April 2018
General Hardwood Market Conditions

General Outlook

Demand remains strong across all the major hardwood markets in the world. The Chinese consumption of hardwoods continues to grow and they are increasingly active in purchasing logs for direct export to China.
Imports of African hardwoods into Europe remains generally flat. This is a consequence of the EUTR import regulations and an increased interest for using modified timbers instead of tropical hardwoods.

North America

At the end of 2017 and into early 2018 we saw 4/4 (25.4mm) White Oak prices soften. This has now changed with a rapid up turn in prices, mainly due to supply pressures, caused by poor seasonal logging conditions and by the Chinese, who are out bidding sawmills, to buy logs for export.
Prices for Poplar and Cherry remain stable. Strong worldwide demand for Ash is driving the prices up.
For both Maple and Black Walnut, demand and prices are steady, which mirrors 2017 for these two species.
Note: for all species the FSC price premium is on the increase due to reducing supply options!

West Africa

At this moment in time the biggest concern is the ongoing delays at the port of Douala (Cameroon). This has been a problem for some months now, and is causing serious delays to shipments and creating cash flow problems for some shippers, because until their timber is shipped they will not get paid by their customers.
The EUTR continues to change trade practices with a limited number of suppliers shipping into the UK.
Generally, the actual availability of Sapele is good at the moment, although some mills have stopped cutting more timber until the issues at the Douala port ease.
Framire has a very limited availability and it will be difficult to stock in all sizes going forward.
Although better than Framire, Iroko remains difficult to obtain and requires long term planning from importers to ensure a good supply. FSC, in all species, has limited availability.

Europe

The demand for European Oak remains as strong as ever and there is intense competition for log supply for the majority of sawmills. Although the 2017 confusion over log exports from Croatia has passed, exporters are reporting that they are having to pay record high log prices at the moment. Most importers will have to order well in advance to try and ensure supply and the majority of exporters are insisting that their customers purchase lesser grades to secure the prime.

Providing you order well in advance the availability of Steamed Beech is good, but certain key sizes and lengths in CND can be difficult to get.

Far East

The availability of Meranti has been under pressure since the 2016 changes in Malaysian regulations for the supply of logs. Although supply has eased in the last few months, prices remain very firm and the strong Malaysian Ringgit against the US Dollar means log prices have increased further to the sawmills. Some key sizes, like 25mm random width, and some 228mm and wider sizes, are now on extended lead times.

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