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October 2024

magazine

supporting the pallet and case industry



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## FEFPEB membership hears tech advances will transform pallets and packaging within ten years

**Pallet and packaging companies heard that they should expect significant change in their businesses within a decade, during a presentation on the imminent impact of artificial intelligence (AI).**

The organisation, which represents pallet FEFPEB In the concluding speech to the annual congress of the European Federation of Wooden Pallet & Packaging Manufacturers (FEFPEB) – Artificial Intelligence – opportunities for the wooden pallet and packaging industry - business development and innovation expert and author Thierry Moubax of Compass AI said approximately 90 per cent of jobs would not exist as we know them 10 years from now.

Moubax said an estimated 20-25 per cent improvement in productivity through AI technologies has been forecast for business. Examples of benefits include freely available analytics and productivity tools; the development of 'knowledge bots' that allow all information about a business to be accessed usefully and continually from a single interface; 24-hour customer assistance; powerful marketing tools; the ability to listen to and summarise client meetings into action plans; streamlining the business acquisition, pitching and follow up process; supporting the recruitment of high-quality employees; and many more.

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Moubax left delegates with the challenge to explore how technology can improve their own businesses and how to develop and implement bespoke AI-enabled tools.

The 71st FEFPEB congress was organised by Belgian wood trade association Fedustria. It took place between September 25 and 27, 2024 in Ostend, Belgium, opening with a reception at the Thermae Palace hotel and a welcome address from the city's mayor.

The full day's business session during the event also saw a presentation by Koen de Leus, Chief Economist – Research at BNP Paribas Fortis, who spoke about the new world economy, and the most significant changes that would impact businesses in the short- to medium-term. This included insights into the advent of 'slowbalisation', which would see lower growth in the world economy; and deglobalisation. Other significant forces include extended periods of higher interest rates, climate change, and an ageing population.

There were also updates for delegates on the impact of the forthcoming EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) (implementation of which has since been postponed for 12 months) by FEFPEB's Secretary General Fons Ceelaert; and Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulations (PPWR) on the wooden pallet and packaging sector by Olalla Trenor Michelena

and Nikhil Varghese of Denton Global Advisors, and Luc Van de Vondel of Valipac. Ceelaert also presented the latest FEFPEB industry statistics on the size, composition, and value of the European pallet and packaging market for 2023, which have been compiled with the help of the organisation's members.

Paul Brannen, Director of Public Affairs at CEI Bois, spoke about 'The EU landscape changing – impact on the wood sector', in the wake of the recent elections to the European Parliament. This includes the introduction of a new sub-target for net zero of 90 per cent by 2040, and initiatives favouring the wood industry, such as the aim of renovating 1.9 million buildings and building lower carbon buildings.

FEFPEB unveiled its revised 'Packaging from Nature' campaign during the congress, which included a revamped logo, websites, and information resources. The initiative was first launched in 2011 to promote the environmental, economic, and other benefits of using wooden pallets and packaging, rather than alternatives on the market. The campaign resources are freely available to FEFPEB's membership to use across Europe.

There were also presentations by Professor Stefaan Walgrave from Antwerp University, who introduced the conference to the complex world







of Belgian politics; and Aurélie Maes, CEO of Maes Mattress Ticking, who spoke about succession in a family business, drawing on her own experiences to give advice to delegates about managing this process in their own companies.

The congress, which attracted 230 participants from across Europe and further afield, included visits to local businesses: manufacturers PGS Rodanar Pallets, Nails of Flanders, second-hand pallet facility PGS REC Belgium, lightweight and industrial packaging at Mariasteen, and block manufacturer G-Bloc. There were networking sessions throughout, with a social programme that featured a walking dinner at Ostend's Fort Napoleon, and a concluding gala dinner at De Halve Maan brewery in Bruges.

FEFPEB Secretary General Fons Ceelaert said: "The FEFPEB Congress is the essential place for European and international colleagues from the wooden pallet and packaging industry to meet, network, and discuss latest developments in our sector. Thanks to the hard work of our partner Fedustria, this year's event in Ostend and Bruges was a great success, giving our membership updates on the regulations and wider economic and technological changes that will impact their businesses in the months and years ahead, with time to consider our shared industry response to these, too."

The next FEFPEB congress will take place next autumn in Vienna, with the next full congress in two years' time.





