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**New venture to bring Cross-Laminated Timber to US market pairs Johann Offner Group and Idaho Forest Group
White House announces support and training for advanced wood building products**

(COEUR D'ALENE, IDAHO; WOLFSBERG, AUSTRIA) -- Idaho Forest Group and the Johann Offner Group have announced plans to bring an innovative wood composite building technology to the United States.

They will market and distribute Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) building solutions to America in a joint venture between the two family owned companies: the Johann Offner Group, a global manufacturing firm headquartered in Wolfsberg, Austria, and Idaho Forest Group, a lumber producer based in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

This comes as the White House today detailed several initiatives to encourage the use of composite wood building products, including a \$2 million prize competition to design and build high-rise structures out of wood.

At a meeting held in Washington, D.C. by the White House Rural Council, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a new partnership to train architects, engineers and builders about the benefits of advanced wood building materials. Innovative use of wood products is already beginning to change the face of construction across the country, and the USDA is undertaking efforts to support these advancements, Vilsack said.

"Wood may be one of the world's oldest building materials, but it is now also one of the most advanced," Vilsack said.

CLT is an engineered wood building system with high strength and dimensional stability that has proven itself as an alternative to concrete, masonry and steel in a variety of building types.

"We have been researching this product for many years," said Marc Brinkmeyer, Chairman of Idaho Forest Group. "Many leading European architects and builders are using this technology to make significant and appealing structures. This joint venture provides an excellent opportunity to offer the proven CLT building technology for use here in America."

KLH Austria, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Johann Offner Group, invented CLT in 1996, creating a process in which wood strips are stacked crosswise on top of each other and glued together. The resulting timbers are strong and lightweight, providing ease of assembly while allowing for maximum architectural freedom.

"After the invention of CLT by KLH, we have successfully developed the European and world markets, offering our product as a highly recognized alternative to traditional building materials," said Johann Offner, Chairman of the Johann Offner Group. "North America has so far not been among our prime markets, which will now change."

"We are happy to have found a partner in Idaho Forest Group to develop this highly interesting market together. This partnership will strengthen our global presence," Offner said.



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As a market leader, KLH as a brand is often used synonymously by the building and design industries for CLT as a product. The new joint venture will be strongly supported by KLH Austria and its subsidiary in London until an American-based sales office is established in June 2014, Brinkmeyer said. The product will be initially supplied from the European factory.

Composite materials like CLT are now a major emphasis for the USDA and the U.S. Forest Service Products Laboratory, based on predictions for future use. According to a statement from Vilsack's office, building stronger markets for innovative new wood products supports sustainable forestry, helps buffer reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and puts rural America at the forefront of an emerging industry.

Popular Science recently profiled the merits of CLT in an article titled "The World's Most Advanced Building Material Is... Wood." (February 2014).

"Compared with steel or concrete, CLT, also known as mass timber, is cheaper, easier to assemble, and more fire resistant, thanks to the way wood chars. It's also more sustainable," Popular Science noted, concluding with these words from an industry expert: "Wood is the new concrete."

"It's an honor to work with the company that invented and perfected CLT," Brinkmeyer said. "They have an extensive R&D focus and a flawless product. Combined with the recovering U.S. housing market, it shows significant promise. KLH has a proven record of using CLT in thousands of projects as diverse as corporate headquarters, theaters, schools, universities, financial institutions and 10-story-high buildings."

The Johann Offner Group, which began as an ironworks, has been owned by the Offner family since 1755. Their corporate philosophy is also their family's century-old motto: "Quality is My Sanctuary." The Johann Offner Group acquired ownership of KLH in 2012.

Idaho Forest Group, the largest lumber producer in Idaho, originated with a 2008 merger of Riley Creek Lumber, founded by Brinkmeyer, and Bennett Forest Industries, founded by Dick Bennett. The company has five production facilities throughout Idaho.

"Idaho Forest Group is very pleased to join forces with the Johann Offner Group," Brinkmeyer said. "They epitomize quality, and they have the very best technical know-how and experience in the CLT building system business. This joint venture fits Idaho Forest Group's vision that wood provides the very best building product for the 21st century – and beyond."

For more information, visit www.klh.at and www.idfg.com