

Switzerland's last sliced veneer mill to stop making veneers at the end of 2012

Hess's peeled veneer mill the only plant left after closure of Lanz

Josef Galliker, the managing partner of the Swiss veneer and sawmill operator Lanz AG, based in Rohrbach, is planning to cease sliced and stay log veneer production at the end of 2012. This will mark the closure of Switzerland's last sliced veneer production facility. Veneer trading activities are to continue until 2014 in order to sell off its inventories of around 700,000 m² of veneers. The site will then be cleared and likely be used for residential buildings in the future. Mr Galliker said that the strong Swiss franc against the euro was one reason for the closure. This factor had reduced veneer sales in and contract production orders from neighbouring countries. The company did not gain as many additional clients as expected after the demise of competitors, either. In addition, Mr Galliker said that the cost of manufacturing in Switzerland was too high to run a veneer mill at a profit.

The Lanz veneer plant had turned some 8,500 fm of roundwood into veneers annually in the past few years. Around two thirds of its output was made on behalf of other companies, with around one third of roundwood used to produce its own veneers. Merchants are currently

offering its machinery for sale. Lanz's last investment project involved a stay-log plant that Grenzebach Maschinenbau GmbH, headquartered in Asbach-Bäumenheim, delivered in 2006. Its combined stay-log and round peeling machine made by RSR is much older, dating back to 1955. The sliced veneer machine, made by the Italian manufacturer Angelo Cremona S.p.a., headquartered in Monza, was built in 1987. Lanz used a 1994 press dryer and a 1987 band dryer, both made by Cremona, to dry veneers.

The imminent closure of the Lanz veneer plant means that Hess & Co. AG, headquartered in Döttingen, will be Switzerland's last veneer producer. However, Hess solely makes peeled veneers and has downstream technology to process them into plywood, ski and snowboard cores, bed slats and moulded plywood. The company stopped making sliced veneers in 1992. Hess's present annual processing capacity stands at around 20,000 fm of roundwood, comprising 12,000 fm of beech, 6,000 fm of poplar and 2,000 fm of other types of softwood and hardwood, such as oak, ash, maple, fir, larch and

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Kullik & Rullmann takes over Gill & Robinson agency

The timber-export company Kullik & Rullmann AG, Berlin, Germany, took over the English firm Gill & Robinson Ltd. from Newcastle with effect from 1 November 2012. In the negotiations which have been known to have been in progress for several months already, the German trading company was able to assert itself against three competitors. Secrecy was agreed regarding both purchase price and turnover figures.

Gill & Robinson claims to be one of the leading timber agencies in Great Britain, with an annual marketing volume of roughly 170,000 m³ of softwood lumber and planed goods. Lumber deliveries are carried out mainly from Scandinavia and the Baltic States and to a lesser extent from Germany and from English and Scottish sawmills. In addition to running sales offices at its headquarters in Newcastle, Kent, Frodsham and Sheffield, Gill & Robinson also boasts a warehouse in the port of Hull. The company employs a work force of eleven, no less than seven of whom are in sales.

Kullik & Rullmann does not intend to make any changes to the personnel structure in Great Britain for the time being. The existing managing partner Ian Robinson, who sold the company during the course of a successor arrangement,

will initially continue to head the business and in the coming years act as an advisor to Gill & Robinson. Sales management will in future be the responsibility of Lawrence Webster, who has been a partner at Kullik & Rullmann since 2007.

Until now, Gill & Robinson has brokered softwood lumber and planed goods mainly to trading companies in Great Britain and Ireland, and to a lesser extent to DIY superstores. There have in recent years been only minimal overlaps with existing clients of Kullik & Rullmann. According to board member Carsten Kullik, cross-selling in particular is to be expanded in the coming months. At the same time, sales personnel from Gill & Robinson are also to offer ranges from Kullik & Rullmann suppliers to their clients in future. Those ranges include German lumber marked with barcodes. In turn, existing Kullik clients in Great Britain are to be offered what are mainly Scandinavian ranges from Gill & Robinson suppliers.

In addition, Kullik also intends to exploit its new acquisition for boosting the sale of softwood lumber in the USA. To achieve that, Gill & Robinson's procurement possibilities in Scandinavia in particular are to be used to be able to sell softwood-lumber qualities to the USA

which are not offered by Central European sawmills. Overall, Kullik expects that the takeover will generate significantly better contacts to Scandinavian sawmills and greater market transparency.

