

Eva-Last – Bamboo Composite Building Materials Manufacturer on Building a Greener Future



Marc Minne
CEO

Eva-Last

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEO CFO Magazine

CEO CFO: *Mr. Minne, what is the overall vision behind Eva-Last, and what is your focus right now?*

Mr. Minne: As a business, our vision remains steadfast, to be the leading global brand in sustainable building products, offering better choices through continuous innovation. We take great pride in converting post-consumer plastic waste materials and bamboo fiber into bamboo composite building materials which are

fully FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) Certified. Wood alternative materials are used in various applications from decking, siding, furniture, and various other applications.

CEO CFO: *What type of waste materials?*

Mr. Minne: The plastic waste materials that we recycle are high-density polyethylene, and polypropylene, those are the main categories. They would fall under a category called, "polyolefins". These are technical terms for those categories.

CEO CFO: *Why is bamboo a good base?*

Mr. Minne: Bamboo is one of the most efficient plants, if not the most efficient plant, in many respects. It's exceptionally fast growing, and it performs well in removing carbon from the atmosphere. Bamboo grows to full size within just three years. It is harvested from the base, so it is not destroyed, regrowing from its base again. It is also a strong and highly durable material, and it also has antibacterial properties.

CEO CFO: *What is the process of combining bamboo and waste materials?*

Mr. Minne: The incoming bamboo is processed and dried, forming a fiber and then is thoroughly screened for quality purposes. Then plastic waste such as recycled milk and shampoo bottles, for example, go into a washing and cleaning process where any labels are taken off and then they are cleaned and dried. Once they are dried, they get cut into smaller pieces and turned into a recycled plastic pellet.

We then take those two constituent materials and put them through a process to combine them with other additives to help increase the UV stability and the life of our product. We compound them into a new constituent called bamboo-plastic composite. That constituent then goes on to a profiling step where we would profile each of those components into various shapes, and those shapes are used for various construction applications.

CEO CFO: *Would you tell us about the range of products you have available today at Eva-Last?*

Mr. Minne: We have a wide range of products available. In our decking category, we have five different material technologies, so these would be different in their constituent makeup, differing in their aesthetics and performance properties. We also have cladding, known as VistaClad, available in two different material options, used for pergolas, louvers and screens for commercial applications. These materials have a lot of structural integrity and allow for versatility in design application.

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CEOCFO: *Where is your company located and where are Eva-Last products available now?*

Mr. Minne: Eva-Last is distributed to over 30 countries, globally. South Africa is one of our core bases and where our company started and that looks after the entire African continent as well as the Middle East, including Dubai and Israel. Europe is also a significant market for us, with Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and Western Europe being a big distribution hub for us. We also distribute into South America, to countries like Mexico, Argentina, Columbia, and others. We have now officially moved into North America with the acquisition of Fortress Deck. We will be looking after all of America's regions from our location here in Plano, Texas. The products are already available in the US and can also be found online on the ecommerce platforms like Lowe's and Home Depot nationwide. They are also available with distributors in around 22 states across the US, concentrated toward the west and central parts of the country. We also have distribution in pockets on the East Coast of the United States.

"Sustainability is a core value of our business. Our manufacturing processes use solar energy wherever possible which reduces our carbon footprint. This is a value that we hold ourselves to and our customers appreciate that. And certainly, the quality of our products is why we've continued to grow from strength to strength, because they perform and are backed by leading warranties. We design and manufacture our products to perform over decades, while remaining aesthetically uncompromised."
Marc Minne

CEOCFO: *Why is now the time to be in the US?*

Mr. Minne: One of the big founding cultural pillars of our company is innovation. We have been innovating at an increasing rate, especially over the last five years. With the COVID pandemic, a lot of our innovation projects were fast-tracked. We have such a wide range of products available to our partners across the world. We looked at how far we have progressed and the disparity to the product range to available in the US, where we only had two of the eight main categories represented. The other six are fully developed, growing and in some instances maturing in various other parts of the world. Therefore, it is the right time for to make a move into the US, offering our full range of products to the market. For us to do that, it made sense to move forward with an acquisition to fast-track our ability to get several products into the market.

