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The Emerging Timber Industry in Uruguay

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Mission Partners: Professor Remo Pedreschi (University of Edinburgh) and Professor Abdy Kermani (Edinburgh Napier University)

About this Case Study

The mission studied the supply chain of timber procurement from plantation to construction in the context of a very 'young' timber industry found in Uruguay. Timber plantations have expanded exponentially in the last 10 -15 years, from 60,000 hectares in 1998 to over 1 million in 2011. Uruguay currently has a small timber processing industry due to the 'young' nature of forestry in the country, and academics at Universidad de la República, recognise a lack of expertise and the need to develop research and practice in contemporary timber engineering. The predominant species are Grandis (eucalyptus) and Loblolly Pine (southern yellow pine).

About this Mission

Including aims and objectives, Itinerary and overseas partners visited, Research field and details of work carried out during the mission. A six day mission to Uruguay investigated the production and use of eucalyptus both for domestic use, and export to the UK and elsewhere. The mission identified knowledge gaps and novel research potential across the architectural, engineering and construction communities. This served to promote UK research in an international setting, and build partnerships for future funding applications.

The mission had visits with academics; construction companies; engineered timber fabrication plants; and a eucalyptus plantation, sawmill and production facility.

“To introduce UK knowledge and expertise in the use of timber into the Uruguayan context”

- School of Architecture, Universidad de la República, Montevideo
- School of Engineering, Universidad de la República, Montevideo
- Weyerhaeuser Productos Ltd, Montevideo – Plywood production
- Mercomadera – Engineered timber products and construction

Fast Facts

- Timber is rarely used in the construction of Uruguayan buildings
- Enthusiasm to introduce innovative forms of timber construction
- Most timber produced in Uruguay is exported for pulp
- Grandis eucalyptus is grown using sustainable forestry practice
- Research and education is needed in timber engineering





- Raíces S.R.L. – Engineered timber products
- Urufor – Grandis eucalyptus plantation, sawmill and products
- INIA (National Agricultural Research Institute), Tacuarembó

A huge quantity of Grandis eucalyptus is grown in the north of the country, but the majority of this is exported. The mission was interested in exploring increased use of this timber in the local market. Resistance to the use of timber as a building material is associated with a 'cultural barrier' and a tradition of using masonry in Uruguay. The Government is encouraging the use of timber in the construction of social housing, and there is an interest in developing the use of timber in the schools of Architecture and Engineering.

Urufor currently export to 25 countries. The domestic market, with a population of just over 3 million, is quite small and thus there is a major difference in the scale of the large producers and the much smaller manufacturers of systems and consequent resources for their development.

There is a great need to develop teaching and research in timber within academia and practice.

Benefits/Impacts of the Mission

Including any likely impacts on the research community and wider society

The schools of engineering and architecture at Universidad de la República, Montevideo are keen to develop knowledge in timber engineering. The mission provided an opportunity to discuss possible collaboration and exchange agreements to share and deliver knowledge. An evening public lecture was used to present expertise and experience of timber from the UK mission to the local academic community. Visits with the timber contractors and the plantation provided an opportunity to see the supply chains for local use of timber. There is now the opportunity to work with partners in Uruguay to develop innovative solutions for working with timber.

Outputs

- A report will be produced by the research team based on the findings of the mission for the UK context.
- Presentation at the LimesNet workshop.
- Presentation of the findings and at the LimesNet Conference in July 2012
- Peer reviewed journal publication on the potential of emerging timber industry in Uruguay.
- A funding proposal to the Uruguay government for research collaboration.

Follow up activities

A proposal is being developed with INIA in Uruguay to look at the design of a library building within a new campus at their premises in Tacuarembó. The mission members will work on this with partners in Uruguay.

www.limesnet.org.

If you have any queries, comments or ideas about any aspect of LimesNet, please email limesnet@bath.ac.uk, or contact:

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