
Press release

Press release: Europe's pulp and paper sector has shown resilience in 2024, but high energy prices and macro-economic uncertainties remain an issue

Brussels, 18 February 2025

Tracking a global economy still recovering from successive shocks and post-Covid stock adjustments, Europe's pulp and paper sector had a positive year in 2024, as shown by the [Cepi preliminary statistics report](#) published today. But looming global trade wars, geopolitical instability, and new EU energy and industry policies to be unveiled this month, hold the potential for profound impact.

Paper and board consumption increased by 7.5% in 2024 and production followed suite, growing by 5.2%, after two years of contraction. The sector outperformed global competitors by a small margin, with global Paper Board production also recovering.

This only partly offsets a negative trend in 2023, where production fell by 13%, and it remains at far lower levels than before the Covid pandemic. Mirroring these trends, Paper for Recycling (PfR) utilisation increased by 4.1% in 2024, after two successive years of decline, while still remaining lower than at its 2021 peak. PfR utilisation remains however at far higher levels than in the early 2000s, **having grown by 5 million tonnes** during this period despite the decreased consumption and production.

Correlated to the sector's recycling performance, the increase was mainly driven by packaging, an engine of growth for the past decades. Production of packaging grades, high users of paper for recycling, has increased by 6.5% compared to 2023. It **now accounts for nearly two thirds of total paper & board production**, at 63.0%.

Demand for graphic paper, which includes newsprint, and printing and writing paper, grew by 5.2% in 2024, its **first year of expansion since 2010**. The demand for tissue paper rebounded with a 5.8% growth rate. Energy prices remain two times higher than before the Covid crisis, weighing on European industry's competitiveness, and especially on the most energy intensive grades.

High production costs, including energy, are currently at the heart of a European debate, as the EU Commission prepares to publish new documents clarifying its plans to restore manufacturing sector's competitiveness and boosting circular economy and bioeconomy in a context where the European Union's growth rates remain stubbornly below other advanced economies' average. **Production across all EU manufacturing sectors is still 10% lower than in 2021**, with pulp and paper being no exception.

As trade tensions intensify, it is important to recall that the EU and the US have been large trade partners, benefiting from a relatively stable environment with no import tariffs on both sides for the past 20 years. While the EU imports from the US a lot of pulp, it exports a lot of paper and board.

Exports overall increased in 2024, notably by **16,8% with North America**. Exports accounted for 21% of P&B production in 2024 and Europe's pulp and paper's global trade balance is by far positive, being one of the top EU manufacturing sectors by this measure.

Download [Cepi's preliminary statistics report for 2024](#).

Quotes by Jori Ringman, Cepi Director General

“In a cyclical industry, we see positive signs of growth in the pulp and paper sector. Whether this growth can be sustained depends in part on what EU Institutions will do to allow us to compete on an equal footing, not only with other pulp and paper producers in the world, but also with industries based on fossil materials.”

“The expected Clean Industry Deal, the Affordable Energy Plan and Bioeconomy Strategy, combined with advancing defossilisation, circular economy and simplification of EU regulation are elements that the pulp and paper industry now needs in order to bring back growth and investments to Europe.”

Notes to editor:

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For more information on Industry commitments,
please consult:

[Cepi’s Sustainable Product Pledge](#)

[Cepi’s Pledge to support the 3 billion trees initiative](#)

[The 4evergreen cross-industry alliance](#)

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: 91% 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 79.3%. 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 19 national associations, Cepi gathers 480 companies operating 856 mills across Europe and directly employing more than 175,000 people.

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