

## FOCUS ON FRANCE

Every two years in Nantes, the Carrefour International du Bois exhibition provides a shop window on the French timber and wood products industry. Growing from a small show principally targeted the domestic market, it has, as its title spells out, become an increasingly global event, with 15% of the 10,000 visitors last year from abroad and visitors and exhibitors together drawn from 60 countries.

UK and Irish buyers are well represented at the Carrefour, but the organisers believe more could benefit from a visit. As a taster of the products and materials they could see, they asked a number of exhibitors to pick out items they feel have cross-Channel appeal. The results highlight the variety of companies at the show and the depth and diversity of the French timber industry overall.

Incorporating Bruynzeel Multipanel and represented in the UK by Timbmet, Le Vanneau-based Allin supplies specialist plywood, including marine products, and also prefabricated engineered ply and timber construction panels. Its focus is taking sheet materials into new and demanding applications ([www.allin.fr](http://www.allin.fr)).

Among the products it picked out was exterior plywood cladding. Not widely seen in the UK to date, this has obvious architect appeal, coming in a selection of Becker Acroma stains. The range includes 100% okoumé-veneered Woodnature, 15/10 sapele-faced Woodpremium and 100% sapele-veneered Woodpremium plus which has a 20-year guarantee.

For interior use, Allin puts forward Antisone decorative acoustic panelling. This is based on grooved 32mm chipboard and can be finished in veneer or laminate.

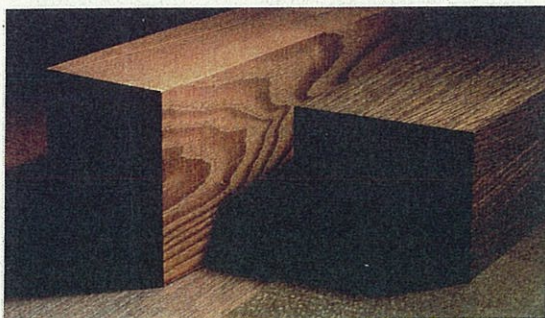
Another exhibitor, wood flooring and decorative interior panels specialist Artepy, describes itself on its website ([www.artepy.fr](http://www.artepy.fr)) as a "fertile source of futuristic inspiration"! One product it suggests has UK potential under-



Allin plywood exterior cladding

# Le flair français

French manufacturers are targeting the UK with innovative new products. Mike Jeffree reports



lines what it means. Bambou COLOR is a range of solid bamboo flooring with a difference. It includes natural look variants, but also 36 'trendy shades', from olive green to pink. Supplied in 96x960x15mm strips, it's also fashion with an eco-conscience, said Artepy, using plantation-grown material and solvent free stains.

Already well-known in the UK for its square-edged oak and boules and its Patchwood and Panoplot edge-glued and finger-jointed panels, innovative sawmill Ducerf ([www.ducerf.com](http://www.ducerf.com)) is diversifying again, this time into heat-treated 'thermowood'. The new 'chemical treatment-free' range will be produced at the company's Charolles facility and ready for delivery in the autumn.

"We've developed both decking and cladding in oak, acacia, poplar and ash," said export director Florence Perrucaud. "And, as well as the semi-finished product, we can also supply the raw material heat treated."

Another big name in French oak, Eurochêne ([www.eurochene.com](http://www.eurochene.com)) recently unveiled its own new departure, decking. Available in thicknesses from 22-48mm, and widths from 100-170mm, the range is billed as ideally placed for the eco-conscious consumer and specifier. Produced in French oak from PEFC-certified forests, it's designed to be left untreated.

The UK is traditionally not a big buyer of French beech, but producers, including Eurochêne, feel it would be worth British buyers giving it serious consideration for joinery. And the company believes its offer could be more attractive still since its recent €1.4m investment at its Besancon beech facility in eight kilns and associated storage sheds to meet demand for kiln-dried lumber from staircase producers.

Flooring and panelling maker Europlac ([www.europlac.eu](http://www.europlac.eu)) bills its product with UK ▶

### SUMMARY

- Carrefour International du Bois, the biennial French timber show, wants more UK and Irish visitors.
- Products with UK appeal highlighted by exhibitors included plywood exterior cladding, thermo-treated oak, pink bamboo flooring and untreated oak decking.
- French timber building companies are also targeting the UK.



