Press release

Circularity is a “no regret option” for the European industrial transition: Circular low carbon forest-based industries are a strategic value chain

Brussels, 11 March 2020

The Green Deal has to be translated into a business case, strengthening sustainable and circular industrial value chains in Europe, and ensuring that they are considered of strategic importance.

For that reason, Cepi, on behalf of the European Paper Industry, applauds the increased support to low carbon value chains in the “New approach to industrial policy” released by the European Commission on 10 March.

“With the proper regulatory framework, the European paper industry together with the forest-based industrial value-chain can become one of the main forces driving the transition to a competitive, low-carbon and circular economy” said Jori Ringman, Cepi Director General.

The European paper industry is already working together with the Forest-based value-chain, to deliver products made from sustainable, circular and regenerative raw materials to European consumers and export markets.

We also recognize the importance of the new governance method of building inclusive partnerships, making sure that national authorities and industry work closely together. Member States and the EU have to accompany the industrial transition to climate neutrality by securing clean and affordable energy for all industrial sectors with the adequate infrastructure – it is a prerequisite for deep emission reductions.

As an industry deeply committed to recycling, Cepi also recognizes that the Circular Economy Action Plan published today 11 March goes in the right direction by identifying key areas to enhance recognition of sustainable products and incentivise waste policies that will close existing gaps in the recycling loops.

We support a reinforced waste policy in support of circularity and agree with the identification of packaging as a priority sector for the Circular Economy Action Plan.
Design for recycling is a pre-requisite for the circularity of fibre-based products. We are fully engaged to future-proof the recyclability of paper products with recommendations for the value chain, like the European “Paper-based Packaging Recyclability Guidelines”. Applying these guidelines will allow the entire value chain to innovate on packaging functionality while keeping the recyclability of paper packaging in mind, as a core preoccupation.

In the same spirit we have convened the new fibre-based value chain alliance 4evergreen, a forum to engage and connect industry members from across the fibre-based packaging and food service value chain, from paper and board producers to packaging converters, brand-owners and retailers, technology and material suppliers, waste sorters and collectors, and more.

In the context of recent waste import restrictions by China, the European paper industry is set to recycle even more in Europe, as it makes additional investments in paper recycling capacities. The paper industry is already recycling 49 million tonnes of paper in Europe (2018 data) and the amount has been growing since 2000. For the investments to happen, the European paper industry material must be separately collected\(^1\) and reach the mills with the right level of quality.

Therefore, the Circular Economy Action Plan correctly identifies the facilitation of EU internal shipments of waste and secondary raw materials as well as the convergence of waste collection systems as priorities.

We look forward to taking full advantage of the new industrial strategy and circular economy action plan. Concretely, this means manufacturing sustainable forest-based solutions made from renewable raw materials, making our production processes even more efficient and our value chains perfectly fit for a climate-neutral Europe.

\(^1\) Cepi has already provided guidance on separate collection for paper and board.
Note to editor:

For more information about Cepi or its position on the Circular Economy Action Plan and the EU Industrial Strategy, please contact Claire Couet, Public Affairs & Communications Director, at c.couet@cepi.org.

About CEPI:

Cepi is the European association representing the paper industry. We offer a wide range of renewable and recyclable wood-based fibre solutions to EU citizens: from packaging to textile, hygiene and tissue products, printing and graphic papers as well as specialty papers, but also bio-chemicals for food and pharmaceuticals, bio-composites and bioenergy.

We are a responsible industry: 92% of our raw materials are sourced in Europe and certified as sustainable, 91% of the water we use is returned in good condition to the environment. We are the world champion in recycling at the rate of 71.6%. At the forefront of the decarbonisation and industrial transformation of our economy, we embrace digitalisation and bring 20 billion value addition to the European economy and €5.5 billion investments annually.

Through its 18 national associations, Cepi gathers 500 companies operating 895 mills across Europe and directly employing more than 180,000 people.