

Tuesday, 25th February 2025 at CTICC, Cape Town



Project: Hines T3 Collingwood, Melbourne
Architect: Jackson Clement Burrows Architects

Surprise
Appearance
by:
Deputy Mayor
Ald. Eddie Andrews

Welcome to the 14th WOOD Conference

A Knowledge-Based Platform Connecting all Architects, Engineers, Quantity Surveyors, Project Managers, Developers, Investors and Architectural students at "The Forefront of Timber Innovations".

**Timber Nexus: Integrating Global Ideas
for Africa's Growth**

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Programme 14th Hybrid WOOD Conference

Cape Town, SA – 25th February 2025

“Timber Nexus: Integrating Global Ideas for Africa’s Growth”

* Please note that the conference will be held in local time (SAST).

07:00 - 09:00	On Site and Online Registration
09:00 - 09:10	Hannu Garny – South Africa – Master of Ceremonies
09:10 - 09:20	Roger Kuratle – Switzerland – Kuratle Group – <i>Opening</i>
09:20 - 09:35	H.E. Mr. Mirko Manzoni – Ambassador of Switzerland – South Africa – <i>Welcome Address</i>
09:35 - 10:00	Johann van der Merwe – SA – <i>„Timber on the Rise: Shaping the Future of Structural Timber Design and Education in Africa“</i>
10:00 - 10:25	Nick Plewman – SA – <i>„Not Seeing the Wood for the Trees – Timber Construction for Biophilic Design“</i>
10:25 - 10:50	Katharina Lehmann – Switzerland – <i>„The Bright Future and Fascination of Wood as Building Material“</i>
10:50 - 11:15	Tea Breakaway / Networking
11:15 - 11:40	Belinda Boyd Duncan – SA – <i>„Strategic Design as a Catalyst for Mass Timber in the Built Environment“</i>
11:40 - 12:05	Christoph Meier – Switzerland – <i>„Timber – An Excellent Construction Material – The Only One – All Over The World“</i>
12:05 - 12:30	Shawn Scriven – SA – <i>„Pioneering Sustainable Architecture with CLT“</i>
12:30 - 12:55	Hannu Garny – SA – <i>„Building and living in a Timber House in SA“</i>
12:55 - 13:55	Lunch Breakaway/Networking
13:55 – 14.20	Wood Student Foundation – <i>„UCT Honours Architecture Student Project: Baphumelele Orphanage in Khayelitsha“</i>
14:20 - 14:45	Kyle Bennet – SA – XLAM – <i>„Timber vs Tradition: Comparing CLT, Steel, and Brick for a Greener Tomorrow“</i>
14:45 - 15:10	Abrie Visagie – SA – <i>„Where the Three T’s Meet – Timber, Technology, and Tradition“</i>
15:10 - 15:35	Braam de Villiers – <i>„The Fourth Revolution Is Here – Timber Is the Material for Revolutionary Change!“</i>
15:35 - 16:15	Prof. James Brown – SA/Sweden – <i>„Practising Wood: Embedding Live Experiments with Wood in Architecture Education“</i>
16:15 - 16:40	Bettina Franke – Switzerland – <i>„Swiss Innovations for the Next Level of Timber Construction – Feasibility Studies for Heavy Duty Timber Bridges“</i>
16:40 - 16:50	Roger Kuratle – Kuratle Group – <i>„Vote of Thanks and Poll“</i>
16:50 - 17:00	Hannu Garny - <i>Closing</i>

Timber Nexus: Integrating Global Ideas for Africa's Growth



We are delighted to invite you to the 14th Annual Wood Conference, an unparalleled gathering of industry leaders, innovators, and visionaries dedicated to advancing timber construction and sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa.

This year's theme, "Timber Nexus: Integrating Global Ideas for Africa's Growth," highlights the unique potential of global collaboration in shaping Africa's urban landscapes through cutting-edge timber solutions. Together, we will explore how national and international expertise can meet local challenges, creating vibrant, sustainable solutions that respect and adapt to diverse cultural and environmental contexts.