# Significant uplift in pallet reuse drives supply chain sustainability gains



## Preliminary results of the latest wooden pallet and packaging market report have confirmed the ongoing trend for reuse amongst manufacturers, retailers, and other businesses.

The findings of the 2023 edition of the annual survey, which is jointly commissioned by the Timber Packaging & Packaging Confederation (TIMCON) and Forest Research, showed repair and reuse of wooden pallets during the year was up 10.6 per cent on the previous 12 months, accounting for an estimated total of 54.1 million pallets over the period.

The report showed an estimated total of 41.7m pallets were manufactured last year, a decrease of 7.9 per cent on last year's 45.3m.

TIMCON President John Dye said: "These results show an important trend towards reuse, highlighting the growing importance businesses are placing on maximising the lifespan of products and all-round sustainability. It's also a reminder that the repairability, reusability, and recyclability of wooden pallets makes them one of the cornerstones for developing truly circular supply chains.

"In parallel, the report also confirms the decrease we expected in pallet manufacturing during 2023. These figures support TIMCON's contribution to the PackFlow report and ongoing dialogue with Defra regarding the implementation of a government reuse incentive scheme for wooden packaging materials."

Report author, Guy Watt of John Clegg Consulting presented the results of the market survey to a TIMCON meeting at The George InterContinental hotel in Edinburgh, which was attended by TIMCON members and affiliate members, and speakers from across the domestic and overseas forest-based industries and related sectors.

The meeting opened with a video address by MSP Mairi Gougeon, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands. She stressed her support for the industry, "because it is part of the sustainable powerhouse that is Scottish forestry", adding that wooden pallets and packaging is a "great example of a sustainable, reuseable product."

Her address was followed by Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive of CONFOR UK, who spoke about the current opportunities and challenges in UK forestry, including a forecast shortfall of timber by the





2040s. This, against projected growth in demand of 78 per cent to 2050, could create “a timber security issue”, he said.

FEFPEB’s Secretary General Fons Ceelaert presented developments in the European pallet and packaging sectors, including an update on European Union Deforestation Regulations (EUDR). He said the timber industry is lobbying to delay the implementation of the new rules, and, in the interim, stressed the importance of having data, advising that pallet and packaging businesses should get as much information from their wood suppliers as possible.

Mike Glennon, Joint Managing Director of Glennon Bros, spoke about the status of the Irish timber market; Simon Tucker, Director of Taylor Maxwell, updated the meeting on timber exports; while Rob Driessen, Managing Director of Dutch pallet and packaging timber purchasing specialist Connec3, presented some welcome reasons for optimism about the European timber market.

The meeting also heard presentations from Ray Black of RB Consult UK, who detailed how ESC and Net Zero will help fuel growth in businesses; and Willy Bijen, who gave a presentation on CO2 - The Green Deal.

President John Dye said: “Over many years, TIMCON has fostered strong working relationships with other wood-based sectors. As our Edinburgh AGM and networking events showed, collaboration between the pallet and packaging industry, other industries, and associated businesses, is at an all-time high.

“This really is vital to help forest-based industries come together to discuss common ground and speak with a shared voice to policymakers. As we



work towards net zero targets together, our links help highlight our unique position as some of most sustainable sectors, and as such those which must sit at the heart of the new green economy.”

The TIMCON meeting took place on September 10-11 and featured the organisation’s AGM, a dinner and drinks on board the Royal Yacht Britannia, and a full business and networking session.



# James Jones & Sons makes pallet and packaging acquisition



**James Jones & Sons Ltd has announced the expansion of its UK Pallets & Packaging Division through the acquisition of H G Timber Ltd, based in Buckingham. H G Timber started trading in 1945 and is currently under the third-generation management of the Theodoulou family. The business is one of the most modern and well-respected operators in the pallet and packaging and racking sectors, and has benefitted from a progressive investment philosophy over the last few years.**

“We are absolutely delighted to welcome H.G. Timber and its employees into the James Jones & Sons Ltd Group, and this acquisition represents the conclusion of many years of dialogue and discussion between both families,” said Tom Bruce-Jones, Chairman of James Jones & Sons Ltd. “Their reputation, expertise and geographical location add a further dimension to our national network, and we believe this will greatly enhance our ability to service both our local and national customer base.”

HG Timber operates eight high speed automated and robotic production lines producing 2-way and 4-way pallets, with the capacity to manufacture in excess of 1.8 million timber products every year on a single shift basis. Critically, the company has just commissioned its latest Viking Turbo line, which will further enhance production capabilities.

