite the fact that Latvia remains among the top ten largest exporters of coniferous saw logs in the world, after increasing year on year, the volume of imports now exceeds that of exports.

Legislative change and technological provision have also resulted in increased production of finished timber structures, almost 100% of which are being exported. In addition, Latvian manufacturers are actively following world trends towards engineered wood or mass wood products, becoming the first northern European country to open a cross laminated timber plant.

Despite comprehensive growth of the Latvian timber industry overall, the forestry sector has not yet been able to achieve complete recycling of local resources, continuing to export significant quantities of pulpwood. However, the lack of chemical wood processing is partially offset by the increase in volumes of energy wood production, making Latvia a world leader in production and export of wood pellets.



Latvian mills feature state of the art technology. PHOTO: AKZ



Mark van Benthem

Data key to driving sustainability

The 2018 European Sustainable Tropical Timber Coalition (STTC) Conference is focused on the theme of data collection. The premise is that reliable data is core to enhancing the European sustainable tropical timber industry's transparency, shaping its marketing strategy, and ultimately increasing its market share. However currently the calibre of trade information and intelligence in the sector has significant room for improvement. **Mark van Benthem**, Director of forest and timber sustainability analysts and advisors Probos reports.

The Netherlands has one of the most evolved markets for certified timber from sustainably managed forests worldwide. In fact, latest figures show certified sustainably sourced products in 2015 accounted for 83% of all primary timber sales.

This high market share is the outcome of combined public and NGO pressure, resulting in demanding procurement policies being implemented and promoted by trade federations, national and local government and individual companies. In addition, the Netherlands has seen wide ranging efforts to boost demand for certified timber products and remove potential obstacles to availability.

Comprehensive market intelligence and market share monitoring has been crucial to formulate and evaluate the effectiveness of these measures and initiatives. Knowing which markets to target makes it possible to really focus promotional efforts.

Probos itself has been heavily involved in generating such market intelligence; undertaking timber market studies and data collection, including in our capacity as Dutch National Correspondent for bodies such as UN ECE, FAO, ITTO and more recently in the framework of the FLEGT Independent Market Monitor (IMM).

Since 2006 we've measured market share of sustainably sourced timber in the Netherlands six times and in Belgium, with Belgian partners, three times. Currently we are collecting data for our 2017 market study for the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy. Such studies also need following up with more in-depth analysis to pinpoint bottlenecks in

specific sectors that hamper growth in market share. Results from both general and in-depth studies have been used by federations, NGOs, governmental agencies and companies to accelerate sustainable sourcing growth and to set increasingly ambitious targets.

Based on our experience, we believe it is essential that other countries use a similar approach to help make sustainably sourced timber products the norm. Many governments and other donors have invested in efforts to support sustainable forest management by growing sustainably sourced timber trade. But few base strategies on hard figures, limiting effectiveness. Having sound, detailed facts and figures adds credibility.

We therefore very much welcome the initiative taken by IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative, through the Sustainable Tropical Timber Coalition, to focus on data collection and analysis partnerships, to contract a data partner and make this topic the core theme of the 2018 STTC Conference.

At the conference, speakers from government, trade federations and companies will share why data collection is important to them and what they do with the outcome. Experts in data gathering and monitoring will present and explain various approaches for gaining insights on the market share of verified sustainable timber. There will also be opportunity for discussion and to ask questions about this key topic, with the ultimate aim to mobilize better data, build partnerships and so contribute to sustainable forest management.

The STTC Conference takes place at the Paris Tropical gardens on October 25 – (see p7).

For more information: www.probos.nl/en/ and www.europeansttc.com



Accurate trade data the foundations for advancing the sustainable tropical timber market. PHOTOS: MARK VAN BENTHEM