Join us as we welcome esteemed speakers, sharing insights into timber's transformative role in architecture, engineering, and construction. Be part of engaging discussions, innovative presentations, and meaningful exchanges designed to drive the future of timber construction in Africa and beyond.

The Wood Conference is not just an event, it is a platform for knowledge sharing, dialogue, and innovation. Over the years, it has become a meeting point for architects, engineers, developers, and investors who share a vision of sustainable urbanization. With Africa on the brink of significant urban growth, this year's focus reflects the urgency and opportunity to design cities that balance tradition, technology, and ecological responsibility.

As the timber industry continues to evolve, this year's event will emphasize how timber architecture is redefining modern construction. From ambitious multi-story urban developments to community-focused projects, timber is proving to be the material of the future. By embracing global practices and adapting them to Africa's unique contexts, we aim to foster creative solutions that address environmental, social, and economic challenges.



Timber Nexus: Integrating Global Ideas for Africa's Growth

Ons is verheug om jou uit te nooi na die 14de Jaarlikse Houtkonferensie, 'n ongeëwenaarde byeenkoms van bedryfsleiers, innoveerders en visioenarisse wat toegewy is aan die bevordering van houtkonstruksie en volhoubare ontwikkeling in Afrika suid van die Sahara.

Vanjaar se tema, "Timber Nexus: Integrating Global Ideas for Africa's Growth," beklemtoon die unieke potensiaal van globale samewerking in die vorming van Afrika se stedelike landskappe deur middel van voerpunt-houtoplossings. Saam sal ons ondersoek hoe nasionale en internasionale kundigheid plaaslike uitdagings die hoof kan bied, deur lewendige, volhoubare oplossings te skep wat respekteer en aanpas by diverse kulturele en omgewingskontekste.

Sluit by ons aan terwyl ons gewaardeerde sprekers verwelkom en insigte deel oor hout se transformerende rol in argitektuur, ingenieurswese en konstruksie. Wees deel van innemende besprekings, innoverende aanbiedings en betekenisvolle uitruilings wat ontwerp is om die toekoms van houtkonstruksie in Afrika en verder te dryf.

Die Houtkonferensie is nie net 'n geleentheid nie, dit is 'n platform vir kennisdeling, dialoog en innovasie. Oor die jare het dit 'n ontmoetingspunt geword vir argitekte, ingenieurs, ontwikkelaars en beleggers wat 'n visie van volhoubare verstedeliking deel. Met Afrika op die rand van aansienlike stedelike groei, weerspieël vanjaar se fokus die dringendheid en geleentheid om stede te ontwerp wat tradisie, tegnologie en ekologiese verantwoordelikheid balanseer.

Soos die houtbedryf voortgaan om te ontwikkel, sal vanjaar se geleentheid beklemtoon hoe houtargitektuur moderne konstruksie herdefinieer. Van ambisieuse meerverdieping stedelike ontwikkelings tot gemeenskapsgerigte projekte, blyk hout die materiaal van die toekoms te wees. Deur globale praktyke te omhels en dit aan te pas by Afrika se unieke kontekste, poog ons om kreatiewe oplossings te bevorder wat omgewings-, sosiale en ekonomiese uitdagings aanspreek.



George Kuratle

Initiator
President Kuratle
Group AG



Roger Kuratle

CEO
Kuratle Group

Organization

We are thrilled to introduce an exceptional lineup of inspiring speakers this year and extend our heartfelt thanks for your enthusiastic interest in our event. Whether you're joining us in person or online, we hope you gain valuable insights and enjoy meaningful, engaging conversations.



