

Products Meeting Needs - Applying Wood Modification to its Fullest Potential

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ABSTRACT

Whilst previous wood modification conferences have dealt with technological advances, there has been limited consideration of market potential. Given the increasing levels of commercialisation, this is now being considered by several groups. There is a need to critically assess why we are trying to develop new modification technologies, and what benefits can be gained from using those already in the marketplace. These benefits can vary from country to country, even in some cases within regions in a country. This paper will review many of the key parameters necessary for converting a good idea (in this case a wood modification process) to a commercial reality, including:

- Logistics – what is the need for the modification process;
- Benefits to be gained – how does the process increase the performance of the resulting material and/or product;
- Environmental considerations – such as an increased need for sustainable building, using where possible enhanced local resources, minimising risk of contamination as a result of leaching;
- Long term benefits gained – including whole life costs, life cycle assessments;
- International marketing versus local marketing – developing niche markets in selected countries. Corporate responsibility to address all these issues.

The overall aim of the paper will be an aid to future development and marketing of wood modification, and as an aid to the future will also consider some of the mistakes from the past, as well as some of the perceived hurdles for modified wood (such as cost). It does not aim to provide a ‘quick fix’ answer, and some of the conclusions may not apply to certain circumstances. The aim is to provide suggestions on how to correct situations that have not been corrected so far.

INTRODUCTION

In order to assess the marketability of modified wood, it is necessary to make a brief summary of the wood market in general.

At the risk of upsetting silviculturalists, the wood industry is a form of long-term farming, with harvesting typically occurring 30-60 years after planting. As is typical