Landfill and incineration restriction for recyclable paper

Increase the availability of paper for recycling in the EU

Summary

- As part of the Waste Target review, the paper industry proposes an EU-wide ban on landfilling/incineration of recyclable paper by 2020.
- Current EU paper recycling performance could increase by 10 million tonnes of paper and board if diverted from landfilling and incineration. Theoretically this incremental volume could result in a paper recycling rate of about 80% (71.7% was achieved in 2012).
- The policy context in the EU supports the notion of diverting recyclable materials from landfilling and incineration to recycling. However, without a legal requirement local authorities do not always make recycling a priority for these streams. The paper industry is committed to supporting them in doing so.

Issue

In 2012, about 78.5 million tonnes of paper were consumed in Europe (EU-27). Of this volume, 56 million tonnes were recycled. An estimated volume of 10 million tonnes of paper and board, potentially useful for recycling, is currently going into incineration or landfill. The industry sees this as a valuable source of material that could be put back into the production cycle – increasing the current EU recycling rate significantly – but needs legal support to enable this because waste management decisions are mostly made by local authorities. The paper industry is committed to supporting local authorities in improving the collection of paper for recycling.

Increasing the availability of paper for recycling will have a positive effect on job and value creation in the EU, both in the waste management sector as well as in the processing industries. An extra 10 million tonnes would result in a paper recycling rate of about 80% (71.7% in 2012).

A ban in landfill will bring about a coherent implementation of EU policy

European Commission communications emphasise that a resource-efficient Europe needs to turn its own waste into a resource so as to decrease its dependence on imports of raw materials, reduce the impacts on the environment and generate economic opportunities.

The Waste Framework Directive includes a waste hierarchy which clearly prioritises recycling over energy recovery and disposal. One of the key conclusions of the European Commission’s report on the Thematic Strategy on the Prevention and Recycling of Waste¹ is that “Significant margin for progress still exists beyond the current EU minimum collection and recycling targets”. “[An] optimal combination of economic and legal instruments should be promoted notably through landfill bans and by applying the producer responsibility concept to additional waste streams on the basis of a common European approach”.

The Road Map for a Resource Efficient Europe foresees: “By 2020, waste [will be] managed as a resource”. “Energy recovery is limited to non-recyclable materials, landfilling is virtually eliminated and high quality recycling is ensured”. Europe needs to step up its efforts so as to achieve this milestone for all recyclable materials by 2020.

CEPI believes that recyclable paper presents a material source for which the above milestone can be realistically met by 2020 at the latest. A specific ban on landfilling/incineration of recyclable paper could mark the first concrete step towards the elimination of incineration/landfilling of all recyclable materials by 2020 or at a later date where appropriate.

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CEPI aisbl - The Confederation of European Paper Industries
The Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI) is a Brussels-based non-profit organisation regrouping the European pulp and paper industry and championing industry’s achievements and the benefits of its products. Through its 18 member countries (17 European Union members plus Norway) CEPI represents some 520 pulp, paper and board producing companies across Europe, ranging from small and medium sized companies to multi-nationals, and 950 paper mills. Together they represent 23% of world production.

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