George Kuratle
Initiator and President,
Kuratle Group AG



Roger Kuratle
CEO, Kuratle Group



Zaida Davids
Organizer, Wood Conference SA



Hannu Garny
Master of Ceremonies



Silvia Furlan
Head Marketing, Communications
Kuratle Group AG

Vote of Thanks

We would like to thank our partners and sponsors for their loyal and generous support and participation. This enables us to establish the Wood Conference as an international knowledge platform for the promotion of sustainable construction with wood for builders, architects, students and lecturers.



Foreword

I was born in the heart of the Kalahari, far from everything modern but close to nature. Because of my profession and my interest I have travelled a big part of the world. On my travels I have met several special and interesting characters.

One of these, is a crazy Swiss gentleman, named George Kuratle. George likes to travel as well. The difference between us is: I do it with a backpack on my back and he does it in a wheel chair.

From my dear friend George, I have learned to be passionate and to try the impossible. In trying you might inspire others to go further.

In George's world, from his wheelchair he says: "Impossible is not an option – just try from another direction of change your approach."

Here we are at the fourteenth Wood Conference and it is my honour to be the MC again. Last year, in the time of Covid we did a virtual conference. Times have changed and this year will be our 3rd hybrid conference. Let's see where the future will take us.



Hannu Garny
Master of Ceremonies



Opening Timber Nexus: Integrating Global Ideas for Africa's Growth



Roger Kuratle
CEO
Kuratle Group AG
roger.kuratle@
kuratlegroup.com



Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Speakers, and honored guests.

I am honored to open this year's conference under the theme: "Timber Nexus: Integrating Global Ideas for Africa's Growth."

Fourteen years ago, this conference was founded with a simple but ambitious vision: to create a platform where knowledge, experience, and ideas could be exchanged freely, helping to shape a stronger, more sustainable timber industry. Over the years, we have built bridges between professionals from different regions, fostering a shared belief in timber as the building material of the future. Today, this platform has evolved into a crucial meeting point for those who understand that timber construction is more than a trend — it is a necessity for a sustainable, resilient, and forward-thinking construction industry.

Last year, under the theme "Timber Metropolis: Shaping Africa's Cities Through Sustainable Construction," we discussed the role of timber in the urban landscape. We highlighted how timber is already transforming cities through innovative, large-scale projects — from multi-story buildings and high-rises to airports and residential developments. This year, we are taking a step further by emphasizing the global collaboration necessary to accelerate Africa's transition toward timber-based construction.

Africa is on the verge of an urban revolution. Over the next few decades, new cities will rise, infrastructure will expand, and millions will seek modern, sustainable living and working spaces. The choices we make today, the materials we use, the methods we apply, and the collaborations we build, will define the future of these urban landscapes. This is where the timber industry has a unique opportunity. By integrating expertise from across continents, learning from established timber markets like Europe, North America, and Australia, and adapting solutions to local African contexts, we can create a new model for sustainable urbanization.

However, true innovation does not happen in isolation. It requires cross-border collaboration, shared knowledge, and respect for cultural and environmental diversity. Today, we are privileged to host speakers and experts who will share their insights, experiences and knowledge. Their perspectives will offer a roadmap for how timber can shape Africa's future cities, providing high-performance, carbon-friendly, and economically viable construction solutions.

At Kuratle Group, we believe in a globally connected timber sector, where industry leaders, architects, engineers, and policymakers come together to create real solutions for real challenges. Our commitment is not just about selling products or expanding markets — it is about ensuring that timber becomes a fundamental pillar in Africa's urban development, adapted to local needs, driven by local expertise, and supported by global innovation.

On February 25th, we embark on another exciting conference, I encourage you to engage, collaborate, and share. Let us turn ideas into action, concepts into construction, and visions into reality.

Thank you already for your attendance, thank you for your commitment to our shared mission, and I look forward to seeing you at the 15th Wood Conference on the 24 February 2026!



