wood flooring Asia
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For solid wood and engineered flooring

Malaysian Hardwood Decking
马来西亚硬木装饰板

From Logs to Premium Manufactured Wood Floors

Sustainable Forestry in Malaysia:
More Than a Century of Practice
Hannover, Shanghai and St Louis

The flooring show year starts immediately after the New Year in Europe with the Domotex show in Hannover in January; and then continues in Asia after the Lunar New Year at Domotex in Shanghai. Following these two leading shows the Wood Flooring Expo by NWFA in St Louis in USA completes the trio; this year with its 30th anniversary show. The difference among the three is that only the American show is focused mainly on wood.

By Michael Buckley
visitors," they said. Our information, though, was that the last two days were disappointingly quiet for some exhibitors, especially those from Asia, although a couple of new buyers can often be enough to justify the huge cost of exhibiting.

Domotex in Germany was reported to have attracted over 40,000 visitors from 100 different countries – not all for wood. The majority were said to have come from European Union countries. A significant upswing, compared to 2013, was noted in attendances from the Middle East and South, East and Central Asia. About 90 percent reported that they were either buyers or involved in their companies’ purchasing decisions, and that they had come to Hannover with specific investment plans. More than 70 percent of all attendees were senior executives. A rise in attendance was also noted for architects, interior designers and contract business professionals, according to Deutsch Messe.

**EU Trends in Wood Flooring**

One of several senior market observers of the wood flooring sector commented, “Visiting the annual Domotex flooring show in Hannover was an opportunity to talk to producers and assess trends. Throughout the two halls dedicated to wooden and some laminated flooring, the mood was generally upbeat as far as overall trade is concerned. However, sales in Europe are not improving much in what is a very competitive marketplace. Many of the European flooring brands sell all over the world and this diversity is helping at a time when Europe’s economy, especially in the Eurozone, remains very fragile.

“**In terms of specifications**, the preference in European markets is for wider boards with the most popular size 145mm width. The wooden floor market in Europe continues its move away from solid timber plank and more and more towards engineered flooring on plywood with top layers of varying thickness from 3.5mm to 8mm. This is due to the improved
stability and competitive pricing that the engineered product offers.

“For most exhibitors in Hannover, Oak accounted for 80 to 90% of their product sales, in various colours and stages of distress. The 'rustic' Oak look is still very much in fashion. The trend of dark ‘smoked’ Oak was also very evident on almost all of the stands. This effect is achieved by exposing the Oak to ammonia which reacts with the natural tannin in the timber to produce a darker colour.”

European country producers included Italy with several of its key manufacturers, many of whom were reported to have featured American Black Walnut mainly for export markets. Italians, in their domestic market, have long favoured their own national Walnut (Noce) which is quite different.

Chinese exporters in Germany

The usual sizeable group of about 60 Chinese wood flooring exporter/producers was also present, with as many as half of who were offering alternatives to wood, such as bamboo and composite materials. One of the attractions for Asian bamboo flooring producers is their belief that they have a unique raw material which is not available from Europe, thus giving them some product protection. While they point out the renewable credentials of bamboo, they omit to mention the embodied energy in creating flat bamboo and the chemical and resin inputs (that solid wood does not require). In the Chinese local market, despite its rise in popularity, bamboo is thought to account only for less than 10% of the market.

Another feature is the strong preference for solid wood flooring at the upper end of the market there. Many Chinese also offered Oak flooring, in recognition of the European market preference. In some cases, other temperate species were on offer from the Chinese, reflecting the fact that the Chinese market – and therefore its producer/exporters – have always presented a wide range of species, as expected at this year’s Domotex Shanghai show. In fact, according to one observer, choice is a key element of the Chinese market. This is particularly interesting as the European flooring industry has expressed that Oak cannot continue to dominate the market any more than it does now. If the furniture industry is anything to go by, consumers are fickle and subject to fashion. This has been shown in its markets that have switched from narrow flooring boards to wide planks and can just as easily affect species preferences which tend to go in cycles. For some businesses, that could signal the end of a growth business run and for others, it will present opportunities in the flooring market that have been absent for years.

