



Invitation for Expression of Interest

Access East Africa's Emerging Engineered Wood Supply Market

**A Commercial Opportunity for Global
Buyers, Traders and Market
Intermediaries.**



Overview

East Africa is emerging as a new supply frontier for engineered wood products. Over the past five years, more than USD 300 million has been invested in modern plywood and veneer processing across the region, creating a growing base of export-oriented manufacturers seeking long-term international market partners.

For global buyers, traders, and market access specialists, this presents the opportunity to engage early with a developing supply region, shape commercial relationships with ambitious processors, and diversify sourcing strategies at a time when global supply chains are shifting.

This Expression of Interest invites experienced market participants to explore the commercial potential of East Africa's engineered wood sector and position themselves at the forefront of a fast-growing production base.



The Opportunity

Over the past five years, East Africa has seen substantial investment in industrial plywood and engineered wood processing, with more than USD 300 million invested in the sector. **Installed plywood production capacity is currently estimated at 1.1 million cubic metres per year, with projections reaching 2.5 million cubic metres by 2040.**

Many of these modern processing facilities are export-oriented and are actively seeking long-term international market partners.

For global market participants, this represents an opportunity to:

- Access a new and underexplored supply base
- Diversify sourcing strategies amid global trade shifts
- Develop early commercial relationships in a fast-growing production region
- Engage with processors investing in quality improvements and export readiness

Beyond commercial benefits, expanding export trade could raise sector-wide standards across production quality, labour practices, and compliance, helping accelerate the transformation of East Africa's forestry and wood products sector.

Why Source from East Africa?

East Africa offers several structural advantages as a platform for engineered wood production:



Competitive Plantation Resource

- High-yield plantation forests with strong growth rates
- Approximately 900,000 hectares of managed commercial forestry supporting raw material supply.



Strong Investment Momentum

- Rapid growth in industrial plywood and veneer processing capacity
- Significant foreign investment in manufacturing infrastructure



Competitive Production Base

- Cost-effective raw material supply from fast-growing plantations
- Competitive labour economics for industrial processing



Strategic Location

- Shipping advantages into Europe, the Middle East, and Asian markets
- Strong connectivity to major global trade routes



Increasing Sustainability Alignment

- Growing focus on traceability, responsible forestry, and certification compliance

Together, these factors position East Africa as an emerging global production hub for engineered wood products.

An Industry Upgrade is Underway

Firms are not waiting for demand signals — they are actively upgrading their capability to serve higher-value export markets.

Key developments include:

- Production and Quality Upgrading
- Industrial veneer drying systems
- Improved phenolic film application and finishing lines
- Enhanced sanding and surface preparation
- Strengthened factory quality management systems

Plantation Genetics and Raw Material Quality:

- Deployment of improved planting material with higher yield and better log quality
- Technical support programmes to improve log consistency and quality
- Direct out grower schemes and structured partnerships with smallholder growers
- Increasing emphasis on long-term resource planning to meet export-grade requirements

These improvements signal a strategic shift from regional commodity trade toward disciplined export manufacturing.



Our Offer: Connecting Global Buyers with East African Processors

Gatsby Africa is convening a group of experienced international buyers, traders, distributors, and market intermediaries to explore emerging supply opportunities in East Africa's engineered wood sector.

Selected participants will join a structured 6–8 month engagement programme that includes industry visits, targeted company meetings and facilitated discussions with leading processors across the region.

The programme is designed to enable informed commercial engagement between global market actors and a new generation of export-oriented processors.

What Participants Will Experience

Participants will gain direct, practical insight into East Africa's developing engineered wood production base through a series of structured engagements, including:

- Visits to industrial plywood and engineered wood processing facilities operating under real production conditions
- Direct engagement with company leadership and technical management teams
- Assessment of production capabilities, product specifications, and scalability
- Exposure to plantation resources and raw material supply systems
- Discussions with sector stakeholders on investment trends, sustainability developments, and export potential

These activities are designed to provide market participants with the information needed to evaluate the region as a potential sourcing platform.



Who Should Participate

We welcome expressions of interest from two categories of participants active in global engineered wood markets:

1. Buyers, Traders, Distributors, Brands and Retailers

We are particularly interested in engaging with experienced market participants who are active in international engineered wood markets and who are looking to explore new supply partnerships.

Ideal participants will typically have:

- Around 10+ years of experience in global engineered wood markets
- Active sourcing activity in North America, Europe, the Middle East, or Far East Asia
- Established networks of importers, distributors, retailers, or construction-sector buyers
- A demonstrated track record of trading plywood or engineered wood products at meaningful volumes
- Familiarity with certification, regulatory, and compliance requirements relevant to their markets
- A genuine interest in developing new supply partnerships in East Africa
- The ability and willingness to visit industrial production sites, including facilities located in more remote areas

2. Consultants and Market Intermediaries

We also welcome expressions of interest from experienced market intermediaries who facilitate international trade relationships in the engineered wood sector.

Participants in this category typically have:

- Deep expertise in global plywood and engineered wood trade
- Established buyer networks in key international markets
- Experience facilitating trade deals or supplier–buyer partnerships
- Strong understanding of compliance, certification, and market entry requirements
- The ability to provide structured and practical feedback on market readiness

Participation Conditions

To ensure an open and collaborative engagement, all participants will be expected to:

- Have no exclusivity agreements that would restrict engagement with multiple processors
- Respect the confidentiality of commercially sensitive information

Participation in the programme does not create any commercial obligations between participants and Gatsby Africa.

How to apply

Applicants should submit a brief EOI (maximum 2 pages) submitted in PDF format.

If representing a company please include your:

- Company name and registration details
- Corporate website
- Annual plywood / engineered wood trading volume
- Key product categories and specifications
- Existing sourcing markets and strategy
- Rationale for participation and desired outcomes
- Contact details of key representative

If representing an individual/consultant please include your:

- Full name and country of residence
- Company affiliation (if any)
- LinkedIn profile
- Resume
- Summary of track record in global plywood sourcing or trade facilitation
- Description of buyer networks
- Reference contacts

Please submit your Expression of Interest to: rfq@gatsbyafrica.org.uk

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis from March 2026.

Final submission deadline: 1 September 2026.

Questions

If you have any questions regarding this opportunity or the application process, please reach out to: aman.choda@gatsbyafrica.org.uk