

Low or High Levels of Recycling?

Recycling and Product Committee

The issue

ENGOs call paper industry to “develop more 100% recycled paper products” and “rarely manufacture paper solely from virgin tree fibre” (*Vision*, January 2006). Similar discussions have emerged in EU on Green Public Procurement and eco-labels.

Paper industry is already recycling beyond any legal requirements. In total recovered paper (RP) utilisation amounted to 49.6m tonnes (cf. 48.3m tonnes of woodpulp) in 2007 (+1.4% from 2006).

The utilisation of RP has increased remarkably year by year but varies from product family to another: between 92.3% RP in case materials and 10.0% RP in graphic papers other than newsprint.

Technology for increasing recycling in most products exists, but meeting fitness for purpose requirements is limited by decreasing availability of suitable grades of RP.

Impacts on the industry

- Whereas the NGOs are not openly giving credit for e.g. packaging having high recycled content, they put negative focus on other products having less recycled content, ultimately aiming at reduced consumption of (all) paper products.
- Public focus is diverted from more important questions such as increasing separate collection and, as a consequence, from availability of recovered paper for recycling.

CEPI's position

- Sustainable paper production is based on complementarity: virgin fibres are sourced from sustainably managed forests; paper products made of virgin fibres are essential in enewing the recycling loop; and recycling helps keeping harvesting in forest sustainable.
- The scarcity of best quality recovered paper is not expected to ease. Industry is therefore utilising recovered paper efficiently in those applications where it is most competitive and gives best environmental benefits.
- Separate collection at the municipalities is advocated e.g. in the Waste Directive revision, for improved quality and availability of RP.
- Industry has renewed the commitment to reach higher levels of recycling (66% by 2010⁽¹⁾) and to improve recyclability. This commitment is supported by the whole paper value chain, as well as the European Commission DG Environment and DG Enterprise.
- Important work is invested in R&D to meet fitness for purpose requirements and eco-design (recyclability).

Additional information

- CEPI annual statistics: production, consumption and recycling of paper in Europe
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(1) European Declaration on Paper Recycling see www.paperrecovery.org