Peter McKenzie, Managing Director of James Jones & Sons Pallets & Packaging Division, added: “The vision and investment in cutting-edge automated production lines at H.G. Timber closely align with the philosophy we’ve adopted at James Jones & Sons Ltd. Together, we are poised to offer an unrivalled national service while maintaining the highest standards in pallet and packaging quality. This acquisition will also enable us to broaden our product offering in both pallets and racking systems. I have known Alistair and his team for many years, and their experience and drive will be invaluable as we move forward.”

“This has been a momentous decision for my family and Laurence Pyle, Sales Director of HG

Timber Ltd, but we are confident that the next chapter of our family’s legacy will be in very safe hands within the James Jones family business,” said Alistair Theodoulou, Managing Director of HG Timber Ltd. “I look forward to working alongside Peter and his management team and to identifying further growth opportunities. This move will help to safeguard our jobs and will guarantee security of raw material supply within a vertically integrated forestry and sawmill business in order to benefit our enlarged customer base.”

In parallel, James Jones & Sons’ Australian subsidiary, Hyne Group, announced the acquisition of Pinetec Pty Ltd last week, a pallet and packaging business based in Perth, Western Australia. This marks the Hyne Group’s first manufacturing presence in the West in its 142 year history and follows its expansion into pallet manufacturing through the acquisition of Rodpak Pallets & Packaging and Express Pallets & Crates earlier this year.

Hyne Group CEO, Jim Bindon said Pinetec will continue to operate as usual but with the benefit of being part of a global network, “With the broader support of Hyne and James Jones Group, Pinetec’s capability and credentials as a business partner to their many customers will be enhanced.”

With these acquisitions, James Jones & Sons Ltd continues its commitment to growth and innovation in the pallet and packaging sectors, solidifying its position as a leading provider of sustainable, high-quality timber products across the UK and Australia.





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## Pallet and packaging market update



**International pressures that have affected businesses globally for many months are persisting. Price rises across the board, a global shipping crisis, and the complex impacts of Brexit and wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, haven't been helped by new issues such as recent strike action affecting major ports along the east and Gulf coasts of the US and Montreal. Uncertainty is an ongoing feature of the market.**

The price of energy and other essential inputs to the pallet and packaging sector have eased slightly. However, while the price of pallet timber had dipped to the end of the 2023, according to the independent Afry index, the last two quarters trading show an increase of 4.4 per cent (Q2) and 2.6 per cent (Q3) in the price of homegrown and 6.5 per cent and 4.6 per cent in Baltic pallet wood.

The price of packaging timber, meanwhile, has also started to climb again, with increases, respectively, of 0.7 per cent (Q2) and 2.4 per cent (Q3) in the price of homegrown; and 1.6 per cent and 2.8 per cent in the price of imported timber.

Demand from the market remains slack, and there are few signs of the seasonal Christmas uplift that has usually begun by this point in the year.

The market for second-hand pallets is reportedly busy. The latest wooden pallet and packaging marketing report, which is commissioned jointly by TIMCON and Forest Research, shows

a significant increase in the reuse of wooden pallets, growing by 10.6 per cent during 2023 against the year before; and almost 40 per cent since 2015 – across all pallet using sectors, from fmcg to construction.

This demonstrates the increasing focus of businesses towards maximising the lifespan of pallets through reuse and once again highlights the central position of wooden pallets have in the development of circular supply chains, thanks to their inherent repairability, reusability, and recyclability.

TIMCON is continuing its dialogue with DEFRA, which has committed to introducing a reuse incentive scheme for wooden pallets and packaging to boost further the sustainability of the huge number of supply chains that are using these products.

The market report, which is written by John Clegg Consulting, showed an estimated total of 41.7 million pallets manufactured during 2023, a fall of 7.9 per cent on the 45.3m made during 2023. Overall, manufacture of new pallets has decreased by approximately 18 per cent over the past three years as users have repaired and reused pallets in larger volumes.

**John Dye**, President of the Timber Packaging & Pallet Confederation (TIMCON)





## Print winged pallet bearers

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# Why choose inkjet print for pallet marking?

**Colin Stewart of Timbermark explains why using inkjet printing for marking pallets is growing in popularity**

Pallets for international shipping have to be marked with a heat treatment stamp to show they adhere to ISPM15 regulations. Traditional methods for marking pallets include heat branding and ink stenciling.

