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August 2024 **magazine**

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## TIMCON warn of supply chain cost pressures

**(TIMCON) has warned pallet manufacturers are facing significant increases in the cost of raw material costs passed onto them, pushing prices up for users – in spite of a currently depressed market.**

The organisation, which represents pallet manufacturers and repairers in the UK and Ireland, has advised of several variables which are causing these increases - none of them related to demand. These include:

- A depressed construction industry - particularly in the housing building sector – which has seen sawmills cutting back on production and subsequently labour.
- Increased prices charged by Scandinavian mills to counter the previous year's poor trading.
- Issues with the availability of EU logs due to recent increased felling volumes to combat bark beetle outbreak.
- Lower volumes of Canadian timber as the result of forest fires last year and this, which has had a knock-on effect on supplies from the US.

TIMCON Secretary General Stuart Hex said: "TIMCON's members have reported significant hikes in the price of pallet wood over recent months. The recently published pallet timber index for Q2 shows a further increase of 4.4 per

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Advertising  
**Donna Ludbrook**  
donna@pacmagazine.co.uk  
mobile 07949 671455

Editorial  
**Dominic Weaver**  
dominic@pacmagazine.co.uk  
mobile 07305 911889

Graphic Design  
**Tom Yorke**  
tom@pacmagazine.co.uk

Subscriptions  
UK £84 per annum  
Overseas  
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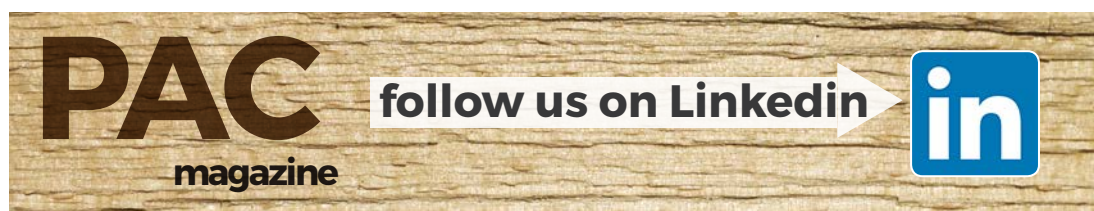
cent for homegrown wood, following on from the 0.3 per cent reported in Q1 – this is the first time we have seen two successive quarters of increase since Q2 2021 and Q3 2021. We have also seen an 6.5 per cent increase in imported timber from the Baltics, the first reported increase since Q3 2021.

“Since December the UK index has reported a total increase of 4.2 per cent. While this is significantly lower than the 20.1 per cent reported in the German HPE index over the same period, the UK monthly index

is clearly showing that prices are continuing to rise in the UK.”

Hex added that, with the UK second only to China as a wood fibre importer, “TIMCON applauds the work that CONFOR is doing to push for increased tree planting.”

“With some predictions suggesting the country won’t see a recovery in the house building sector until 2025, we hope the newly elected government will introduce measures to stimulate an uplift sooner rather than later,” said Hex.



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# IPP AND Bakkavor renew contract



*European pallet pooler IPP and UK fresh food experts Bakkavor have agreed a new contract.*

**One of Europe's leading poolers of sustainable wooden pallets and the UK's top provider of own-label fresh prepared foods are celebrating their 15-year partnership with the signing of a new contract.**

Coventry-based supply chain experts IPP and fresh food specialists Bakkavor began working together in 2009 at Bakkavor Meals, previously known as Hitchen Foods, in Wigan.

The relationship has flourished ever since and enables Bakkavor to cost-effectively move products such as breads, desserts, salads, dips, soups, ready meals and pizzas into distribution centres for major UK supermarkets.

IPP works across 37 UK-wide locations to guarantee the availability of millions of reusable pallets so that Bakkavor's products reach the supermarket shelves on time and in the best quality.

The two companies have agreed terms on another new contract which will take the working relationship past 15 years in October this year.

The partnership is based on the sustainable circular economy model, where IPP retrieves, repairs and reuses pallets and works to reduce 'empty running', the wasteful transport miles where a vehicle returns to base with no goods on board.

Darren Binns, head of logistics for Bakkavor, said: "The supply of pallets into our business and the

service offer from IPP is critical to us. They are a low maintenance partner – they get on with the job, work with us collaboratively on any areas of concern and always do what they say they're going to do.

"They work with us across the board. Everything we make, we move on an IPP pallet.