Shanghai

‘DOMOTEX asia/CHINAFLOOR’ is the largest international flooring show in the Asia-Pacific region. Each year, the Shanghai show attracts tens of thousands of buyers, agents, distributors, wholesalers, retailers, franchise dealers, architects, designers, contactors, project managers, real estate developers, owners, government officials, associations, and manufacturers from all over the world, according to the organisers, VNU Exhibitions. The 2014 show drew more than 42,000 flooring professionals worldwide, with more than 1,100 exhibitors from 36 countries.

In Shanghai, the Wood Flooring Forum (WFF) provides a platform for communication and interaction on crucial topics for the wood flooring industry, which in 2013 covered industry topics such as the e-commerce developments in the flooring industry. WFF is organised in cooperation with the China National Forest Products Industry Association (CNFPIA). ‘InnovAction flooring’, the new marketing campaign, served the industry for the first time as a powerful platform for new flooring products. The show hosts international country pavilions.
from many different countries – previously America, Belgium, Germany, India, Iran, Pakistan, the Netherlands and Turkey.

This year, the wood and laminate halls feature the USA Pavilion (jointly run by National Wood Flooring Association and American Hardwood Export Council). Representing the NWFA in Hall E1 at Domotex are Jeff Fairbanks, NWFA Chairman of the Board of Palo Duro Hardwood in Denver, CO and John Lessick, NWFA Chairman Emeritus of Apex Wood Floors, Chicago, IL. They are joined by nine companies some of which are members of both associations. According to Michael Martin, NWFA President & CEO, “The demand for flooring products in Asia has changed considerably during the past few years, of which the most dramatic is the increased desire for U.S. wood flooring by the growing middle class in many Asian countries. Industry statistics seem to reinforce this belief. The 2015 US FLOORReport by Market Insights indicates that more than 50% of the world’s wood flooring consumption was in the Far East and Middle East in 2013, while only 30% was in Europe and only 14% was in North America. As Asian markets continue to grow, these figures could change even more dramatically.”

April in USA

The NWFA will no doubt provide an analysis of the current North American and international markets after their great Wood Flooring Expo from 28 April to 1 May in St Louis, Missouri, which will be reported in detail in the next issue of Wood Flooring Asia. According to NWFA, “It is the only show dedicated exclusively to wood flooring, where professionals from across the world showcase the industry's latest products and services under one roof, and engage in meaningful educational and networking events to grow their businesses.” This year's Expo returns to St. Louis, where the NWFA started 30 years ago. Oak, both Red and White, is also the major species in the North American market, but the industry also has access to a range of local hardwoods suitable for flooring – Ash, Hard Maple, Hickory and Walnut, as well as several imported from South America and Asia. The National Hardwood Lumber Association (NHLA), responsible of the Grading Rules for material for flooring production, is also teaming up with a pavilion at the Expo at which a number of its members will exhibit. WFA
NWFA Will ‘Play it Forward’ with Gary Sinise Foundation’s R.I.S.E. Program

The National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA) has announced a new partnership with the Gary Sinise Foundation’s R.I.S.E. program, which builds smart homes for veterans who have sacrificed their health, many losing multiple limbs during their military service. Gary Sinise will speak at NWFA’s Wood Flooring Expo in April to officially launch the partnership.

“Gary’s participation during Expo this year coincides with the event’s ‘Play it Forward’ theme,” said Michael Martin, NWFA President & CEO. “While we will mark the NWFA’s 30th anniversary during Expo, we are also looking forward as an association and an industry, in business and in how we contribute to society. This collaboration is a significant step, as an organization with 3,000 member companies, to pay forward our knowledge, skills and resources.”

NWFA’s partnership with the Gary Sinise Foundation’s R.I.S.E. program is a long-term opportunity to benefit veterans. NWFA member manufacturers, including American OEM, Mannington Wood Floors, Mullican Flooring, Shega Hardwood Flooring, Somerset Hardwood Flooring, and WD Flooring, will provide materials. Distributors and contractors in the communities where homes are being built will also become involved in the process, creating locally based support for the building the homes.

“A lot goes into the building of these smart homes and we are tremendously grateful to our generous partners who lend their support to the Gary Sinise Foundation’s R.I.S.E. program,” said Sinise, Founder of Gary Sinise Foundation. “The NWFA is playing a crucial role in making these homes a reality for those who have sacrificed so much in defense of our freedom and I thank them for standing with us in support of our wounded service members.”