However, inkjet printing is an alternative method of pallet marking, which produces a fast, regular, high-quality mark without the drawbacks of fire risk or high labour costs.

Heat branding burns the mark into the timber, using an engraved brass plate heated to over 500 degrees Celsius. The main disadvantages to this method are the fire risk, the safety risk to the operators, and the energy use.

Ink stenciling is a convenient way of marking stacks of pallets by hand, after production. But it is labour-intensive, and the water-based inks often smudge if the stencil is moved or becomes damaged over time with constant use.

Inkjet solves these problems, and there are additional benefits such as the fine print quality for sharp text and logos, or the variable data possibilities for automatic date codes and serialization.

In comparison with branding, inkjet printing presents a lower risk option, both to the operator and the environment. The printers work at ambient temperature, and rather than handling hot plates to change a message, an operator can change the print design at the touch of a button. This means a faster marking process: the operator does not have to handle hot metal, wait for the branding plate to heat up or stop the production line for up to 10 seconds per pallet while it is branded.



*Composite blocks marked with the EPAL logo and scannable QR code using inkjet printing*

Inkjet printers also consume less energy than their branding counterparts. Assuming the brander uses 6 x 0.75kW heating elements and compressed air to power 6 air cylinders, an inkjet printer will use approximately one tenth of the electricity to produce a high-resolution mark. The printer will need to power just two controllers and the LEDs are on only when the pallet block is passing in front of them; approximately 7.5% of the time.

The flexibility of programming is also a major advantage that inkjet has over stencilling. Messages can be changed quickly and easily to include logos, dates, machine-readable codes and product specification data. There is no time or money spent on creating new stencils; instead, the user-friendly touch screen allows messages to be created with a few taps.

Handheld inkjet printers combine the convenience of stencilling by hand with the high-resolution print and zero maintenance appeal of the thermal inkjet printer system. Again, programmed by touch screen and available to use with water-based or solvent-based inks.





Overall, it is the quality of the mark made by an inkjet printer often given as one of the main attractions over branding or stencilling. High resolution inkjet printing offers these unique benefits:

- **Print quality** – fine logos for creation of (e.g.) FSC logo, or QR codes.  
Prints nicely on cracked or curved blocks, branding plate must contact evenly across the surface to stamp the whole design.
- **Economy** – by using outline logos or fonts or by printing smaller a user can control their ink costs.
- **Variable data** – an electronic system allows use of live date and time, counters, or external variable data for serialisation.
- **Adaptable:** works for two-way or four-way finished pallets, pallet blocks prior to construction or with a handheld printer after construction.



*Printing a two-way pallet bearer 25mm high using thermal inkjet*



And with the latest developments in technology, inkjet printers can be combined with UV curing LEDs to offer further benefits:

- **Produce a stable, light-fast mark**
- **Can print on wet substrates, including wet-painted stacks of pallets.**

#### Wet pallets marked and UV-cured

One customer, who has recently switched to inkjet printing from hot branding, had this to say: "We wanted to move away from heat branding, which we were finding both costly and slow. We were very impressed by the flexibility offered to us by inkjet printing. Both the handheld and fixed position printers provide a very sharp image, which is critical for our required marking, and it has speeded up our production techniques tremendously."

With products and technologies constantly evolving, inkjet printing has the potential to offer marking solutions for every kind of packaging requirement. Contact Timbermark to find out more on [sales@timbermark.co.uk](mailto:sales@timbermark.co.uk)



*Printing pallet blocks on a conveyor using a piezo inkjet printer*



# IPP makes network head appointment



**An experienced logistics professional has taken on a new role overseeing network operations at IPP, one of Europe's leading pallet poolers.**

Neil Cowley has taken on the new role of Head of Network Operations, bringing with him

three decades of expertise within the supply chain of FMCG goods for B2C retailers.

In his role at IPP, based in Meriden, West Midlands, Neil is overseeing the company's depot and quality teams, supporting nine staff in keeping IPP's network moving efficiently.

The depot team liaise day-to-day with IPP's 10 depots across the UK and Ireland, arranging for pallet volume requirements to be fulfilled to meet customer demand, while the quality team is focused on ensuring that the standards of IPP's pallets within the network are of the high quality expected.

Neil said: "The depot team are focused on customer service and ensuring there is always capacity for the network to support customer demand, which is an ever-moving feast. The quality team's focus is on ensuring that all products within our network are of the required standard."