Welcome

Ambassador Mirko Manzoni has served as the Swiss Ambassador to South Africa, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mauritius, and Namibia since November 2023. With a distinguished career in diplomacy, he previously held the role of Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Mozambique from 2019 to 2023. In this capacity, he played a pivotal role in mediating dialogue between the Government of Mozambique and the opposition party RENAMO, contributing significantly to peacebuilding efforts in the region.

Ambassador Manzoni brings extensive expertise in providing good offices and fostering high-level engagement with governments and international organ-

izations. His diplomatic acumen and commitment to conflict resolution have earned him recognition as a skilled mediator and negotiator.

Educationally, Mirko Manzoni holds a master's degree in architecture from the École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), which he completed between 1989 and 1996. His multidisciplinary background underscores his ability to approach complex challenges with creativity and strategic insight.



H.E. Mr Mirko Manzoni
Ambassador of
Switzerland -
South Africa
capetown



Timber on the Rise: Shaping the Future of Structural Timber Design and Education in Africa



Johann van der Merwe

Senior lecturer and researcher at the University of Pretoria



Timber engineering in building construction is increasingly popular in many parts of the world. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in timber as part of the structural solution for buildings on the African continent. South Africa, with its established forestry industry and comprehensive national standards — from grading to the structural design of timber elements — faces persistent misperceptions regarding the suitability of local timber for structural use. The presentation will showcase research conducted at the University of Pretoria to strengthen design standards to align with Eurocode 5 and validate the mechanical properties and performance of locally engineered timber products. Test results indicate

that locally produced soft and hardwood are well-suited for all recently-investigated structural applications. For a construction sector serious about reducing the embodied carbon of building structures, this research supports the increased use of local timber for structural applications, reducing reliance on imported materials



Not Seeing the Wood for the Trees – Timber Construction for Biophilic Design

Timber as a sustainable resource
Timber as a light footprint building material
Laminated timber in organic design

Case Studies:

And Beyond Sandibe - Okavango Delta:

- Using timber in a sensitive landscape.
- Built to be impermanent
- Creating an organic design without concrete

Wilderness Bisate - Rwanda

- Building in a remote location
- The use of off site manufacture with Laminated timber
- Modular design, yet creating organic forms without concrete
- Lightweight footprint on a steep site.



Nick Plewman
Architect
Nicholas Plewman
Architects



The bright future and fascination of wood



Katharina Lehmann

CEO Blumer Lehmann



As the African continent faces unprecedented urban growth, the need for sustainable, resilient, and community-centric development is more critical than ever. This presentation will diverge from traditional architectural and engineering perspectives, focusing instead on the strategic design framework that disrupts the current built environment by integrating mass timber, particularly Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT), into the heart of built environment development.

Unlike conventional approaches, this talk will emphasize a holistic strategy rooted in four essential pillars: circularity, biophilic design, inclusivity, and sustainability. We will explore how these principles guide every stage of timber construction, from forest sustainability and resource management to the profound wellness effects of building with nature. By addressing not just the technical aspects but the broader human and environmental impacts, this approach fosters

a deep, community-driven response to using mass timber in the built environment South Africa.

The presentation will offer insights into creating an integrated ecosystem where timber is more than a material — it's a medium for social and environmental transformation. We will discuss how strategic design can bridge the gap between traditional construction practices and innovative, sustainable solutions, positioning mass timber as a key player in Africa's urban future. This approach not only supports the environment but also enhances human well-being and community cohesion, making it a powerful tool for change



Strategic Design as a Catalyst for Mass Timber in the Built Environment

As the African continent faces unprecedented urban growth, the need for sustainable, resilient, and community-centric development is more critical than ever. This presentation will diverge from traditional architectural and engineering perspectives, focusing instead on the strategic design framework that disrupts the current built environment by integrating mass timber, particularly Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT), into the heart of built environment development.