“I know the Gary Sinise Foundation’s infrastructure is in place to construct these smart homes in an efficient and economical manner,” said Barbara Titus, Shega Vice President. “I have seen firsthand the difference these projects make in the life of the veteran and his or her family. We are proud to be part of this partnership between the NWFA and GSF. I look forward to other NWFA members joining the effort.”

NWFA members will participate in projects for up to 15 homes per year, and will partner with manufacturers that match the U.S.-based manufacturing requirements of the R.I.S.E. program.

“While we, as a wood flooring association, can of course, contribute flooring products and labour, it’s not about that aspect as much as it’s about giving back a veteran his mobility and dignity,” said Martin. “It’s something all U.S.-based organizations should be willing to do for men and women who have lost their personal freedom of mobility by defending our collective freedom.

“When we were first approached about this idea, I thought it sounded great, but I didn’t fully understand the importance until I was told the story of one veteran’s response to what he was going to enjoy most about his new home. I expected something along the lines of the ease of using automated cabinets or voice-activated technology, but his answer was even more basic and drives home the change to daily life that these homes can provide. His answer was, ‘My son will no longer have to take me to the bathroom. I can go on my own.’”

NWFA Announces 2015 Technical Education Schedule

The National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA) has announced its 2015 technical education schedule, including new workshop topics and locations. The NWFA also has welcomed 39 Partners in Education program members.

“NWFA and its Partners succeeded in 2014 in more than doubling attendance at its training events,” said Brett Miller, NWFA Vice President of Education & Certification. “We are excited to continue growing the educational opportunities we offer professionals of all backgrounds in the industry. We project a significant increase in attendance again in the coming year, and plan to conduct close to one million hours of instruction.”

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Joining the progressive-skill schools that range from the Principles of Wood Flooring to Master Craftsman training, are new offerings such as the Father/Youth class, Concrete Preparation for Installation, and Retail Sales Certification Training & Testing.

One-day educational workshops and four-day skill-level schools will be offered in 14 cities from coast to coast. NWFA headquarters in St. Louis, E.J. Welch Company in Chicago, and Chattahoochee Technical College in Marietta, Ga., will serve as training centers. NWFA distributor members will host the remaining workshops in locations throughout the U.S. for convenience to students.

The full list of workshops and locations is available at www.nwfa.org/tech-ed-schedule.aspx.

The Partners in Education are essential for the success of NWFA's training programs. They provide additional expertise as instructors, invest time and donate materials. Of the 39 participating manufacturers in the program, seven are designated as Premium Partners. They are: 3M, AdvanTech, BONA US, Bostik, MAPEI Corporation, Somerset Wood Products, and Weyerhaeuser Company. WFA

The National Wood Flooring Association has announced that Vermeister S.p.A. has been approved for the NWFA Accepted Product Seal and NWFA Accepted Eco Product Seal designations.

The NWFA Accepted Product programs identify wood flooring products that meet or exceed established industry standards. Vermeister has earned its designations under the category of Finishes, Stains and Sealers, for its Zero VOC water-based finish.

"NWFA congratulates Vermeister on achieving the NWFA Accepted Product Seal and Accepted Eco Product Seal designations," said Michael Martin, NWFA President and CEO. "These seals are designed to provide an immediate way for the industry to recognize companies that are committed to quality manufacturing, as well as to raising the bar by creating an industry benchmark of achievement."

To gain approval, Vermeister S.p.A. submitted its product testing to ensure it conforms to established third-party testing specifically for finishes.

NWFA Approves Vermeister S.p.A. for Accepted Product and Accepted Eco Product Seals
The NWFA Accepted Product Seal applies to wood flooring abrasives, factory finished engineered wood flooring, finishes, stains, and sealers, moisture inhibitors for wood subfloors, and factory-finished solid wood flooring.

The NWFA Accepted Eco Product Seal identifies finishes, stains and sealers that meet or exceed defined eco-friendly standards.

Vermeister S.p.A. has manufactured wood flooring solutions for more than 40 years. The Vermeister S.p.A. range of products includes adhesives, damp-proof primers, finishes for professional wood flooring contractors, maintenance products, and coating systems for wood flooring manufacturers. WFA

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**NWFA Continues Partnership with World Wildlife Fund**

The National Wood Flooring Association has announced that it has renewed its Memorandum of Understanding with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in an effort to further the goal of environmental sustainability in the wood products industry. The collaboration will focus on three major areas:

- Promoting environmentally responsible procurement of wood imports by NWFA members
- Promoting better understanding about US buyer expectations regarding technical and quality specifications
- Seeking opportunities to connect NWFA members with WWF’s Global Forest & Trade Network (GFTN) participants

To accomplish these goals, the two organizations will work together to share information and provide educational opportunities for their respective member companies.