"Because it is such a critical component of what we do, we want to keep working with IPP and drive as many efficiencies we can.

"We know we will always get the correct level of attention, review sessions, clarity around handling of pallets and a good management process.

"It's all about the commercials – confidence in supply, confidence in management and responding quickly."

Shelley Pierre, commercial director at IPP, said: "Our long-standing relationship with Bakkavor is based on being easy to work with, going the extra mile to support the robust supply chain it needs to get products on the supermarket shelves in a timely manner.

"The customer experience is vital, which means being collaborative, proactive and reactive in equal measure.

"We're delighted to extend our working relationship yet further and our sustainable solutions continue to be a vital cog in Bakkavor's operations."

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# Pneumatico Pallet Assembly Table

## – Your questions answered!

It goes without saying when investing in new equipment asking questions is fundamental to making an informed decision. Here are the answers to 10 of the most frequently asked questions about the Pneumatico Pallet Assembly Table.

### What is a pallet assembly table?

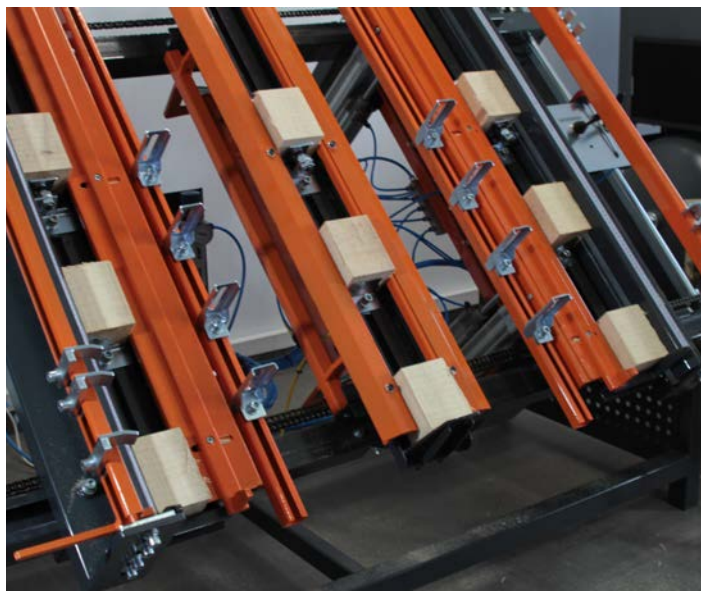
The assembly table, also called a pallet nailing table, is a machine designed specifically for the manufacture of wooden pallets.

### How does it work?

The machine is designed to be used by a single operator who loads the pallet timber onto a pre-configured bracket and clamp system. The top of the pallet is assembled first before it is flipped, to complete the base.

### How long does it take to change the pallet configuration?

On average an experienced operator can configure the system in five to 10 minutes.



### What type of pallets can be made?

Two- and four-way pallets can be made using blocks and bearers. Common pallets produced on the machine are UK standard, EURO/EPAL, chemical pallets (1-5) and wing types. A major benefit of the system is the ability to make custom/ bespoke pallets.

### How many pallets can be made per day?

On average 170-230 pallets can be produced per eight-hour shift.

### What size pallets can be made?

There are three models available - PT-1900, 2800 and 3300. As an example, the PT-3300 can produce pallets to a maximum of 3,300mm in width.

### What is needed to make the Table operational?

The machine only requires compressed air for the clamps and pallet lift. As there are moving parts, the system should be installed in a dry and sheltered location. Nail guns are required if the system was supplied without them.

### Who is the table designed for?

Companies who are looking to increase productivity and efficiency.

Companies with automated lines who need to fulfil high levels of low volume and custom pallet orders.

Manufacturers and logistics companies who need pallets to transport goods.