"Both teams are working towards the goal of getting the right product, at the right quality, to the customer at the right time. While I am a newcomer to the world of pallet pooling, this is an approach which I've been used to for decades in various roles which I've held across different sectors, including B2C, retail, logistics and supply chain."

"The teams I am working with at IPP are excellent at what they do, and my priority is to support them and to understand how we can further support the rest of the business."

Neil said that IPP's focus on sustainability was a key factor in his decision to join the team.

He said: "I think that doing whatever we can to operate sustainably as individuals is important, and IPP's sustainable business model – the concept of repairing and reusing the pallet, then getting it back into the supply chain – was appealing to me."

David Bage, operations director at IPP, said: "Neil brings a wealth of logistics experience to his new role, and we're pleased to welcome him to the team."

"His background and expertise in the FMCG supply chain means he is used to ensuring that the correct products are moving through the supply chain at pace, which is a huge asset to our team and network."

## CHEP Europe receives fourth EcoVadis Platinum award

**CHEP Europe has achieved the highest Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) rating available from business sustainability rating organisation EcoVadis.**

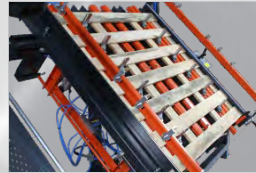
CHEP Europe, the supply chain solutions company, has earned an EcoVadis Platinum Recognition Level for its sustainability achievements in 2023. It's the fourth year running that CHEP Europe has received the highest recognition of a supply chain supplier presented by the world's most trusted business sustainability rating organisation, placing CHEP amongst the top 1 per cent in the category 'Renting and leasing of other machinery, equipment and tangible goods'.

CHEP's environmental policy, its endorsement of the Science Based Targets initiative and the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), and initiatives such as the awareness programme offered to its customers and employees regarding waste reduction and health & safety issues, reflect the company's advanced level rating performance.

Alejandro Tostado, Senior Director, Sustainability and Government Affairs Lead at CHEP Europe said: "Our goal is to lead the way in creating regenerative supply chains. As pioneers in the circular economy, we are committed to fostering a collaborative effort to tackle some major challenges of our era: decarbonising the global supply chain and restoring natural resources."



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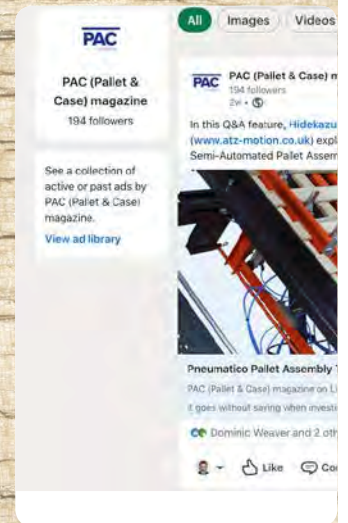
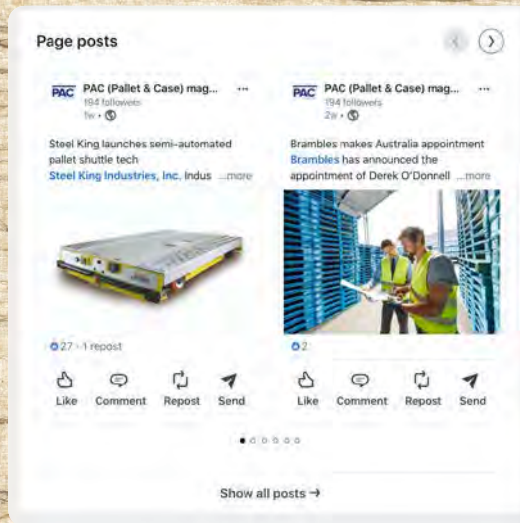
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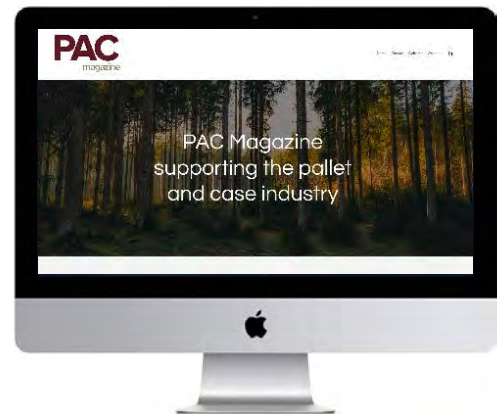


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