Stop the Madness - Shrink Waste and Recycle

Brussels, 11 June 2008

The Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI) agrees with the overall objective of a campaign launched by 50 environmental NGOs in Europe on Monday to reduce paper waste but refutes the qualification of irresponsible producers. In fact it believes those organisations themselves are irresponsible as this campaign misleads public perceptions by purposely mixing global and European issues reducing all problems to paper production.

“Nobody can disagree that there is an element of waste in our current consumption patterns and we applaud the NGOs for addressing it. But we would repeatedly encourage the NGOs to work with us to ensure that this waste is not lost but recycled so that paper can increasingly be produced from recovered fibres and that society as a whole plays its part.” said Teresa Presas, Managing Director of CEPI.

The European pulp and paper companies have very comprehensive programmes to reduce waste throughout their value chain. To produce paper in Europe, already 50% of the raw material used is recovered paper. From the other 50%, most of it is residues from wood used in saw mills, as well as branches and other thinnings of trees, coming out of normal sylviculture practices. Also 50% of the energy used in paper mills comes from renewable sources, mainly from burning the residues produced when wood is turned into pulp and the residues from sustainable forestry. All this makes the pulp and paper industry a unique example of how an industry can avoid producing waste and one that recycles at all stages. This translates into the truly sustainable use of resources.

When engaging in public advocacy, the NGOs must present the whole picture and not only selective aspects and data. In fact, the 2000 scientists who were granted the Nobel Peace Prize for their work on climate change concluded that to combat climate change effectively we need to work with forests in a sustainable way that produces balanced yields of timber, fibre and energy.
The International Energy Agency also established that the pulp and paper industry is indeed energy intensive but not carbon intensive due to its significant use of biomass.

“We cannot accept that these NGOs attribute to the European paper industry issues such as tropical deforestation, and CO₂ emissions in quantities three times higher than global aviation. Focussing on paper consumption is not going to stop climate change. It is essential that these 50 NGOs take their responsibility seriously, drop the propaganda war and work constructively with industry and consumers to change consumption patterns across all products and services”, continued Teresa Presas.

“Sustainability is an all embracing approach. By targeting the paper industry these NGOs are promoting other materials that do not have the same environmental credentials, and are contributing to the relocation of paper production to other areas of the world where environmental standards are less of a concern. This also implies, becoming responsible for the loss of thousands of jobs in Europe in particular in rural areas without any significant gain for the climate”, she concluded.

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CEPI aisbl - The Confederation of European Paper Industries

The European paper industry is one of the most competitive and sustainable in Europe producing 100 million tonnes of paper and board and 40 million tonnes of pulp annually. It provides directly 230,000 jobs and indirectly 2,950,000 jobs along the forest and paper chain. The paper sector makes a vital contribution to the quality of every day life, and through its commitment to research and innovation, to that of tomorrow.

CEPI champions the interests of the pulp and paper industry in Europe, representing those interests towards the European Institutions. It monitors, analyses and acts upon EU legislation and initiatives relevant to industry, communicating on the industry’s achievements and the benefits of its products. Through CEPI, the paper industry makes expert and constructive contributions to the official European consultation process with industry. CEPI directly represents the National Associations of the paper industry in 18 member countries across Europe.

Through its 18 member countries* CEPI represents 800 pulp, paper and board producing companies across Europe, ranging from small and medium sized companies to multi-nationals, and 1,200 paper mills. Together they represent 27% of world production.

(16 European Union members plus Norway and Switzerland)*