This MOU expands on the body of work the organizations accomplished together under the prior MOU, such as promoting market linkages among NWFA members and GFTN participant companies and increasing understanding about wood sourcing risk identification and mitigation. Multiple NWFA members participated in GFTN trade missions in Peru and Bolivia to explore potential new sources of responsible wood. GFTN also attended the 2013 and 2014 NWFA Expos to promote market linkages between GFTN producer companies and NWFA members. Additionally, GFTN offered an education session on responsible wood sourcing for NWFA members as well as a webinar on sourcing legal and sustainable wood from the Russian Far East.

“We’re pleased to be able to provide additional resources for our members when sourcing wood from other countries,”

NWFA President & CEO, Michael Martin. “This will be especially useful with the increased industry scrutiny and compliance surrounding the Lacey Act. NWFA members will now have a credible industry resource that is recognized world-wide for its forestry conservation efforts.”

WWF’s Manager, Wood Sector Engagement, Amy Smith, adds that NWFA members will have access to tools, training and on-the-ground technical assistance in conservation matters with GFTN managers in key source countries. “This can be a valuable resource for NWFA members as they source wood from overseas,” says Smith. “It can provide the feet on the ground expertise in areas where forest governance and enforcement is weak to help companies to identify and manage sourcing risks and ensure the wood they’re procuring is responsible.”

WWF-GFTN will present a one-hour education session during the NWFA 2015 Wood Flooring Expo in St. Louis from April 28 to May 1. The session will be titled “Lesser-Known Timber Species: Good for Business, Good for the Forest.” The course will be registered with AIA & IDCEC for architect and designer continuing education credits. Additional educational opportunities will be offered throughout the year, including a possible trip for NWFA members to China to meet with GFTN in-country experts.

**About WWF-GFTN:** WWF is the world’s leading conservation network with more than 5,000 staff and conservation projects in more than 100 countries. Its mission is to promote biodiversity, promote responsible sourcing of natural resources, and promote ways to reduce energy use, pollution and wasteful consumption. GFTN is the WWF network’s initiative to eliminate illegal logging and promote responsible forestry and trade.

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The National Wood Flooring Association is a not-for-profit trade organization, with more than 2,800 member companies worldwide, dedicated to educating consumers, architects, designers, specifiers and builders in the uses and benefits of wood flooring. NWFA members receive the best in educational training, benefits, technical resources and networking, to advance their professionalism and success.
Floor your success in Asia Pacific at DOMOTEX Asia/CHINAFLOOR 2015!

The floor covering industry will meet in Shanghai to witness the hottest new products and innovations in Asian floorings unveiled at DOMOTEX Asia/CHINAFLOOR from 24th to 26th March 2015.

DOMOTEX Asia/CHINAFLOOR is the leading flooring trade exhibition in Asia Pacific and the second largest flooring trade exhibition worldwide. As part of the DOMOTEX shows group, DOMOTEX Asia/CHINAFLOOR focuses on the ‘burning’ Asian markets.

Boost your business opportunities in Asia

As one of the fastest developing and most dynamic regions in the world, Asia is the hub of growing markets with enormous demand for flooring products. DOMOTEX Asia/CHINAFLOOR is the place to explore this market and make professional connections. The show and its valuable support services are designed to facilitate the discovery and development of new relationships and business opportunities for exhibitors and visitors alike.

Innovative products and solutions – International flavour

Shanghai is where the industry sees the latest flooring products trends in Asia and beyond. Both Asian and Western exhibitors from around the world will bring their new and innovative products and flooring solutions to DOMOTEX Asia/CHINAFLOOR.

Country pavilions from machine-made carpet producing countries and other individual exhibitors will exhibit their products in the international carpet flooring hall at W1. The hand-made carpet sector will be represented by country pavilions from several renowned carpet producing areas including Iran, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Nepal, which,
A Word from Michael Martin, President and CEO, NWFA

The demand for flooring products in Asia has changed considerably during the past few years. One of the most dramatic changes that have occurred is the increased desire for US wood flooring by Asian consumers. The reasons for this trend vary, but many industry experts conclude that the growing middle class in many Asian countries is a contributing factor, as well as a general desire for products that are made in the United States.

