



Media Release
October 2022

AHEC's 25th Southeast Asia and Greater China Convention hailed a 'huge success'

Over 200 gather at Bangkok's Marriott Marquis for AHEC's first in person event in the region for 3 years

On Friday 14th October, influential individuals from the Southeast Asian timber industry met to listen, discuss and network at an all-day event hosted by AHEC. AHEC's conventions are known across the industry as a source of insight into the forces shaping wood trade globally, and an opportunity to establish and renew business contacts for mutual benefit. The event in Bangkok last week certainly lived up to this expectation.

Mr John Chan, AHEC's Regional Director, commented *"We could not have been happier with the convention. It was wonderful to meet friends old and new face-to-face after so long being forced to only meet on screen. It was a great chance for our members to present their products and capabilities to businesses from Thailand and to start conversations with those who are part of the growing focus on sustainable American hardwood species in our region. 2022 is a special year as it marks AHEC's 30th year since it opened its SEA & Greater China office in Hong Kong. It also is a homecoming of sorts, as the last time AHEC's regional convention was held in Bangkok was in 2000. We look forward to welcoming our friends and members for the 26th convention in Chengdu, China in June 2023."*

Following opening remarks from Mr Eric Mullins, Agricultural Attaché, USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Bangkok, and a welcome from AHEC's Regional Director, Mr John Chan, a morning of presentations from experts from the US followed.

A presentation from Mr Mike Snow, Executive Director of AHEC sought to challenge some of the misconceptions regarding wood and the environment. His talk highlighted the natural regeneration, annual growth to harvest ratios and the sophisticated forest management practices that mean the American hardwood resource can be considered truly sustainable. He went on to share the data and evidence AHEC has in the form of lifecycle assessment data, American Hardwood Environmental

Profiles (AHEPs) and the US Forest Service's Forest Inventory and Analysis programme (FIA) to substantiate this assertion.

Mr Tripp Pryor, also from AHEC's head office in Virginia, showed that the US remains the world's largest hardwood lumber exporter, accounting for almost a third of the value of the market. His talk demonstrated that the range of species demanded by the Southeast Asia region is expanding and underlined the incredible growth of 49% year on year of exports to Thailand. He went on to highlight some of the limitations of existing global certification systems. He introduced listeners into some of the initial stages of an improved system of certification that AHEC is currently developing as part of the Sustainable Hardwood Coalition with partners including the World Forest ID consortium at Kew Gardens in London, which is building the largest geo-referenced open source forest sample collection to tackle fraud, illegal logging and deforestation.

In the afternoon, young Thai designer Ms Nong Chotipatoomwan, discussed her experiences participating in AHEC's first global design collaboration, Discovered. She talked about the honour of being asked to be one of 20 designers selected globally to exhibit her work, a rocking chair made from American red oak, at the prestigious Design Museum in London and the Triennale in Milan. It was a taste of the strength of world class design talent which the SEA region produces.

The day closed with an introduction to the complex world of American hardwood lumber grading delivered with the characteristic humour of the Chief Inspector of the National Hardwood Lumber Association (USA), Mr Dana Spessert.

The day was expertly directed by Mr Jiro Jirawat Tangkijngamwong, Chairman of the Thai Furniture Association, the Thai Timber Association and Trade Associations in Lifestyle and Design, Chamber of Commerce, Director at Deesawat Industries Co. Ltd, Deesawat Design Co.Ltd and Newsawat Sawmill Ltd Partnership. A busy man who added Master of Ceremonies and keynote speaker to his roles for the day.

Many questions were asked during the course of the day to the speakers from the crowd demonstrating an interest in sourcing, availability, pricing and application. The convention concluded with a sumptuous buffet and networking opportunity where AHEC members met current and prospective customers eager to take up the opportunity to explore mutually beneficial business relationships.

"It was a day that presented an excellent opportunity for us and our members to reconnect with the Southeast Asian region in person. It is encouraging that we are seeing more discussion around the sustainability of wood and that our efforts in education and communication are bearing fruit. We thank all for their warm welcome and hospitality and look forward to forging deeper relationships with our partners as a result" reflected Mr Michael Snow.

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