

19/5/09

This morning I visited JGA Wood, a sustainable sawmill. The JGA plant is 30km from Växjö. Clas, a fourth generation member of JGA's family owners, met us.

The first thing that struck me was the huge area of logs, awaiting processing. Mainly spruce, with some pine. These log stacks look black from a distance - almost as though they have been creosoted! However, then you see the sprinklers over the top, spraying 24x7. By keeping the logs saturated, they can prevent decomposition and store them up to five years prior to milling. Clas said that it is only recently that they have processed the last of the Hurricane Gudrun windthrow. Gudrun, was the biggest storm in living Swedish memory and occurred in 2004. When I was here in 2007 there were still large areas of devastated forest visible all around.

A couple of key points: The Småland silvicultural regime is quite different to New Zealand. For a start, average rotation is 80 years. Secondly, the species and their natural turpines etc.

Anyway, back to JGA and Clas. We looked at the debarking area. All the bark from the two debarking lines (one large diameter, one small) goes to the local district heating plant. Then the logs are scanned for the cutting plan. All cutoffs are collected and conveyed automatically to:

- a chipper for pulp chip
- Hogged for the kiln heating boiler (a 20 year old Järnforsen); or
- Milled into pellets at the two year old pellet mill on site.

The pellet mill, a recent investment, has had one or two teething problems. Each grinding head costs 60,000 kr and has an estimated service life of 2000 hours. But I saw the damage that stones can do and it wasn't pretty'. JHL have discovered that the bigger the mill, the better service life and less problems and have changed to a bigger grinding head which so far has lasted 3,000+ hours. The pellet mill runs 24x7 with one attendant, on two 12h shifts, who bags and palletises for the residential market. There is also a bulk loading facility but most is pallet shipped to a distributor here in Småland. Keen locals can also drive their cars on site up to the pellet mill house and load a few bags into the boot. Surprising from a safety perspective on such a big site but Swedes are pretty safety conscious (most of the time) so I'm sure this is managed

somehow. Is this sort of thing why Volvos have their lights permanently stuck on, so that they don't get backed over by even bigger Volvos?

This is the second Järnforsen boiler in two days - they have over a thousand around the world, with a few hundred outside of Europe, so I was bound to see more than one. What impresses the most is that it was deserted. Typical Swedish automation. Perhaps someone goes in there once a day and kicks it to make sure its still there. Clas didn't know the capacity - it heats three kilns.

Anyway, back to sustainability. I asked Clas what exactly made this a *sustainable* sawmill. Apart from the energy loop closure on all wood processing residue generated on site, all their purchased sawlogs have PEFC certification, which is a Swedish sustainable forestry and lumber certification. This means they can also certify their lumber. PEFC is a local FSC equivalent, accepted in Europe. JGA's biggest markets are Holland and the UK. There is very little treatment in Sweden, and none on the JGA site. Most treatment for outside applications is done just prior to export, and CCA is not used. Tanalit boron systems etc? JGA also have a stress-grading facility. Plus, they're nice to their staff - they are building a new spacious office to accommodate some more administration people. JGA's sales are strong at present - unlike the NZ wood processing industry, where volume is down by 30% this year.

By the way, my luggage finally found me at 1830 last night, some 21 hours and 500 km after me arriving in the country.