

for exterior siding. Canoxel and other such products have already been successfully marketed here.

Although the Netherlands has a well-developed timber frame construction (TFC) building sector, the Dutch market for pre-engineered and log homes is somewhat limited due to the dense urbanization in the western part of the country.

Canadian building products are already on display at the national "Bouwbeurs" building fairs and include, in addition to the items mentioned above, composite and recycled sheet materials, central vacuum cleaner systems, pneumatic scaffold lifts, and locks for doors and safes.

Open doors to the building market

The Netherlands is a relatively open market, characterized by a large proportion of imports. Few barriers exist, with the exception of Europe-wide measures such as kiln drying requirements for softwood lumber. Most Canadian exporters to the Netherlands in this sector work with local partners, which is essential for selling to end users. In sawn lumber, shippers may either sell directly to importers or may use timber agents, who work on commission. While product literature will eventually need to be translated into Dutch, English is acceptable for initial market exploration.

Sustainable growth

The Netherlands has an active environmental policy and the Dutch are

highly aware of environmental issues such as the importance of forest stewardship. DuBo, a program supported by the government that promotes sustainable building, encourages energy conservation in construction and the use of sustainably produced materials, including wood. Products which are demonstrated to be "environmentally friendly" may therefore enjoy a competitive edge.

Interest is growing in lumber certified as "sustainably produced". The Dutch import trade supports the "Keurhout" timber hallmarking organization, which evaluates certificates accompanying incoming consignments of lumber, while the Dutch environmental organizations actively promote the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification system.

Small volumes of Canadian certified lumber have been imported to date, but as more Canadian producers offer a clear market advantage by certifying their forests, lumber imports from Canada will likely increase. This will apply particularly for species such as western red cedar, which is popular with architects, users and specifiers but is deemed "unsustainable" by environmental non-governmental organizations (NGO) which are campaigning to discourage its use.

Major competition

The Dutch produce many of their own building products, such as doors and door- and window-frames but import much of their electrical equipment, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) equipment, ceramics and tiles,

and roofing material from Europe. Products from low-wage countries dominate the DIY market and garden sector markets which are very price-competitive. Therefore Canadian exporters of high-value, up-market products may be more successful than those companies that compete directly with low-wage producers in Eastern Europe and Asia.

The Netherlands imports most of its softwood lumber from Scandinavia, although imports from the Baltic States have been growing. Canada remains a small player in the lumber import market, contributing only 2% of all imports.

Although niche market opportunities exist for Canadian manufacturers of pre-engineered timber frame and log homes, these firms should be aware that they will be competing directly with domestic timber frame builders.

Useful sources of information

- Netherlands Timber Trade Association (VNH), e-mail: vnh@wxs.nl
- H.I.B.I.N. (Organization for traders in building materials), Web site: www.hibin.nl
- Bouwbeurs (main national building products fair), Web site: www.bouwbeurs.nl

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CPI and CCC

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With growing demand for its outstanding product quality and customer service, CPI Canada is definitely counting on its strong partnership with CCC for the years ahead.

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