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Belinda Boyd Duncan

Founder and Strategic Director



Timber – “An Excellent Construction Material – The Only One – All Over the World”

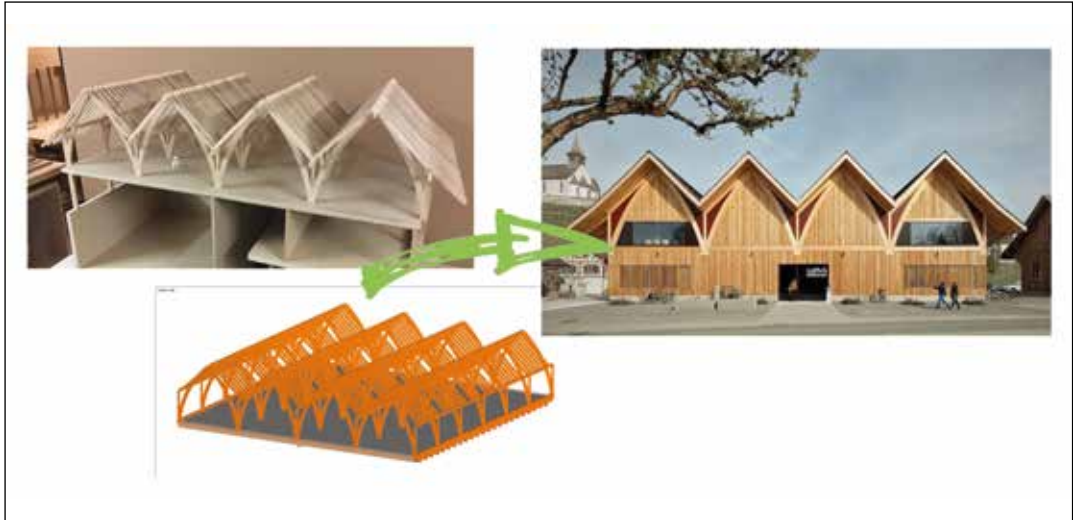


Christoph Meier
 construction engineer HTL/SIA

Wood is becoming the building material of this century. For sustainable and economical construction, all professionals are encouraged to work with this material. Traditional and proven connections are now manufactured with high precision using modern machinery. With help of extensive prefabrication in factories, fast and efficient assembly is possible. The comfort and pleasant indoor climate ensure satisfied customers. Many wood-based materials have become standard. Fire protection and building physics requirements can be easily met with proper application.

Architects and investors have embraced this “wood virus,” continuously inspiring us to achieve excellence and envelope further innovation.

Many examples of buildings in a wide variety of shapes and with diverse requirements exist, providing ample proof that building exclusively with wood is the way forward for the future.



Pioneering Sustainable Architecture with CLT

A reality check for the future of construction.

1. The Wake-Up Call – A Personal Story

2. Why CLT Matters: Rethinking Architecture's Impact – The Problem

- The hard truth about our industry:
- The myth of "green" buildings:
- The shift in mindset:

3. The CLT Revolution: Why Timber is the Future – The Solution

- Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) isn't just wood
- Key benefits (proven by research & case studies):
- Global case studies:

4. The South African Reality: Challenges We Must Overcome – The Barriers

- Challenge 1: Regulation is stuck in the past
- Challenge 2: The supply chain bottleneck
- Challenge 3: The market's short-sighted thinking

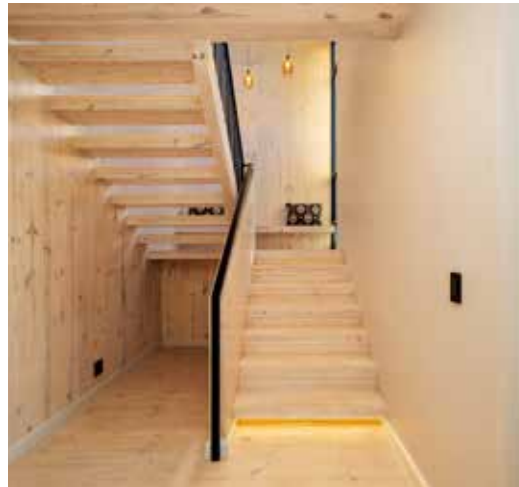
- Challenge 4: Professional responsibility & building code interpretation

5. A South African Case Study: Building a New Legacy – The Proof

- Showcase a completed CLT project

6. The Call to Action: A Reality Check for the Industry – The Future

- What needs to change?



