

Full House at AHEC's 19th Convention - Tianjin, June 2014

China is currently the world's largest importer of hardwoods and the USA is the world's largest producer and exporter of sustainable hardwoods. A global panel of experts discussed how this is beneficial for both countries as well as for the environment during the American Hardwood Export Council's 19th Southeast Asia & Greater China Convention. A record number of 80 AHEC members from 40 companies participated with 350 delegates from all over China and Southeast Asia, including representatives from 37 regional trade and design associations.



Mr. Ralph Bean,
Director, Agricultural Trade
Office, Embassy of the United
States of America

The convention took place at the St. Regis Hotel in Tianjin, where importers, distributors, manufacturers and designers from China and across Southeast Asia were welcomed by Mr. Ralph Bean, Director of the Trade Office in Beijing and Mr. Kou Wei Ping, President of Tianjin Furniture Trade Association. Mr. Kou said that *"the convention provides an excellent platform for the two industries to exchange opinions and networking and welcomes AHEC members to come to Tianjin to do business and invites AHEC and members to participate in the Tianjin Furniture Exhibition in May 2015."* As a trading and business platform, the AHEC convention is an important annual event for the hardwood industry to meet old friends and network with new contacts. Ms Sharon Shek, AHEC's Assistant Director of Compliance and Operation, said *"The record breaking attendance of AHEC members this year indicated that the convention is a resourceful occasion for their business development."*

With an estimated 7 billion people now sharing this planet, it is no surprise that governments, institutions and policy-makers around the globe are focusing increased attention on reducing carbon emissions and finding measurable, actionable ways such as Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) and Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) to drive environmental and industrial policies. In recent months, both China and the USA have made public pledges to curb carbon emissions. A series of convention speakers discussed ways in which sustainable wood products, such as hardwoods from the United States, can be an important tool to help reach these goals, addressing topics related to Global Environmental Policies and Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of American hardwood. In addition, design in American hardwood and NHLA Lumber Grading rules were also presented, which have a direct influence on yield and thus the environment.



Mr. Michael Snow
presented certificate
to Mr. Kou Wei Ping

Commenting on behalf of the NHLA Mark Barford, Executive Director/CEO, from Memphis said *"We are pleased to participate in this annual event as a great opportunity to reinforce the requirement to learn and understand the NHLA Lumber Grading Rules."* He also spoke about the NHLA Kiln Dried Lumber Certification program which is now being used by the U.S. industry to replace the phyto-sanitary certificate needed to transport hardwoods from the USA. Mark detailed a meeting held earlier in the week with U.S. and Chinese officials regarding China accepting the certificate which is vital to the expansion of business between the countries. During the convention, NHLA Chief Inspector Dana Spessert detailed the grading system and introduced the two staff members NHLA employs in China, confirming that NHLA will continue to increase their presence in the markets throughout China and Southeast Asia.



Keynote Speakers

Mr Mike Snow, AHEC's Executive Director from Washington DC, gave a statistical background on U.S. exports to China highlighting America's expanding forests as good news for the Chinese furniture and building industries which depend on a stable source of raw materials to satisfy growing Chinese demand. Exports of American hardwood products to Greater China in 2013 were valued at more than US\$1.1 billion, an increase of 33% compared to 2012. Snow also gave a brief 'AHEC - Around the World' presentation showing key AHEC activities and promotional projects.

Mr. Rupert Oliver, President of Forest Industries Intelligence Ltd. in UK, provided an overview of environmental and 'Green Building' policies around the globe, and explained how Life Cycle Assessment, including the AHEC LCA for kiln dried lumber and sliced veneer, is encouraging the on-going movement towards a more science-centered approach to green specification and design. He emphasised that efficient use of wood as a material greatly reduces its environmental impact and long-life timber products have a much better carbon footprint.

Mr Snow, welcomed the move towards science-based LCAs; *"A natural, renewable, legally harvested and sustainably*