Industry statistics seem to reinforce this belief. The 2015 US FLOOR Report by Market Insights indicates that more than 50% of the world’s wood flooring consumption was in the Far East and Middle East in 2013, while only 30% was in Europe and only 14% was in North America. As Asian markets continue to grow, these figures could change even more dramatically.

As a result, many US wood flooring companies will be showcasing their products to this lucrative market at the DOMOTEX asia/CHINAFLOOR show to be held in Shanghai, March 24-26, at the Shanghai New International Exhibition Center.

Each year, in partnership with the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), the National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA) sponsors a pavilion at DOMOTEX Shanghai to assist its members in reaching this growing market. NWFA members are able to display their products in one centrally located area on the show floor in an effort to reach potential new customers and explore options for exporting their products to Asian markets.

In addition, during last year’s show, the NWFA held meetings with the China National Forest Products Industry Association (CNFPIA) and the China DaLian Wood Industry Association (CDWIA) to discuss a variety of issues affecting the industry, including international standards for grading, manufacturing, and installation, as well as how US products can help meet growing demand in Asia.

DOMOTEX asia/CHINAFLOOR is the largest international flooring show in the Asia-Pacific region. Each year, the Shanghai show attracts tens of thousands of buyers, agents, distributors, wholesalers, retailers, franchise dealers, architects, designers, contactors, project managers, real estate developers, owners, government officials, associations, and manufacturers from all over the world. The 2014 show drew more than 42,000 flooring professionals worldwide, with more than 1,100 exhibitors from 36 countries.

Over the years, the NWFA’s participation in the DOMOTEX show in Shanghai has grown considerably, and that growth is expected to continue as demand for US products increases. Companies interested in learning more about the NWFA are encouraged to visit the pavilion, where they can explore the services NWFA offers its international members, and where they can learn more about US wood flooring products available to meet growing demand in Asia and abroad.
There is no doubt that the wood flooring industry is a global market. Today more than ever, manufacturers of wood flooring are selling their products to consumers all over the world. The variety of choices available continues to expand and open up the possibilities for continued growth and product demand.

Companies looking to reach the US consumer have an opportunity to do so through the National Wood Flooring Association’s Wood Flooring Expo. This year’s event will be held April 28 – May 1 in St. Louis, Missouri, USA.

The Wood Flooring Expo is the only international trade show dedicated exclusively to wood flooring and wood flooring products. Each year, the Wood Flooring Expo brings together thousands of wood flooring professionals from all over the world. Last year’s show attracted more than 3,000 wood flooring buyers representing millions of dollars in industry purchasing power from all business sectors, including manufacturers, distributors, retailers, contractors, inspectors, builders, architects, designers, and other professionals from more than 20 countries. These attendees recognise the value of building long-lasting relationships that only face-to-face meetings at trade shows can facilitate. Where else can you learn about all the industry’s latest products and services under one roof? The bottom line is that the Wood Flooring Expo offers one of the most cost-efficient ways to build those international relationships to help your business grow.

In recent years, the Expo has experienced phenomenal growth. The show has been recognised by Trade Show Executive magazine as one of the top 50 fastest growing shows in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Each of those years, the show grew an average of 25 percent, and this year’s show floor is already sold out.

So what does this mean to you? If you’re a manufacturer, importer or exporter of wood flooring or wood flooring products, this show offers you one of the most targeted audiences available. If you’re a distributor, this show offers you the opportunity to establish new relationships that can help your business grow. If you’re an inspector, the show offers you numerous educational options to maintain your license. And if you’re a contractor, this show brings you all the latest equipment, products and services under one roof, making your time away from the job both efficient and productive.

Come see hundreds of innovative products on the trade show floor, come hear dozens of industry experts talk about the trends that will drive our industry into the next decade, and come meet the industry leaders who can help you to become more successful. You can do it all in one place, under one roof at the NWFA 2015 Wood Flooring Expo.

Registration is open and rooms are going fast, so make plans today to attend the only show anywhere dedicated exclusively to wood flooring. Come grow with us. WFA