

## **AHEC outlines ‘forward thinking’ strategy to open up new market opportunities for American hardwoods**

### ***Collaborations, installations, seminars, workshops and sustainable design initiatives to comprise the major elements of AHEC’s campaign***

**February 10, 2016** - The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), the leading international trade association for the American hardwood industry, has outlined its forward thinking strategy to open up new market opportunities for American hardwoods in 2016. According to Roderick Wiles, AHEC Director for Africa, Middle East, South Asia and Oceania, the major elements of AHEC’s campaign will involve collaborations, installations, seminars, workshops and sustainable design initiatives across both established and emerging markets in India, South Africa and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Given that American hardwoods are widely accepted and understood in these markets, Wiles is positive of increased engagement with the design community in particular.

Valued at more than USD 100 billion in 2014, the MENA design market is expected to grow by about 6 percent annually to reach USD 147.5 billion by 2019, according to the MENA Design Outlook report. With this in mind, AHEC remains committed to its involvement with the major design events in the region such as the Commercial Interior Design Awards, Dubai Design Week, Design Ras Al Khor (DRAK), and Downtown Design amongst others. In terms of the timber trade, key activities for the year include AHEC’s participation at INDIAWOOD in Bangalore, Timber in Construction Expo (Yapi Ahsap Fuari) in Istanbul and the Dubai WoodShow.

“Collaborative installations have proven to be a highly effective way of stimulating interest from designers and the design media. At the same time, they help to serve as a means of demonstrating the beauty of widely-available and yet under-utilized American hardwood species. Building on our LCA modelling data, we plan to calculate and communicate the light environmental footprint of American hardwoods used in all installations in a bid to demonstrate the true sustainability of the material,” said Roderick Wiles. “AHEC runs one of the most widely recognized wood promotion campaigns in the

world and it makes perfect sense for us to continue our support for events that we have been involved with whilst also exploring new avenues and opportunities to promote American hardwoods.”

Through 2016, AHEC will also focus its strategy on education aimed at all elements of the ‘timber chain’, whether it is specifiers (architects and interior designers), end users (furniture and joinery manufacturers) or importers and distributors. AHEC intends to conduct seminars across different markets, highlighting positive developments such as the growing acceptance of thermally modified U.S. hardwoods, which can be used in exterior applications, such as decking and cladding and the development in engineered wood solutions, particularly cross laminated timber (CLT), which represent an exciting potential for American hardwoods and particularly for American tulipwood given its high strength-to-weight ratio.

“With an industry goal to increase sales of U.S. hardwoods, AHEC is focused on developing existing markets and finding new markets and applications for American hardwoods. Our aim is to enable the American hardwood industry to be proactive rather than reactive by identifying markets and providing data to help develop these markets. It is through the strong connections made with architects and designers in the region - particularly in Dubai - that awareness of both AHEC itself and American hardwoods has been raised considerably in recent years. As a result, it has become increasingly common for architects and interior designers who are looking to specify American hardwoods to come to AHEC for advice,” concluded Wiles.

As is the case all over the world, wood is attracting increased interest from the design community. With this in mind, AHEC is positive of potential design collaborations in India and Turkey in the second half of 2016. However, it is clear that there is still a lack of knowledge amongst both the specifiers and the trade when it comes to a number of issues. These include the lumber grading rules, the importance of kiln-drying, methods of handling and storing lumber and even species variety. It is imperative then that AHEC continue its technical and educational seminars across all markets and also focus on trade servicing in addition to working with the architectural and design community.

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**About AHEC:**

The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) is the leading international trade association for the U.S. hardwood industry, representing the committed exporters among U.S. hardwood companies and all the major U.S. hardwood production trade associations. AHEC runs a worldwide programme to promote American hardwoods in over 50 export markets, concentrating on providing architects, specifiers, designers and end-users with technical information on the range of species, products and sources of supply. In addition, AHEC also produces a full range of technical publications. For more information, please visit: [www.americanhardwood.org](http://www.americanhardwood.org).