The acquisition will increase Kullik & Rullmann's annual trading volume to over 500,000 m³, mostly comprising softwood lumber. The focus of business at Kullik & Rullmann is the export of softwood lumber, planed goods and laminated-wood products within Europe, to the Near East and to Asia and North America. To that end, the company also runs sales offices in each of China and Japan. Within Germany, the company trades as Kullik Holzagentur GmbH, which is also headquartered in Berlin. Trading volume in Germany is roughly 200,000 m³/year of softwood lumber, while annual marketing volume of laminated wood totals 30,000 m³. Among the suppliers to both companies are in particular medium-sized sawmills such as Gelo Holzwerke GmbH, GmbH (Weißensadt), Holzwerk Schilling KG (Rot an der Rot), Holzwerke Weinzierl GmbH (Vilshofen), as well as large-scale companies such as Ziegler Holzindustrie KG (Plößberg-Betzenmühle/Oberpfalz) and the laminated-wood producers Holzwerke Bullinger GmbH & Co. KG (Neuruppin) and Holzwerke Pröbstl GmbH (Fuchstal-Asch) – all from Germany. □

BayWa: Turnover in building segment still down year on year

The turnover trend during the course of this year in the building segment of the conglomerate BayWa AG has remained down year on year as a result of the partial hiving-off of the DIY and garden superstores with effect from 1 January 2012. The third quarter also showed year-on-year decline in turnover of 12.7% to €506.7m (July-Sept. 2011: 580.3m). This means that the rate of decline has slowed slightly, after the second quarter had seen a decrease of 17.3%. The EBIT for the period July to September showed year-on-year improvement of 9.5% to €19m (17.3m).

In the first nine months of 2012, turnover in the Building segment was down by 15.3% to €1.320bn (Jan.-Sept. 2011: 1.559bn). The EBIT, at €23.1m (30.5m), also showed a large year-on-year decline of 24.4%. The year-on-year collapses in turnover caused by the hiving-off of the DIY superstores were partially compensated for in the reporting period by the roughly 17.6% higher turnover generated with building materials. The partial division Building Materials also made a positive contribution to the results trend with an improvement in EBIT of 15.9%. Klaus Josef Lutz, chairman of the board at BayWa, estimates that subject to favourable weather conditions the strong trend in business

with building materials could even fully compensate for lower turnover and results from DIY and garden superstore business by the end of the year.

In the other business divisions, the conglomerate was able to show improvement in revenues and results. The Agriculture division was the strongest in terms of turnover, with growth up to and including September of 18.5% to €3.820bn (3.223bn). The EBIT was up by 8.7% to €81.8m (75.2m). Turnover in the Energy segment improved by 23.7% to €2.651bn (2.143bn), while the segment EBIT increased by 78% to €25m (14.1m). Across the whole concern, turnover showed growth of 11.5% to €7.853bn (7.043bn). The EBIT for the first three quarters totalled €125.4m (123.1m).

To finance further expansion plans, especially in the field of agriculture, the company has agreed with Competo Capital Partners GmbH, Munich, Germany, to form a joint project company, with each holding 50% of the shares. BayWa will sell the company headquarters in Arabellastraße to the project company for roughly €80m for refurbishment. The property is then to be completely refurbished. In 2014, headquarters will be temporarily transferred to another property, probably until 2016, after which the building is to be sold to an investor and subsequently rented back to BayWa on a long-term basis. □

Swiss company Balteschwiler to become new Hagebau partner

The Swiss planing mill and timber-trading company Balteschwiler AG, Laufenburg, will join the purchasing cooperative Hagebau Handelsgesellschaft für Baustoffe mbH & Co. KG, Soltau, Germany, with effect from 1 January 2013. After Holzplatten AG, Samstagern, Switzerland, became a member in October 2011, Balteschwiler will be the second Swiss Hagebau partner from the timber-trading sector. The total number of Hagebau business locations in Switzerland has therefore increased to 106. At the beginning of 2012, Mobau Partner AG, Weinfelden, Switzerland, with 10 business locations, had already become a partner of the purchasing cooperative. Balteschwiler employs a work force of roughly 110 and claims to be one of the biggest timber-trading businesses in Switzerland. The company's range comprises more than 12,000 articles, mainly from the sectors of solid wood, wood-based materials and wooden flooring, as well as wood products and accessories for interior fitting-out.

At the beginning of November 2012, Hagebau GmbH & Co. KG had reached the turnover mark of €5bn and thereby already exceeded the previous year's revenues of €4.9bn. For 2012, Hagebau is reckoning with turnover of €5.6bn. □