

Log harvest in Ghana's Lake Volta now getting underway

Salvaging operations to recover underwater roundwood "deposits" in Lake Volta in Ghana, one of the largest artificial lakes in the world, are about to begin. The exclusive harvesting rights are held by Clark Sustainable Resource Developments Ltd. (CSRD), a subsidiary of the Canadian company Triton Logging Inc., with headquarters in Saanichton, British Columbia.

The negotiations between CSRD and the Ghanaian authorities about the harvesting rights had been conducted over several years. A memorandum of understanding was signed in April 2008 and the plans were finally ratified by the Ghanaian parliament at the end of 2010. The agreement is valid for 25 years and applies to 350,000 ha of submerged forests resulting from the creation of the reservoir in 1965. The value of the potentially accessible log resources is estimated to be \$1-2 billion.

According to Jim Hayhurst, vice president of Triton Logging, the first test runs began in March 2011. These trials succeeded in bringing to the surface commercially sought-after wood species such as iroko, ebony, and mahogany species of good quality and dimensions. Preparations for commercial harvesting are currently underway and will initially involve the use of a SHARC Harvester.

A machine of this kind can harvest approximately 100,000 m³ of roundwood per year. Triton Logging intends to employ more SHARC harvesters starting this year. Hayhurst quotes a target figure of four units of this type with a combined harvesting capacity of 400,000 m³ logs per year. Projected over 25 years, this could amount to up to 10m³ of logs being recovered from Lake Volta.

All the roundwood from Lake Volta is to be processed in the region; there are no plans for exporting roundwood. CSRD is currently setting up a sawmill on the shores of the lake for manufacturing AD and KD lumber. It will probably be put into service at the end of July/beginning of August this year. The timber is to be marketed by Triton Logging's sales team. The focus of the marketing operations is on the markets in Europe, Asia, and the USA. The existing local wood industry is to be supplied with roundwood from the lake as well.

Lake-wood from a similar project has been available in Europe for roughly three years. Logs have been harvested in Lake Blommestein in Surinam, South America, since 2008. The Dutchman Jos Dennebos (Deenebos Flooring B.V. of Raalte, Netherlands) secured the harvesting rights along with domestic partners. General importer is F.W. Barth & Co. GmbH of Korschbroich, Germany. □