Left, from top down: Ducerf 'thermowood'; the new untreated oak decking range from Eurochêne; Artepy's pink bamboo flooring; and the Carrefour exhibition



FRENCH LAY UK FOUNDATIONS AT ECOBUILD

The French timber building sector is also targeting the UK, as was highlighted by its presence at the Ecobuild show in London in March.

Among the exhibitors was Arbonis ([www.arbonis.com](http://www.arbonis.com)), a group comprising design and build businesses using both traditional timber construction systems and engineered wood products. Its various building approaches enable it to undertake a huge range of projects from industrial buildings to housing, offices and health facilities.

A departure from Dardant Demeuria

([www.demeuria.com](http://www.demeuria.com)), to date a supplier/builder of "luxury eco homes", was its new 'Eco-Family' range. The 120m<sup>2</sup> three-bed houses include the same "state-of-the-art

ventilation, insulation and intelligent home automation" systems as its upmarket models, but cost considerably less, starting at €199,950.



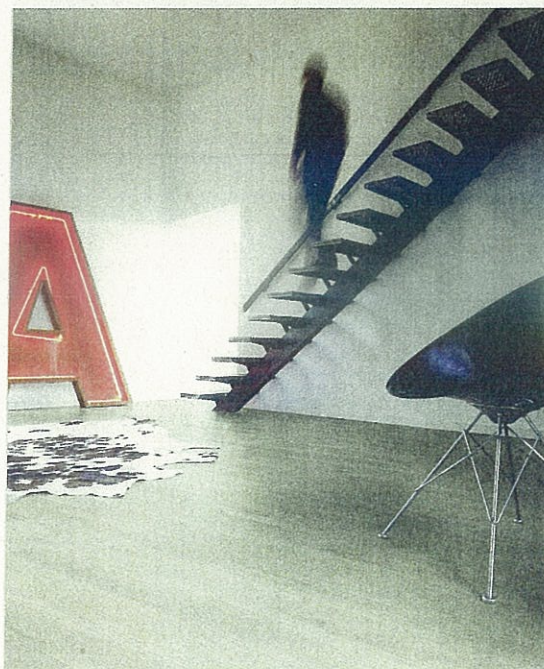
One of Arbonis' large-scale industrial buildings

market potential as being light on the environment and the pocket. FunFloor is an engineered floor comprising a 0.6mm hardwood veneer surface bonded to an HDF core and ply underlayer. It makes its timber go "five times further" than solid wood flooring, says the firm, and is "half the price" at an RRP of €35/m<sup>2</sup>. It is also claimed to last, with seven layers of varnish giving it a higher 'stiletto test' rating than unprotected solid hardwood.

Plywood giant Joubert ([www.joubert-group.com](http://www.joubert-group.com)) said it has focused on ease and speed of installation for its new exterior grade Primed 2 in 1. The FSC-certified CE2+ okoumé range is coated in UV mastic to block the pores before being given a factory-applied 80 micron coating of white acrylic paint and a light sanding. The result, said Joubert, is a panel that saves serious site time. It estimates that a panel (and it comes in 250x122mm and 310x153mm) can be installed and given a final coat of paint or varnish in one-and-a-half hours, compared with four-and-a-half for standard unfinished plywood.

Hi-tech cladding maker Sivalbp ([www.sivalbp.com](http://www.sivalbp.com)) underlined its ambitions on the UK market recently when export sales manager Mathieu Blanc undertook a country-wide tour to meet merchants and distributors. The company's ultra-modern €22m, 60,000m<sup>3</sup> capacity plant includes extensive kilning, steam chamber and thermal modification facilities, with the latter capable of treating 20,000m<sup>3</sup>. The company uses Douglas fir, Nordic spruce, Siberian larch, mountain spruce and larch and western red cedar and specialises in offering a wide choice of finishes, including some unusual textures. These include distressed, rustic and even a 'hacked' look for interiors, plus a range that's slow brush-sanded at 5m/min to create a raised grain effect.

Another Carrefour regular, Silvadec ([www.silvadec.com](http://www.silvadec.com)), has already secured a prestigious UK application for its Forexia decking, as pathways at the Eden Project in Cornwall. Forexia is a two-thirds wood, one-third polymer composite and, unlike comparable products, said Silvadec, is solid rather than hollow, giving it the "rigidity of solid wood". The range includes grooved or smooth surface finishes and a choice of colours, including 'Tropical Red'! ■



Top left: Joubert-Primed 2 in 1 cladding; below: Silvadec composite decking at the Eden Project

Above: heavily-grained Sivalbp cladding

Left: Europlac engineered FunFloor