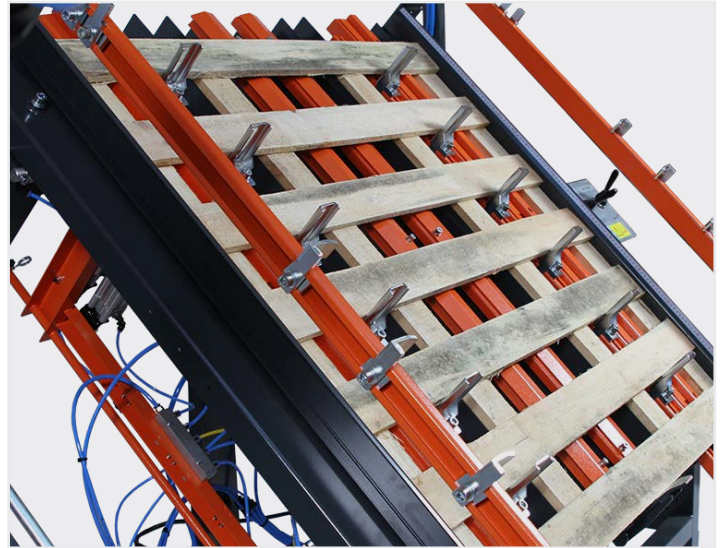
## What are the key design features?

The angled table maximises floor space and simplifies the nailing and loading/unloading of the pallet. Floor plans are issued detailing the dimensions of the machine.

- Balancers support the weight of the nail guns and minimises operator fatigue.
- The pneumatic lift minimises strain when flipping pallets.
- The overhead rail system allows the nail guns to be supported across the entire width of the table.

## How much does it cost?

This depends on the model and the accessories required for making the pallets. Whenever possible we review the customers pallet drawings to ensure



the system is correctly specified and provide pricing based on this information.

For more information on Pneumatico Semi-Automated Pallet Assembly Tables please contact John Ichikawa at ATZ-Motion on **07908 175191**, by email [sales@atz-motion.co.uk](mailto:sales@atz-motion.co.uk) or visit [www.atz-motion.co.uk](http://www.atz-motion.co.uk)



  
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# A quick win



The Timber Packaging & Pallet Confederation (TIMCON) and colleagues in Europe and other parts of the world have reported that the wooden pallet and packaging industry is facing a perfect storm of cost pressures. These price hikes have been driven by forces other than demand, which has remained slack: these include a slump in construction – particularly the housing sector – which has caused sawmills to cut back on their labour and production, soaring costs from Scandinavian mills, and falling timber supplies from the EU and north America.

As these challenges and resulting squeeze on supply chains have continued, there has been a clear impact on the price of pallet wood. TIMCON's German counterpart HPE reported an alarming 20.1 per cent rise earlier this year, while the UK's domestic supplies rose by 4.4 per cent, and imports from Baltics by 6.5 per cent. Naturally, manufacturers and repairers have had to pass on a proportion of these costs to customers in the price of pallets and packaging, which in turn will impact on the huge number of supply chains that rely on these products, including pharmaceuticals, food and drink.

It's not only economic factors affecting the market; there are environmental forces at play here, too. These include an outbreak of bark beetle in Europe which necessitated increased levels of tree felling, and huge forest fires that affected Canada last year and this.

It is another reminder of the need for businesses to step up their sustainability initiatives to mitigate the impact of an increasing number of climate-related events. There is some irony that, as more of the world understands that using naturally occurring, easily replaceable raw materials such as wood – and supporting businesses based on them – is the only sensible choice to protect our environment, climate

change is increasingly presenting more challenges to these very natural resources. TIMCON continues to push to support our business and improve supply chain sustainability, continuing our productive dialogue with Defra about the urgent need to implement a reuse incentive scheme for wooden pallets and packaging, despite the delay the change in government over the summer brings.

In the short term, we hope the positive noises made by the new government about encouraging house building will lead to a boost in the construction sector and increased sawmilling production to bring the cost of our raw materials down. In the longer term, it is essential that the government supports sustainable businesses and mitigates the cost impact of current and future supply chain pressures by addressing the shortfall in domestic tree planting – and doing all it can to back forest-based industries such as wooden pallets and packaging. It's a quick win for businesses, consumers, and the environment.

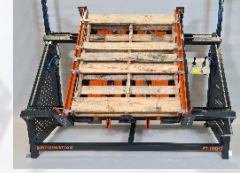
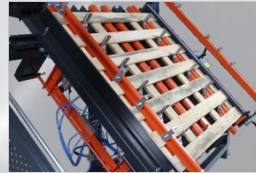
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# Small changes, big impact?

**Shelley Pierre, commercial director of IPP, argues the case for positive chaos in the battle against climate change**



*Shelley Pierre, commercial director at European pallet pooler IPP.*

A hummingbird flapping its wings in one part of the world can generate untold consequences in another, according to the widely-respected scientific 'chaos theory'.