Another significant factor was the opportunity to provide sustainable building solutions to significant parts of the market who understand composite decking but not necessarily well versed in other composite building materials. With the ever-increasing cost of natural hardwoods, and the scarcity of these resources globally, offering a more sustainable option benefits everyone's future. Trees which, in some cases have taken up to 200 years to grow, should not be cut down for any reason.

CEOCFO: *Are people coming to you primarily because of sustainability, or do they recognize the quality of the products?*

Mr. Minne: Sustainability is a core value of our business. Our manufacturing processes use solar energy wherever possible which reduces our carbon footprint. This is a value that we hold ourselves to and our customers appreciate that.

And certainly, the quality of our products is why we've continued to grow from strength to strength, because they perform and are backed by leading warranties. We design and manufacture our products to perform over decades, while remaining aesthetically uncompromised.

We also make sure that our products are price-competitive, certified, tested, and suitable for all indications. Sustainability does play a factor and I am willing to bet as time goes on, that sustainability becomes more important. More and more consumers are "going green" and looking into how the products are made.



CEOCFO: *Are there newer technologies and equipment or newer uses for raw materials that you can bring into play?*

Mr. Minne: We do have a digital product that we will bring to market which will be the first of its kind. This is a product that uses 3-D print technology to produce photo-realistic replicas of real woods. That is one of the more cutting-edge technologies in our space at this point. That product is called Pioneer and will be made available in the US before the end of 2023.

CEOCFO: *What is the competitive landscape?*

Mr. Minne: The adoption of wood plastic composite materials is strong in the United States. To my knowledge, it is a high decking per capita market globally. There are a lot of use cases for these products, but consumers have adopted the materials for their performance quality as well as for their sustainability. There is certainly competition in the United States, and we have a lot of respect for that.

We also see the market significantly growing year-on-year. I think as the market continues to grow, there will be more adoption of these materials. From a competitive landscape point of view, the competitors are growing and the excess in the market offers us the opportunity to join the market.

We do, however, also have significant distinctions in our brand and product portfolio, which could help to differentiate us in the market over time.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell me more about the acquisition, is that a typical way of growth for you, or is it more of a one-off?*

Mr. Minne: It is a bit of a one-off. I would not say it's not typical of the way we have shown growth before. Although no one knows what the future holds. The acquisition was of Fortress Deck, an exclusive partner of ours in the United States. Fortress was responsible for distributing our Eva-Last manufactured products under our Eva-Last product brands, like Apex and Infinity. However, the products were marketed under the umbrella brand of Fortress Building Products.

It made sense for us to pick up on all the good work that Fortress had done over the eight years. They had fantastic relationships and got the product into the market. They had good support of the product, and it made sense for us to

take on that good work as a foundational base, then with the view of growing our business and Eva-Last brand in the Americas.

CEOCFO: *What are some of the challenges in an acquisition?*

Mr. Minne: It is a complex situation and one with natural conflict in terms of interest between a buyer and a seller. Through a series of negotiations, we got to a fair resolution, one that benefited both parties. The contracting component is also a challenging part of acquisitions, which is a very detailed road to go down. It took more time than initially anticipated but overall, we are happy with the outcome.

CEOCFO: *Do people know the Ever-last name, do they know the product names and should they know Eva-Last?*

Mr. Minne: Globally, yes. In the United States, our product names are out there and people are familiar with them but in terms of the Eva-Last brand, it has not been represented in the United States until this point. That is a challenge that we acknowledge and one that we are excited for, taking the Eva-Last brand and making it known, and making it known for what it stands for, is equally important for us.

CEOCFO: *Why is Eva-Last an important company?*

Mr. Minne: Eva-Last is significant because of the products that it designs and manufactures and for the way it manufactures those products with an environmentally conscious ethos. Our products essentially replace wood and, in many applications, hardwood. Eva-Last keeps trees in the forest and it recycles post-consumer waste at the same time contributing positively to a greener future for all. Our products are also low-maintenance and safe, all while lasting for decades. Our products are also easy-to-use and install and with the labor costs in the US, our products are cost-effective options, saving on time and money. Our extensive product range also gives architects and designers, and property owners, versatile options that are sustainable.