

EUROFOREST 2018



Wagon-builder Diebolt had booked a very large area of the showground and had moved in a huge amount of equipment. This new unit with extending pole-trailer was already sold and due to start work in the forests bordering the Rhine in the east of France. Diebolt's timber loaders of preference are from the Slovenian-built Tajfun-Liv range.



Deep in the heart of France, every four years the community of St Bonnet-de-Joux hosts the French national forestry demonstration. This year's event saw over 40,000 visitors eager to see what the 350+ exhibitors had on offer. Hilary Burke reports.

OAK and Douglas fir are the timber-producing species that are most economically important in the area. A glimpse at the timber-transport systems on offer in the top field, near the chateau, corroborates the offering from the productive forests of Burgundy.

Carriage-builder Diebolt, based in Marmoutiers in Alsace, has made a substantial investment in the future of its business and now seems to be back in real contention to supply a significant share of timber-transport solutions in France and beyond its borders. Diebolt's offering is wide; firewood units and dollies for the twisting roads in the hills of the Basque Country and the 'piggy-back' triaxle trailers popular in the mountain ranges of the Vosges and the Alps were on show.



Irish-based chainsaw milling system producer Go2Mill took one of the small sites within the woodland circuit. The small chainsaw attachment runs on square-section timber or metal tubing and keeps the chain running true during the milling. Brian Gibson (left) and the Go2Mill team were very impressed with the reception their invention received and the sales produced.



In the hands of an experienced operator, Hiab's HiVision remote loading control system seems to have no problem getting the timber aboard or down onto the ground. It is hard to deny the safety and comfort advantages imparted by the HiVision technology; especially if Exte's remotely controlled load-securing system is added to the mix. Will any health and safety zealots decree that all wagons must be so equipped and drivers may not emerge from their cabs whilst in the designated zone of forestry operations? I am sorry I suggested it!

FRENCH timber hauliers tend to be very loyal to the wagon configurations to which they are used, often influenced by their geographic location. In the west of France, from Les Landes on the Spanish border to Brittany in the north, cut-to-length transport is the norm. In the centre, to handle the Douglas firs and oaks of Burgundy and the Auvergne, for example, some hauliers still insist on the old-fashioned extending pole-trailer. A source that did not want to be named assured us that Diebolt had supplied the systems to the old-timers, and they almost always opted for the geometric hydraulic steering system on the triaxle semi-trailer.

Transports Basto et Fils, from Carcassonne in the South, is a concern with a wide variety of wagon options for both national and international transport of timber and forestry products. One of the most recent additions to the fleet is a Scania R580 with a rear-mounted Jonsered 1250Z timber loader.

The novelty was Hiab's HiVision system that allowed David Basto to remain in the co-driver's seat and control everything with a couple of joysticks. The image from the camera mounted on the top of the kingpost feeds through to David's brain via a 'virtual reality' headset.

Both on the ground and between the bolsters, positioning was accurate to the centimetre. Log selection and turning or twisting of the cut-to-length timber to stabilise the load or stack seemed as quick and easy as if David had been sitting up there in the high seat himself. When he emerged from the Scania's cab to the applause of the show-going public, it was time to ask about the limitations of the technology.

Could it work, for example, where the driver lifts the trailer-end of his unit, anchors it to the ground with a tree-length tip-end and then runs out his cables on the wire?

David Basto was not sure. While it was a real bonus in terms of safety and working conditions for hauliers moving shortwood into the mills, it could be a little difficult to persuade those specialist hauliers of full-length or oversized timber to get used to the system, he admitted.



Julien Kaiser of Alsace-based forestry machinery producer AMR is pictured. The link AMR formed with Fuelwood UK some years ago has been extremely beneficial to both businesses, according to Julien. Through Fuelwood, UK firewood suppliers now have access to the wide range of specialised equipment often used on the Continent. Baling systems, formerly unknown on this side of the Channel, for example, can radically improve ease of handling for the firewood contractor. The rotary chopper, on the other hand, makes the production process far safer.



Left to right: Jean-Philippe Bazot, Jean-Luc Bongard and Christelle Rousselet. From ground preparation to secondary transformation of sawn timber, BBF operates across the forestry sector in Burgundy and the surrounding regions. 250,000m³ of timber is felled and transported annually to supply the sawmill the business established 25 years ago. The plastic (Folastec) band tracks fitted to the John Deere forwarder have been trialled extensively in Burgundy.



Tigercat forestry equipment in France is supplied by Luxembourg-based Clohse Group. Belgian firm Charlier Engineering is a key partner in fitting out machinery – especially the big skidders – for the Central Europe market. It is reported sales of the newly introduced Tigercat 602E 'swing boom' skidder have been very encouraging.