Such small and incremental actions have provided a global theme in the wider climate debate led by Secretary General of the UN, António Guterres, who warned that 'humanity is in the hotseat' after July 2024 was recorded as the hottest month in human history.

Small islands such as the low-lying Maldives, which have done nothing in terms of creating the climate challenge, are now at risk of being swallowed up by the over-heated oceans that surround them.

To prevent this, the industrialised nations must dramatically cut emissions and roll out robust renewable energy strategies to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5°C by the end of the decade.

There have been some positive steps from sectors, such as retail with renewable and re-usable packaging and the ability of customers to return single-use plastics to supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsburys, but there is still a long way to go. The mood music is positive but not everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet.

There have been recent stories of renewable packaging trials ending positively but not being immediately rolled out across retail estates. We have even seen the re-introduction of disposable cups in one well-known store which had successfully trialled customers bringing their own in to claim a free coffee with their shop.



The never-ending saga of the faltering deposit return schemes (DRS) in England and Scotland, designed to incentivise the return of the 13 billion plastic bottles sold in the UK every year, has also not helped the situation.

All of this has sent mixed messages to customers who want to be able to collectively flap their wings to do their bit for the planet.

As a business that has for more than a century been involved in the circular economy – the greener supply chain predicated on the maxim of the re-use, repair and repatriation of sustainable wooden pallets that help feed the food industry – we understand the wider need to creatively reduce the carbon footprint through logistical optimisation.

Networks of pallet repair centres feed the European operation that ultimately reduce empty running and unnecessary miles driven, which ultimately save costs and the climate as part of what we refer to as ECONomics.

Sadly, only around nine per cent of global supply chain companies can claim to be part of the circular economy, a figure that has remained stubbornly low for many years.

Unfortunately, we do not have the luxury of many years to resolve the climate challenge – businesses need to act now. Retailers are taking a lead and championing the small incremental changes that are necessary to create larger, positive change and lead by example to help educate customers and suppliers to do the same.

Necessity is the mother of invention and there has never been a more pressing time than now to affect that change and create a positive chaos for us all.



## Brambles makes Australia appointment

Brambles has announced the appointment of Derek O'Donnell as interim CEO of CHEP Europe. He was previously the Senior Vice President of Strategy and Transformation in CHEP Europe.

O'Donnell takes over from David Cuenca, who was appointed to the role of CEO of CHEP North America as outlined in Brambles' ASX announcement on 1 July 2024.

The company said: "Derek's appointment

provides support and continuity to the business while the process to make a permanent appointment for the role is underway. Brambles will update the market when an appointment has been made. Derek joined Brambles in 2018 to establish and lead Brambles' Shaping Our Future transformation programme. In 2021, he joined the CHEP Europe business where he has been responsible for strategy, transformation, customer experience, marketing and innovation."

## Steel King launches semi-automated pallet shuttle tech

Steel King Industries, a Wisconsin-based equipment manufacturer specialising in designing and manufacturing high-quality pallet rack systems, has launched new semi-automated pallet shuttle technology.



According to the company, the lithium-ion powered Pallet Runner™ is a deep lane storage system from partner Automha Americas, a pioneering pallet shuttle provider, that efficiently moves pallets in and out of high-density storage lanes, creating increased storage density in an existing space.

The system is particularly suited to applications with high volume SKUs, as pallets are loaded into the system by lift truck and transported into deep lanes by the Pallet Runner cart. Once the load is positioned, the cart returns to the front of the system to receive the next pallet.

The lift truck operator travels only between load source and lane entry, and the cart does the rest. This maximises productivity and minimises travel distance for both product loading and unloading.

The Pallet Runner is a cost effective option for companies looking to streamline their storage processes, reduce operational costs, and ensure a competitive edge in the rapidly evolving market. The deep lanes of the system increase storage density by reducing aisles and utilising depth

space, maximising storage capacity within the same footprint.

The company said: "The system moves quickly and seamlessly, enhancing efficiency, expediting pallet loading/unloading, and reducing wait time for trucks at loading docks compared to traditional forklift operations.

"It can be scaled up or reconfigured with relative ease to accommodate growth or changes in product lines. With less need for forklift drivers to enter storage lanes, the Pallet Runner system reduces labour requirements and associated expenses while improving safety."

Don Heemstra, VP of Sales and Marketing for Steel King, said:

"The seamless integration of the pallet shuttle technology with the pallet rack systems will offer warehouses and distribution centers increased automation, efficiency, flexibility, productivity, and safety



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