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'Passport' to access Europe

FRIM to collaborate with Trada on CE Marking and Q-Mark quality certifications

CE marking is a "passport" for products to pass freely throughout Europe without manufacturers having to conduct more testing or certification to prove their products comply with the legal requirements of each member state.

The Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) will work with Trada Technology Ltd (TTL), a construction products testing arm of the BM Trada Group as an approved testing laboratory for timber and construction products, intended for export to Europe, to ensure compliance to requirements for product safety, performance and quality.

The testing services form part of the certification process to demonstrate the product compliance with safety and quality requirements for the European markets and perhaps, the Middle East market.

The agreement to enable FRIM testing laboratories to collaborate with TTL on the CE Marking and Q-Mark schemes was signed recently at TTL's head office in Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom.

FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mohmod represented the Malaysian Forestry Research and Development Board (MFRDB) in signing the document, while TTL director Andrew Abbott signed for TTL.

Also present at the ceremony to witness the signing were FRIM

senior research officer Mohd Arshad Saru, TTL business development head Mark Wilkinson and principal consultant Hugh Mansfield-Williams.

Sawn timber for construction without the CE mark for the same market will be downgraded.

—DATUK DR ABD LATIF MOHMOD

The scope of testing against the requirements of BM Trada Certification (BMTc) Q-Mark/CE mark under this agreement will initially look at two areas — wood durability by the FRIM Wood Mycology Laboratory in accordance with EN 350; and strength testing of structural timber by the Timber Engineering Laboratory.

More FRIM laboratories may be added in the future.

"The durability of wood used in the plywood production will have to be tested in accordance with EN 350 or our durability rating will be downgraded. This will be a big slap to our higher quality plywood exported to the European Union (EU).

"Similarly, sawn timber for construction without the CE mark for the same market will be downgraded if not tested against similar

technical requirements stipulated for the CE marking. This will affect our sales to the EU, which is one of our major markets," said Abd Latif.

In efforts to boost the export of higher value-added wood-based products in line with the target set by the National Timber Industries Policy (NATIP) and help the country attain higher economic status by 2020, he said FRIM is exploring various means to contribute actively towards the achievement of these objectives.

One of the effective ways to push the Malaysian products up the value chain is to comply with international or regional standards for relevant products although compliance with many of such requirements may be challenging, both in terms of technicalities and cost.

For one such requirement, namely CE Marking for the European Community, products to be exported to Europe must be tested by approved testing laboratories, mostly located in Europe, whereby the Notified Body must be incorporated in Europe.

Abd Latif said it is only logical for FRIM, being a Corporate ISO-9001 compliant institution to assist in the testing and standards certification process.

He believes that once this is successfully executed, it will save the country's wood-based industry both time and money, besides strengthening FRIM's position in the international arena.

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Sharing a light moment: Abd Latif and Fira chief operating officer Phil Reynolds signing the extension agreement at the FIRA office in the UK.