Shawn Scriven

Principal &
Founding Member
NUDE/FUSE
Architects



Building and living in a Timber House in SA



Hannu Garny
Master of Ceremonies

Join me on a short journey. I will take you from the dream to live in a real solid wood timber house, the design, manufacture and the fun in building process and best of all, to live in a timber house in Stellenbosch, South Africa.



UCT Honours Architecture Student Project: Baphumelele Orphanage in Khayelitsha

“The University of Cape Town Honours Architecture program includes a half year “simulated office” elective, where students in small groups of around 5 students form mock architectural “practices” and prepare an architectural project from client engagement and conception up until full working drawing / production drawing stage.

This includes working on projects with exposure to real clients, consultants and organisations, as well as working with Quantity Surveying students to ensure the fundability of the project.

In 2024 the students had the privilege of working with the Baphumelele Orphanage in Khayelitsha as well as the Wood Student Organisation. This allowed the students to meet the amazing Mama Rosie Mashale and the hard working team that run the Baphumelele orphanage under huge financial constraints, and as such get to understand the orphanage and its specific needs in the local context.

Once they had fully researched and understood the societal and physical needs that the orphanage faced, the student groups then proposed a series of interventions to improve the existing orphanage facilities.

The Student Wood Foundation generously came on board provided support and some real life experience by exposing the students to how one goes about working with an ex-

ternal funder in order to see a project appropriately scaled and phased in order to allow a funder to realise the project.

The student groups all looked at utilising timber construction within their various proposals, leading to many in-studio discussions on the appropriate use and application of timber construction within the orphanages context in Khayelitsha.

In this, the 14th Wood Conference, the student groups will be sharing their various projects, outlining the specific needs that the project proposals met and voicing the specific lessons around timber construction that they learned in the process.

We very much wish to thank the Kuratle group and Student Wood Foundation for partnering with us on this journey. This partnership allowed the UCT architecture students to explore, challenge and understand how exposure to global insights, funding and methods of construction could play a pivotal role in future solutions to specific South African problems and contexts.”



Wood Student Foundation



WOOD Student Foundation

Timber vs Tradition: Comparing CLT, Steel, and Brick for a Greener Tomorrow



Kyle Bennett
Project Director

Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) is a sustainable, high-performance alternative in South African construction. It offers strength, efficiency, and environmental benefits, with applications in floors, walls, roofs, and other joinery. Comparisons to concrete, brick, and steel emphasize its benefits in cost, construction speed and environmental impact. Challenges like regulations and industry adoption are explored alongside opportunities for local growth.



XLAM

Where the Three T's Meet – Timber, Technology, and Tradition

This presentation explores the integration of locally sourced timber with both traditional and modern carpentry techniques. It will emphasise the importance of using local resources, affordable technology, and skilled labour to create sustainable timber structures. By examining specific case studies, we will explore the sourcing, procurement, manufacturing, processing, and treatment of timber, alongside advanced technologies such as drafting software, structural analysis programs, and modern woodworking machinery. When combined with the expertise of skilled local labour, this integrated approach guarantees exceptional results.

We will highlight how South Africa can set a global example in environmentally responsible timber construction by combining heritage techniques with forward-thinking innovation. Attendees will gain valuable insight into the vast potential of timber con-

struction, discovering strategies to achieve quality, sustainability, and cost-efficiency.

