

Japan: More than 30 % higher gluelam imports

In spite of the reducing construction figures, the country according to Japan Lumber Reports (JLR) imported 271,675 m³ gluelam products during the first half of the year, by about 31 % more than one year ago. Market insiders attributed this development primarily to the clearly higher demands put to quality and assurance the Japanese government had stipulated last year by passing the Housing Quality Assurance Law (HQAL). The rules under this new law give preference to the employment of processed wood products, having initiated the substitution of solid-wood resp. non-dried wood grades so far employed in housing projects.

Germany is heading Japan's gluelam imports with shipments of 62,718 m³ (+193 %), followed by Finland (43,142 m³), Austria (39,931 m³), and Sweden (35,715 m³). Together with Danish and Norwegian shipments, European suppliers account for some 70 % of Japan's gluelam imports. Including the Russian shipments of 13,801 m³, this share is even up at 74 %. Marked growth rates were achieved by Canadian suppliers, having expanded their shipments by almost 37 % to about 21,410 m³.

According to JLR, most of the German exports are handled by Berlin-based Kullik und Rullmann AG. According to the management of Kullik und Rullmann, in the first half of the year the company handled gluelam exports in a volume of 35,942 m³, equal to about 57 % of all German shipments. Referring to imports from Finland, the report mentions the intensified shipments by Heinola-based Novolam Oy, as well as of Finland Laminated Timber (FLT) Oy Ltd. in Lisvesi. The expansion of the Chinese production capacities for 5-ply posts meanwhile is reflected by Japan's import figures. With 13,813 m³, China increased its gluelam shipments by 267 % comparing the year-earlier period.

Critical situation on the Japanese gluelam market

At present, European suppliers are evaluating the situation on the Japanese gluelam market as rather critical. Apart from stagnating sales volumes, most recently additional price reductions had to be taken for laminated posts as well as beams. Current prices for 5-ply spruce posts, JAS, in lengths of 3 m are between EUR470 and EUR395/m³, in 6 m around EUR420/m³. Price quotes for spruce beams from the Central European production are around EUR400/m³, CIF, including THC.