

Guidelines for Responsible Sourcing and Supply of Recovered Paper

Introduction

Paper recycling has a rich history and has been a respected industrial activity for more than a century. Under new environmental, health, safety and trans-frontier shipment regulations, this economic activity has acquired a civic and legal dimension, which when coupled with the developments in further regulations, demands an increase in responsibility from all parties involved in the recovery and recycling of paper.

Different recovered paper grades are used for manufacturing different paper and board products. In Europe, recovered paper purchasing is based on the European standard EN 643, European List of Standard Grades of Recovered Paper and Board, and these guidelines assume the use of that Standard. The “Recovered Paper Quality Control Guidelines” (CEPI and ERPA, 2004) also apply.

Successful paper and board recycling depends largely on the quality of recovered paper. As recovery rates increase, there is a tendency for the quality of the collected material to deteriorate. For this reason, a good working relationship between mills, merchants, and other involved parties is essential to ensure the responsible sourcing and supply of recovered paper.

Responsible collection of paper and board using efficient management and quality control systems, demands that all players involved recognise that they are handling a valuable secondary raw material. Separate collection (from other dry recyclables) should be strongly encouraged to maintain the quality of recovered paper.

Rapid technological development in the paper and board manufacturing and converting industries, increasing demands from final users of paper and board products, as well as existing and emerging legal requirements, require a more stringent approach towards the collection and handling of recovered paper.

Recovered paper collection systems vary according to country and source. Each source constitutes a different channel of collection, yielding different grades and qualities of recovered paper with different characteristics, which after separation (segregation at source) or sorting, are classified according to EN 643. As it would be impossible to give a description of all used paper collection systems in operation, the following guidelines for responsible sourcing of recovered paper list the steps that normally occur along the paper recovery chain. These guidelines also lay down additional steps paper mills should follow when producing paper and board for food contact.

These guidelines apply to any source and for any application. It may be that national legislation or practices require modifications to these guidelines.

1) Making used paper available for collection

The whole paper chain has a responsibility to make information available in order to facilitate responsible sourcing and recycling of recovered paper. This information can be different for the various types of consumer groups (e.g. business and industry outlets, households, (local) authorities) and shall at least cover the following:

- The importance of paper recycling and quality requirements of recovered paper;
- Which types of paper are suitable for recycling and which are not;
- The need to keep paper separate from unusable materials for paper recycling (as described in EN 643);
- Best practices for collection schemes;
- Adherence to all national and international environmental legislation with respect to storage and transportation.

2) Collection

- Bins and containers must be suitable for retaining paper and board for recycling in order to maintain quality requirements.
- Separate collection of paper should be strongly encouraged to maintain the quality of recovered paper. Recovered paper originating from multi-material collection systems, containing only material of a valuable recyclable nature, has to be specifically marked (see EN 643). It is not permissible to mix unmarked collections with other recovered paper and board.

- Recovered paper for recycling has to be collected separately from refuse (see EN 643). Collected paper segregated from refuse sorting stations is not suitable for use in the paper and board industry (see EN 643).
- The following paper streams are prohibited as raw materials for the production of paper and board intended to come into contact with foodstuffs by the Council of Europe Resolution¹:
 1. Contaminated waste paper and board from hospitals;
 2. Recovered paper and board which has been mixed with garbage and subsequently sorted out;
 3. Used stained sacks which have contained for example chemicals and foodstuffs;
 4. Covering materials, such as paper used for covering furniture during repair and painting work;
 5. Batches mainly consisting of carbonless copy paper;
 6. Waste paper from households containing used hygienic paper, such as used kitchen towels, handkerchiefs and facial tissue;
 7. Old archives from libraries, offices etc., if they contain PCBs.
- Recovered paper and board from households collected separately from other materials, if it is to be used in the production of food contact grades, must be inspected and if necessary sorted.

¹ Council of Europe Resolution AP (2002) on paper and board materials and articles intended to come into contact with foodstuffs, Technical Annex 3. The Council of Europe Resolution is a recommendation to its member countries and is not legally binding. Various European and national regulations are applied in paper production.

3) Sorting-stations

- Equipment and facilities are either used exclusively for sorting paper and board or, when used for sorting other materials, must be appropriately cleaned before sorting paper and board.
- Health, environment and safety procedures must apply.
- Adequate pest-control measures are taken.
- Sorted paper is properly classified according to the recovered paper grades established in EN643 or other agreed specifications.
- All paper mills, which produce paper and board that comes in direct contact with foodstuffs should be identified to the supplier.
- “Best Practice Recovered Paper Baling Conditions” are applied.

4) Transportation

- All transportation should conform to national and international transport and customs legislation.
- Transport conditions should be suitable to maintain quality requirements.
- Recovered paper for a mill producing paper and board, which comes into contact with foodstuffs, is to be clearly identified on the transport documents.

5) Recovered paper management systems

- Suppliers of recovered paper should have a quality management system or nationally accredited system in place, which details how the above mentioned (items 2-4) are managed.

6) Purchasing of recovered paper

- The relationship between suppliers of recovered paper and paper mills should take place according to the “Recovered Paper Quality Control Guidelines”.
- Any paper mill producing paper, which comes into contact with food, shall advise its suppliers of this fact.
- If recovered paper from households is to be used for the production of food contact grades of paper and board it is strongly recommended that it is collected separately from other dry recyclables. For such applications the industry’s intention is to phase out the use of material collected with other dry recyclables as soon as possible.
- Suppliers to mills have to be assessed.
- Purchaser can check suppliers’ management-system certificates and keep a record of suppliers’ performance. The mill will make information available to assist the supplier.

7) Mill gate

- The delivery is checked against agreed conditions or according to the “Recovered Paper Quality Control Guidelines”.
- Control upon reception of raw materials must be carried out.
- Claims have to be made on receipt of the delivery; the supplier must have the chance to inspect the material together with the mill-staff and to take it back, if necessary.
- If there is a reason to believe that the lot includes paper from prohibited sources as defined under the Council of Europe resolution on food contact, the whole load will be taken back.

8) Storage at paper mills

- Appropriate cleanliness and hygiene are to be maintained in raw material storage areas.
- Adequate pest control measures are taken.
- Where a mill produces both food and non food contact grades, appropriate measures must be in place to ensure that only the appropriate grades of recovered paper are used to produce food contact material.

9) Quality management at paper mills

Mills would be expected to include procedures covering paper within their quality management systems, including:

- Purchasing;
- Receipt;
- Quality control;
- Storage of recovered paper and;
- Assessment of new recovered paper suppliers.

Mill sites producing paper and board intended to come into contact with foodstuffs must be operating the Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) for paper and board for food contact.