

The advancements the composite industry over the past decade have been nothing short of remarkable. The construction of wind turbines highlights this great success story.

Now, as the world's industries look closer at the carbon footprint of the materials they use, I want to examine the use of the composite materials we use in wind turbines.

Currently, Balsa, PET, and PVC are the principal composite materials used in blade manufacturing. While there is a push to make PET and PVC from recycled origins, Balsa is a natural material from the cradle. Let us be clear; Balsa is the only composite material, which can be climate positive.

The corporate actors in renewable energy continue pushing a green agenda. This push should be applauded. However, as they talk green they are also working to displace Balsa with carbon-intensive, petroleum-based synthetics.

If we want to move towards a greener industry, should the trend not be in the other direction? Should we not use more Balsa? Balsa is the only truly natural material available to the composite industry. Furthermore, in many applications, Balsa offers superior technical performance compared to synthetic composites.

Blade manufacturers justify the move to more petroleum-based composites by saying they are increasing the percentage of recycled material in these composites. However, should the goal not be to replace petroleum-based materials from the starting gate?

As we all know, we need to decarbonize planet earth as fast as possible. There is little debate that wind is one of the important avenues to move towards decarbonization in the short term. However, examining wind turbine manufacturing, we have a choice to make. Are we going to continue to trend toward more carbon-rich composites, or are we going to move towards natural and renewable materials?

Balsa is a well-established and trusted composite material that is also natural. Through wise investment in Balsa plantations, we can create a stable, low carbon material source for the wind energy industry for the long term. In addition, Balsa generates a significant positive economic impact in the areas where it is grown as has and has been shown to alleviate pressure on the native forest. Balsa is better for the planet on a local and global scale.

Let us not hide behind the veil of recycled petroleum-based composites when we have the opportunity to use a proven, natural, low carbon material. We must commit to being forward thinking. We do not need to think about more synthetics. Let's think natural. Let's think Balsa!

