

Building a Bridge to Taiwan's Timber Market

By Doreen Chen-Moulec

U.S. glue-laminated timbers have been used to construct Taiwan's longest wooden bridge. Measuring 1.8 meters wide and 40 meters long, it will be used as a pedestrian crossing in Shikong, near the epicenter of a serious earthquake in 1999. But the structure is more than just a long wooden bridge. It demonstrates how the partnership between government and industry has benefitted U.S. glue-laminated timber exports in this key market.

The Work of Many Hands

The bridge was constructed through the concerted and coordinated efforts of FAS cooperators in the forestry product industry, the American Plywood Association (APA), the Engineered Wood Association and the Softwood Export Council (SEC); the State of Idaho's Trade Office in Asia; FAS staff in the Agricultural Trade Office (ATO) in Taipei, Taiwan and Washington, DC; and private firms. Funding was provided through FAS' Foreign Market Cooperator Development (FMD) Program.

Western Wood Structures of Portland, Ore., provided the materials. The glue-laminated timbers, made of Douglas fir from the Pacific Northwest, were manufactured by American Laminators, Inc. of Swishome, Ore., an APA member. The timbers were treated with a wood preservative made by Permapost Treaters (a member of the Western Wood Preservers Institute). Yi-Tsai Wood Co., Ltd. and Yang's Designing and



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Planning Company undertook the bridge's importation and construction, at a total cost for labor and materials of approximately \$140,000.

The project had its genesis in a November 2000 trade mission sponsored by the state of Idaho and ATO Taipei. During the mission, representatives of Yang's Design and Planning Company traveled to the Pacific Northwest and met with U.S. manufacturers of glue-laminated beams. They also toured public structures in Washington, Oregon and Idaho made from such timbers.

APA presented information on commercial use of the timbers; SEC on foreign market development; the Western Wood Products Association (also an SEC member) on carpentry techniques; and the American Institute of Timber Construction on fire rating standards.

In May 2001, 125 individuals from Taiwan's industry and government, including the head of Yang's Design and Planning, attended a seminar sponsored by APA, the Western Wood Products Association and

SEC on the attributes and durability of timber and wood frame structures.

Laying a Foundation

The bridge construction is indicative of the upward trend in U.S. exports of fabricated wood structural parts to Taiwan. These exports surged from \$8,000 in 2000 to \$568,000 by 2001.

And the outlook for future sales is promising. Taiwan building codes and regulations are being changed to allow more use of glue-laminated timbers, and Taiwan's Construction Planning Association is helping to promote the use of wood-frame construction technology to rebuild homes and other buildings damaged by the 1999 earthquake. ■

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