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Developing new market applications for 2020

The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) is an international trade association representing U.S. hardwood exporters and the major U.S. hardwood product trade associations. Charged with promoting “the full range of American hardwoods in over 50 export markets,” AHEC programs are funded “through the joint efforts of the U.S. hardwood industry and the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.”

AHEC’s recently released activity plan, “Strategy Brief 2020,” included the following information regarding “Developing new market applications:”

“Seeking out and promoting new uses for American hardwoods has become a key element in the AHEC strategy to increase market share for American hardwoods in Europe. Exterior and structural applications of wood products are two examples of market uses where the use of American hardwoods share is still relatively small, but the market potential is huge.

Timber construction in Europe is a growth sector, with an increasing use of wood in both the residential and commercial sectors as an alternative to concrete and steel. So architects and engineers are looking to increase their knowledge about wood in construction. This provides the right environment to promote the high performance structural use of American hardwoods.

- AHEC’s tulipwood project for the 2013 London Design Festival, *The Endless Stair*, was the first ever use of hardwood cross-laminated timber (CLT), and has changed the thinking about the structural use of hardwoods.
- As a result, a leading CLT manufacturer agreed to work with AHEC in 2016 to produce the first industrial sized hardwood CLT panels, again in tulipwood, used to create *The Smile*, the first permanent structure built with hardwood CLT.
- In 2018, AHEC’s landmark project *Multiply* took the debate to a new level, demonstrating how modular use of tulipwood CLT can change the face of construction. *Multiply* performance and production schedule information will be used to promote the commercial consumption of low-grade tulipwood for CLT production.
- During the 2020 programs, AHEC will undertake further structural material processing research on American hardwoods that will assist product development by European industries.

Additionally, the commercial development of thermally modified timber (TMT) in Europe is providing exciting new opportunities for U.S. hardwoods in exterior markets. AHEC will continue to seek out and publicize examples, encourage the use of a wider range of U.S. hardwood species for TMT, and show case TMT in AHEC projects.”

For more information, visit www.americanhardwood.org