This session aims to inspire architects, industry professionals, and students to embrace locally driven solutions that honour cultural craftsmanship while pushing the boundaries of modern design. It will explore how South Africa can remain at the forefront of international trends in the timber construction industry by effectively utilising its available materials, technology, and labour, without compromising its rich natural and cultural heritage.



Abrie Visagie



The Fourth Revolution is here- Timber will be the Leader

The Fourth Revolution is here- Timber is the material for Revolutionary Change.

The World is changing at a pace that is astounding. The 1st and 2nd Industrial Revolution moved slowly but the 3rd and 4th Industrial Revolution moved with an incredible speed. The 4th Industrial revolution brought digital tools for manufacturing that has improved our capabilities to move from design

to manufacturing in the blink of an eye. Timber is the most sustainable material on the planet and will also become the material of choice in the 4th Industrial revolution. Welcome to the Future



Braam de Villiers
Co-Founder
Earthworld Architects and Interiors



Practising Wood: Embedding Live Experiments with Wood in Architecture Education

In this talk, James Benedict Brown presents insights of, Practising Wood in Architecture: Connecting Design, Construction and Sustainability, It will be an invaluable resource for architecture students, university teachers and practising architects, providing actionable knowledge on incorporating wood into design and construction.

Whether you're looking to develop practical applications of wood products or adopt more sustainable practices, this talk will inspire you to think about how wood can change the way we design buildings.



Prof. James Brown
Associate Professor



Swiss Innovations for the Next Level of Timber Construction – Feasibility Studies for Heavy Duty Timber Bridges



Bettina Franke

Head for Research and Marketing

Timbagroup
Timbagroup Holding AG

Timber construction has evolved significantly, driven by advances in materials, technology, and engineering methods. Switzerland has been at the forefront of this innovation, pioneering next-generation solutions that are pushing the boundaries of timber construction. This paper explores the feasibility of high-performance timber bridges, a promising area where sustainable practices meet the needs of infrastructure buildings. Timber bridges, long celebrated for their environmental benefits, now face the challenge of achieving the structural performance required for high loads, long spans, and durability. Swiss researchers and engineers are addressing these challenges with innovative approaches, including advanced materials, hybrid timber-concrete systems and new cross-sections.

This study focuses on feasibility assessments carried out through interdisciplinary research and case studies. It covers structural analysis, prestressed timber capacity, construction detailing, transport, and erection. By using state-of-the-art technologies such as parametric modelling and advanced manufacturing processes, these bridges can meet the requirements. The results highlight the integration of engineered wood products such as cross-laminated timber (CLT) and glulam with reinforcement techniques. In addition, sustainable practices in sourcing and construction are in line with global climate targets, reinforcing the role of

timber as a sustainable material for future infrastructure.

Innovation in heavy-duty timber bridges is not limited to technical solutions, but also addresses regulatory and economic frameworks to encourage wider adoption of infrastructure projects. The study concludes that with continued research and collaboration across disciplines, timber has the potential to revolutionize timber construction, providing a sustainable, efficient, and aesthetically pleasing alternative to traditional materials such as steel and concrete. This research contributes to the global discourse on sustainable construction and positions Switzerland as a leader in advancing timber engineering to meet the needs of modern infrastructure.



Kuratle Group Ecosystem – Delivering Added Value in Trade, Production, and Logistics

The Kuratle Group AG is an international, family-run company headquartered in Switzerland. Comprising a diverse portfolio of businesses, the group specializes in construction materials, timber products, transport, logistics, and related services. With a strong commitment to quality and innovation, the Kuratle Group AG has established itself as a trusted name in its industries, delivering excellence across its operations.

Wood Conference SA is a subsidiary of the Kuratle Group AG.

Kuratle Group companies



TICINORO



XLAM

meier
meierlogistik.ch



kuratlegroup.com



Please diarise
the upcoming events:
**15th WOOD
Conference:
24th February 2026**

Wood Conference SA PTY LTD

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