Equip'Forêt was founded by Gérard Magimel in 1988. Since that time the Sifor harvester (4/6WD) and forwarder (6/8WD) ranges have been produced in central France. The 414E harvester is still popular for first thinnings and small hardwoods, especially sweet chestnut. One selling point of the 524 harvesting head is that it is produced in France from French components as far as possible. The company is also the national distributor for Novotny forwarders and Hypro processors.



An innovative product on show for the first time in France was Ekovax, a natural treatment to protect conifer seedlings from attack by the large pine weevil (*Hylobius abietis*). A coating of wax is applied in the nursery to the lower stems of coniferous stock supplied for reforestation. Early results from central France have indicated that 60% losses in the first year of establishment have been reduced to only 10% non-fatal stem damage in Douglas fir restocking by use of the product. At the moment, the treatment is guaranteed to be effective for at least one year. It will be interesting to see how the Ekovax responds to this summer's consistently high temperatures.

Such advances – whether in timber-haulage systems or in woodland establishment – are still in the early phases of development. A few changes are, however, afoot in the Euroforest structure. Amiable sawmiller Jacques Ducerf has stepped down as chairman of the event and handed his charge over to Jean-Philippe Bazot. Bongard-Bazot et Fils (BBF) is a business based in Burgundy that spans the forest industry. Forest road construction, establishment and sawmilling all fall within the company's remit. Five harvesting machines (John Deere and Komatsu) fell the timber of suitable dimensions in Burgundy and the neighbouring regions. Seven forwarders, from the same manufacturers, haul the produce from the harvesters or the hand cutters to the roadside. A Tigercat grapple skidder is also available to deal with the biggest timber.

Jean-Philippe Bazot sees the Burgundy forestry demonstration continuing as a showcase for the French forestry industries. Raising the awareness of the general public of the importance of the French woodlands and their role as a sustainable source of timber is one of the event's purposes. Another is facilitating commercial trade – the number of exhibitors present has risen from 264 in 2014 to 369 this year. In M Bazot's view, the event is an extremely efficient platform for the professionals in the sector to communicate with the authorities. Both financial and administrative assistance may be forthcoming but the participants in the forestry chain will have to show willing and work together if they are to optimise the benefits.



Logset, Komatsu and John Deere forwarders were in action throughout the event, handling Douglas fir logs felled prior to the arrival of the visitors. The age of the crop in the mature stands of the forest near St Bonnet-de-Joux is 90 years. Felling of the big timber during the event, it was decided, would require the maintenance of lengthy risk zones and prohibitive levels of safety stewardship.



ALONGSIDE its well-accepted tree tube systems, Tubex was offering products to protect small clumps of vulnerable seedlings in uneven-aged-growth woodlands. The biodegradable coco fibre netting can be left in situ as danger to the saplings diminishes; the plastic version can be removed and redeployed a few more times in the woodland.

Protecting clumps of natural regeneration with small fences featured on the Tubex stand. Biodegradable coco netting can be left to decay naturally and blend into the forest floor. The netting formed by plastic material should, of course, be removed when the stems are out of danger and can be redeployed elsewhere in the woodland.

FORESTRY ON SHOW



Rabaud's Xylotrail forwarding trailers (with capacities of 11 and 15 tonnes) feature a steering drawbar, but drive to the trailer wheels is not direct but merely 'assisted'. A hydraulic pump turns cage wheels between the tyres. Rabaud expects their customers only to require the extra traction occasionally.



While the machine operator of tree surgery firm Grillot shears the top from a tree, the groundsman waits below to deal with it with the chainsaw when it is grounded. Do not worry about the lack of personal protection; he'll never be able to pick up the saw as it weighs at least four tonnes! The sculpture was carved by Charles Gerbet from a giant sequoia the Grillot teams had been contracted to deal with in the French city of Autun. Aged 120 years, the monster was 40m tall and had a diameter of 2.5m at breast height.

In the foothills of the Pyrenees, the base workload of Pialleport SA continues to be the production of the Camox skidder range. The recently introduced six-wheeled G275 is the most powerful design to emerge from the St Gaudens workshops. Reconditioned older skidders – both Camox and other brands – are available; as are pre-owned spares such as blades, wheel chains, winches and timber loaders.



A new Agrip grapple skidder, the MD250, was presented to the public at Euroforest 2018. The constructor has been through difficult times in recent decades but the marque is well remembered for the sterling work carried out by the machines in post-war France. The tough work in the woods often saw forestry tractors consigned to early retirement.



Olivier Saulnier works big timber in the Alps. For his latest machinery upgrade, Hyundai dealer Curty Materiels has supplied an HX 300NL excavator as a carrier for Olivier's Woody 60 harvesting head. Local Hardox steel fabricator Serrurerie Dunand was subcontracted by Curty Materiels to cut and fit the forestry protection that the contractor required for the rough ground he experienced in the mountains of Haute-Savoie.