

## Demand for interior doors remains subdued

According to producers, the demand for interior doors on the German sales market has tended in recent months to remain at a subdued level. Business development in the German interior-door industry has therefore, as expected, fallen short of last year's level. Although some sales growth was shown for various high-quality interior-door ranges, in contract business and on some foreign sales markets, interior-door suppliers have profited from that growth to very differing degrees. Some established contract-sector companies and manufacturers with high export quotas, or niche-market suppliers at the top end of the market have recorded growth in revenues. In contrast, many producers focussing on standard ranges and boasting a large proportion of warehouse stocks recorded declines.

Sales growth in Germany continues to be mainly attributable to a shifting of market shares between suppliers. It is currently assumed that both production and total sales of interior doors in Germany, as well as overall turnover in the German interior-door industry during the first half of the current year have fallen compared to the same period last year, and the second half of the year is not expected to show any appreciable improvement in the market situation compared to last year. The summer months saw demand from the specialist trade at a seasonally quiet level.

On account of higher material, energy and logistic costs, the profit situation among interior-door producers has come under further pressure in recent months. Although price rises are being considered in order to pass on these cost increases, most manufacturers think that this will be difficult on account of the overall weak market situation. According to reports from suppliers, the pressure on prices in the German market has continued to remain high in recent weeks due to demands for discounts from buyers and undercutting of prices by some producers. Some interior-door suppliers assume that the price rises quoted in new price lists have again been undermined in individual contracts by discount agreements and other special conditions. □

## EFPI members imported roughly 10m m<sup>2</sup> parquet

Members of the European Federation of Parquet Importers (EFPI), Brussels, sold a total of 10.337m (2006: 11.470m) m<sup>2</sup> of imported parquet in Europe in 2007. The decline compared to the previous year is a result of the change in membership numbers.

Numbers appearing in the statistics for 2007 derive from the six members Amorim Wood Supplies GmbH (Bremen/Germany), Euro Covering S.L. (Barcelona/Spain), Fetim B.V. (Amsterdam/Netherlands), Oscar Peschardt & Co. Norge (Kristiansand/Norway), Plyquet Holzimport GmbH (Bremen/Germany) and Importeursverband Euparal (Dordrecht/Netherlands), the import association which has been a member of EFPI since April, 2006.

In a direct comparison, according to the EFPI, these six members have expanded their imports in 2007 compared to the previous year. However, in the statistics for 2006, import figures from Everfloor (Ishøj/Denmark), Houtwerf Zoeterwoude BV (Ederveen/Netherlands) and Ekowood S.A. (Luxemburg), which in the meantime have left the Federation, were also included.

The figures released by the EFPI refer to imported parquet which was sold exclusively in Europe for the period under consideration, independent of whether the relevant countries were EU members or not. However, the statistics do not include sales concluded between individual EFPI members.

Sales outside Europe, that is to say re-exports to America, Asia, Africa, Oceania and the Middle East, were also not taken into consideration.

Of the total parquet volume of 10.3m m<sup>2</sup> imported into or sold in Europe, 9.556m (10.626m) m<sup>2</sup> were accounted for by engineered parquet. This group of goods includes all two-, three- and other multi-layer parquet ranges with a top layer of at least 0.6 mm. The share of total imports by EFPI members enjoyed by these parquet ranges is therefore 92 (93) %. Solid parquet, which includes all solid-wood flooring such as mosaic, lam and board parquet, with 780,816 (843,739) m<sup>2</sup>, had a share of only 8 (7) %. □

## US Court dismisses appeal against ITC

On July 31, 2008, the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit confirmed the final determination handed down on January 5, 2007, by the International Trade Commission (ITC) at the US Department of Commerce, Washington/D.C., thereby dismissing the appeal originally lodged by the three Chinese laminate-flooring manufacturers Power Dekor Group Co. Ltd., Yingbin-Nature Guangdong Wood Industry Co. Ltd. and Jiangsu Lodgi Wood Industry Co. Ltd. Power Dekor and Lodgi Wood had already withdrawn from the appeal proceedings following the conclusion of licence agreements with Unilin Flooring in recent months.

On July 1, 2005, Unilin Flooring had submitted a complaint to the ITC which in fact affected 32 importers and manufacturers of glueless laminate flooring. In the opinion of Unilin Flooring, the laminate flooring produced or imported into the USA by those companies infringed various rights covered by the US-American patents US 6.490.836, US 6.874.292 and US 6.928.779. In the final determination handed down on January 5, 2007, the ITC determined the infringement of a total of nine rights. Through a general exclusion which was imposed at the same time, the decision also applied to patent-infringing products from those companies which were not originally directly affected by the ITC proceedings. As a result, the import into the USA of laminate flooring which infringes the above patents was forbidden.

Following conclusion of the appeal proceedings, Unilin Flooring intends to introduce further measures to stop imports which are still being carried out. Through its associated companies Unilin Beheer NV, Flooring Industries Ltd. S.a.r.l. (Bertrange/Luxemburg) and Unilin Flooring NC LLC (Thomasville/North Carolina), Unilin Flooring had already applied for an enforcement action against Uniboard Inc., Laval/Québec/Canada, a company belonging to Pfeleiderer, on March 24 last, as the glueless laminate flooring imported into the USA by Uniboard continued to infringe Unilin Flooring patents and therefore breached the general exclusion order. The application was granted on June 20. □

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