

## Press release

# Forest fibre could be the future of Europe's textile industry

Brussels, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022

*As highlighted in the Communication 'an EU strategy for sustainable textile' released today by the European Commission, the textile industry is a resource-intensive sector. Textile consumption is the fourth highest pressure category in the EU in terms of use of primary raw materials and water, and it is also its fifth source of greenhouse gas emissions.*

As a bio-product, **forest fibres used in textiles, such as viscose or lyocell fibres, have the potential to avoid the significant environmental impacts.** Wood-based cellulose fibres are 100% renewable, biodegradable, and most importantly recyclable. They also have a low water footprint during their growth phase and do not lead to soil depletion, nor do they compete with food production. Also, during the processing and finishing of textiles, using wood-based fibres can lead to reduced chemical and water footprints. Cepi welcomes the approach taken by the Commission in the EU strategy for sustainable textiles to ensure that renewable and recyclable materials are the cornerstone of a circular and Europe-based textiles industry.

It is estimated that less than 1% of all textiles worldwide are recycled into new products. Structural weaknesses regarding textile waste collection need to be systemically addressed within the EU for a more circular future. A big challenge for recycling in the textile industry is the separation of different materials in blended fabrics. With their extensive know-how in the recycling of fibres, and a recycling rate of 73.9%, **companies in the pulp and paper sector already have the experience and technology to propose solutions to the textile industry.** Recent industry innovations make it possible to recycle used textiles and to preserve their material value, while separating synthetic fibres from cotton or other plant-based fibres in mixed textiles.

To engage in a systemic shift within the textile industry and make the best out of the pulp and paper industry's knowledge, the European Union will need to scale-up investments in infrastructure for the collection, sorting and recycling of textiles. For this reason, **Cepi stands ready to support the European Commission's work on common industrial technology roadmap on circularity, which aims at streamlining industrial research and innovation, including on textile recycling.** The Commission will also need to provide the right regulatory framework to increase the sorting and recycling rates of textiles and incentivise the uptake of renewable materials from sustainable sources.

Despite a growing social trend for sustainability in the EU textile and fashion industry, Europeans consume on average 26 kg of textiles per person per year - a significant share of which is coming from third countries. **A forest fibre-based textile industry could be homegrown, contribute to Europe's strategic independence in raw materials, and support European competitiveness.**

Already a purveyor of green jobs, the pulp and paper industry is investing in Europe twice as much as average manufacturing industries and has already decoupled economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions. It could feed a huge untapped potential within the European textile industry to foster sustainable economic growth, and build more local, resilient and decarbonised supply chains for the future of the European textile industry.

**Quote:**

*“Europe has the potential to become the global hub for new sustainable textile industry. Sourced, manufactured and recycled in Europe, with European technology, forest-based textiles can carry the potential of rolling out a global renaissance of sustainable fashion. Anything you can do from fossil raw material you can also do from wood in a way that is better for the planet, including sustainable textiles.”*

Jori Ringman, Director General – Cepi (Confederation of European Paper Industries)

**Notes to editor:**

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For more information on textiles and the pulp and paper industry, watch the micro-documentary:

[Textiles: part of sustainable pulp and paper industry by Cepi, Sodra, Sappi, Metsa Spring & Lenzing.](#)

For background on forest fibres:

[All green products start with #GreenSource: climate neutrality with Europe's forest fibre industry](#)

For more statistics on the paper and pulp industry in Europe and worldwide, please refer to the latest version of our yearly report and preliminary report:

[Key statistics 2020](#)

[Preliminary statistics 2021](#)

**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 speciality papers, but also bio-chemicals for food and pharmaceuticals, bio-composites and bioenergy. We are a responsible industry: 85% of our raw materials are sourced in Europe and certified as sustainable, 92% of the water we use is returned in good condition to the environment. We are the world champion in recycling at the rate of 73.9%. At the forefront of the decarbonisation and industrial transformation of our economy, we embrace digitalisation and bring 18.5 billion value addition to the European economy and €4.5 billion investments annually. Through its 18 national associations, Cepi gathers 495 companies operating 895 mills across Europe and directly employing more than 180,000 people.

More information about our sustainability performance [here](#).