

# 7th International Hardwood Conference

Venezia, November 15-17th 2017

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Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that Fedecomlegno (Italian Timber Trade Association) and its mother company Federlegno-Arredo (Italian Timber and Furniture Association) welcome you to this very important event. President of Federlegno-Arredo Emanuele Orsini could not join us because he is still in Rome but he is sending his greetings and best wishes for our Conference.

Being the hosts this year makes us proud especially in front of such a qualified audience with participants from 17 different countries. We thank you all for your presence and we will do our best to make your day fruitful and inspiring.

If we had to put a tag that embraces us all under a unique definition, I would say in modern language **#inspiredbywood**. We are all proud, in our everyday activities, to deal with such a unique raw material. In fact we have to keep repeating that wood is the only one which grows by itself and which, when carefully and sustainably utilized, can really be a resource lasting forever.

Opening the Conference I will very briefly nominate some key issues, which I think will literally **RESHAPE our way of doing business in the coming decades**. These are definitely too big items not to touch and at the same time, each one of them would deserve a Conference of its own. I will just give a few key sentences for each of these topics since you will find most of them in several of today's contributions to the Conference.

**SUSTAINABILITY:** FSC and PEFC are definitely one of the answer to the problem. Media campaigns explaining that even "non certified" wood can be sustainably managed is also another answer (and I am thinking of the Fair and Precious campaign by ATIBT rather than the good work made by STTC Sustainable Tropical Timber Coalition). Other germs of sustainability, especially when joining social and environmental aspects, can be found in indigenous community forestry management as we can already experience in quite a few countries in Central and South America as well as in Africa. Coming to temperate hardwoods, it goes without saying that European countries' legislations in terms of forestry are showing to many developing countries the correct way to pursue a proper and long-term oriented harvesting.

**LEGALITY:** EUTR, Lacey Act and similar legislations in other countries have in fact reshaped our ways of purchasing wood, asking us to go deep with our due diligence processes into the mechanisms of timber sourcing. It has been and it will still be harsh, but at the end of the day we will be able to say to a whole category of designers, architects, engineers, project specifiers some clear words: the



wood you are buying IS clean. In addition, next step will be to go to these professionals and ask them to request the same kind of procurement transparency also in supply chains of other competitive materials such as metals, minerals, concrete, oil and plastic.

**INNOVATION:** no business is exempt from the big revolution of digital design, digital production and digital sales. We HAVE to find a way to enter this main stream and to convey positive concepts about wood. Wood being natural because of its characteristics (including so called “defects”), wood being eco-friendly whenever sustainable, wood bringing quietness, relax and psychological relief in homes and workplaces, wood bringing inspiration to people’s life. If we will be able to ride these trends, we will be among the first one to find ways to communicate to the new generations, the millennials, who are relentlessly refusing any traditional advertisement campaign.

**KNOWLEDGE BASE DISSEMINATION:** From primary school to post-graduate students, there is an increasing demand for explanation about issues that are part of our knowledge base but are not known within the general public. The questions we hear are: Can sustainable forest harvesting be a way to stop rainforest destruction? How do we “replant” forests? Which is the role of trees in CO2 segregation? How can I be sure that I am buying a “green” piece of furniture? How can we compare wood to other raw materials in terms of life cycle? Shouldn’t we invest more in designing products made out of reclaimed wood? Each one of us has to consider himself a crusader for wood and we all need to go out there in schools and answer these questions.

**GROWING DEMAND FOR WOOD PRODUCTS:** Demand for forest products keeps growing as population and incomes grow. It is peculiar that the annual per capita wood consumption is about the same 0,5m<sup>3</sup> throughout the globe, and this same figure is switching from being 80% firewood in less developed countries to being 80% industrial sawn wood and wood-based panels in developed countries. As soon as country’s income grows and economies develop, we make a better use of the same amount of wood resources. FAO experts made a forecast that Industrial Roundwood consumption by 2030 will be 60% higher than actual levels. Therefore, even if we have seen some mighty developments in woodworking technology, there will still be issues on where wood should come from, who and where will produce it and how it should be produced.

**PLANTATION WOOD:** there is a clear trend in shifting from poorly regulated wild forests towards plantations and sustainably managed forests. The same forecast from FAO experts tells us that this path from deforestation to reforestation will double the production of plantation wood within 2030, reaching one third of global industrial wood consumption. It is our common task to dig deep into these new plantation logics trying to anticipate and lead plantation investments as well as the most widespread utilization of plantation wood.

Thank you very much.