

A Common Vision for Transforming the European Paper Industry

As agreed at the Forest Movement Europe meeting 2 October 2005¹

Long-term Vision

We, the undersigned, want to see a future Europe that consumes dramatically less paper than at present, with all that paper made by an industry that is less reliant on virgin tree fibres, maximises use of recycled materials, respects local people's land rights, provides employment and has social impacts that are beneficial, conflict-free and fair. We want to see all of Europe's paper being made from responsibly- and sustainably-sourced fibres, using entirely renewable energy, with water that is as clean after paper production as before, producing zero waste and zero emissions.

Working towards the Vision

In order to work towards this long-term vision, this document sets out an agenda for the transformation of the industry within the next 10 years.

Paper has played an important role in civilisation, and the history of paper-making is one in which the industry has continuously evolved to meet challenges and achieve entrepreneurial development and technological change. The twenty-first century is bringing new challenges to the paper industry as producers and consumers become more aware of the environmental and social impacts of industrial activity and become committed to a sustainable future.

Europe's overall ecological footprint² is 2.2 times its biological capacity, and has risen by 70% since the early 1960s. The footprint of all individual EU countries is above the world's sustainable level, which indicates the need to reduce consumption across all sectors of the economy, to less than half current levels.

Although paper products yield many benefits, European society's growing demand for paper leaves an unacceptably large ecological footprint on the planet. Some projections by industry show per capita paper consumption growing significantly in the next 10 years³. Europe currently consumes 205kg of paper per capita, four times the world average. Europe consumes 80 million tonnes of paper each year, 25% of world consumption.

The paper industry has a special responsibility, due to its scale, location and resource use, to transform its production and consumption patterns towards processes that are ecologically and socially responsible both within Europe and in other locations. Europe is a large importer of pulp and paper from other regions, and European paper companies are also expanding their production and sales operations globally.

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² See <http://www.ecologicalfootprint.com/>

³ Source, Jaakko Poyry.

An Urgent Need

Europe's production, consumption and waste of pulp and paper results in many negative social and environmental impacts across the planet. In some cases the pulp and paper industry endangers peoples livelihoods and has negative impacts on the health, well-being and stability of local communities. Paper production generates air and water pollutants, waste products and the gases that cause climate change. It is also one of the largest users of raw materials, including fresh water, energy and forest fibres.

Forests are essential for wildlife habitats, biodiversity conservation, climate protection, clean air and water, livelihoods of local people, indigenous peoples' cultural survival, spiritual experience and recreation, yet globally many old-growth and other endangered and high conservation-value forests are being logged for fibre. In some places forests or other natural ecosystems are being cleared for conversion to plantations with limited ecological value, employing toxic chemical herbicides and fertilisers, and with devastating consequences for the local people. Continuing growth of the plantations sector risks exacerbating these problems.

Ninety percent of the fibre used in paper-making currently originates in forests and plantations, but there are significant opportunities to reduce the impacts on forests through more sustainable forest management and through recycling and the use of alternative agricultural fibres.

The paper industry was a major focus of pressure from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) some 10 years ago and some progress was made, however significant problems remain that still require solutions, and in many cases pollution problems have been exported. Major procurers of paper are concerned about the lifecycle of the products they buy, and NGOs see the paper industry as a major player with significant interacting impacts on communities around the world, on forests and fresh water and on the global climate.

The paper industry has a tradition of innovation and can, indeed must, rise to this challenge.

Goals For Transforming Paper Production, Trade and Use

We, the undersigned NGOs, call upon the paper industry, consumers, governments and non-governmental organisations to adopt and to commit to urgent actions towards the following goals, which apply to the entire paper life-cycle⁴:

- reduce paper consumption;
- reduce reliance on virgin fibre;
- ensure social responsibility;
- source fibre responsibly;
- ensure clean production.

Reduce Paper Consumption

- Eliminate excessive and unnecessary paper consumption.
- Develop and promote creative and innovative systems and technologies that reduce the consumption of fibre and maximise efficiency.
- Proactively work with consumers to educate them to reduce paper consumption.

⁴ Lifecycle includes the entire production system including: fibre sourcing, pulping, production, transportation, use, multiple recycling and disposal.

Reduce Reliance on Virgin Tree Fibre

- Maximise post-consumer recycled fibre content in paper and paper products and develop more 100% recycled paper products.
- Maximise recyclability and proactively support capture and improved collection systems of recyclable waste paper.
- Maximise fibre efficiency through lowering basis weights of paper and product design.
- Increase the use of other recovered materials (e.g., agricultural residues and pre-consumer recycled) as a fibre source in paper.
- Rarely manufacture paper solely from virgin tree fibre.

Ensure Social Responsibility

- Respect human rights, and comply with and proactively develop fundamental employment and social standards⁵ and relevant international conventions⁶ for the protection of human rights.
- Ensure free and prior-informed consent of local people, through meaningful and culturally appropriate consultation methods, in the areas from which raw materials originate and where production takes place.
- Recognise and respect indigenous peoples' legal and customary rights to control their traditional lands and protect their cultural identity.
- Respect local communities' rights to a healthy environment, and rights to participation as a primary stakeholder in land-use planning.
- Ensure workers', including subcontractors' workers', rights to beneficial employment and a safe working environment.
- Reverse the trend towards ever-larger industrial units and promote community-ownership and the development of a diversity of small- and medium-sized enterprises in the paper sector.
- Respect and support local economies on the basis of a long-term social and environmental vision built with local communities and businesses.

Source Fibre Responsibly

- End sourcing of wood fibre from unknown, illegal or controversial sources, suppliers or operations.
- End the use of wood fibre that threatens endangered and high conservation value forests and ecosystems.⁷
- End the use of fibre that comes from conversion of natural forest or other high conservation value ecosystems into plantations for paper fibre⁸.
- Source any virgin wood fibres for paper from forest managers that have credible, independent, third-party certification for employing the most environmentally and socially

⁵ ILO Fundamental Work Rights: freedom of association, the right to organise and to collective bargaining; the abolition of forced labour, the elimination of child labour; and the prohibition of discrimination in employment and occupation (equality of opportunity and treatment).

⁶ ILO Convention 169 for the Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, General Declaration of Human Rights (1948), UN Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966), International Agreement on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), International Agreement on Civil and Political Rights (1966).

⁷ Some forests are so rare, threatened or ecologically vulnerable, or are of such global biological or cultural importance that any logging or commercial use could irreparably damage their conservation value. See 'Wye River' discussion document *Endangered Forests: High Conservation Value Forests Protection – Guidance for Corporate Commitments* for additional details, <http://forestethics.org/article.php?id=1176>, and see Frequently Asked Questions for more on high conservation value forests.

⁸ Some conversion may be allowed when it has been agreed within a comprehensive HCVF process with transparent stakeholder involvement.

responsible forest management and restoration practices. Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is currently the only international certification programme that comes close to meeting this goal.

- Develop the use of alternative crops for paper if comprehensive and credible analysis indicates that they are environmentally and socially preferable to other virgin fibre sources.
- Eliminate industrial use of chemical pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers in fibre production, and apply integrated pest management.
- Refuse fibre from genetically modified organisms.
- Substitute 'near for far', using locally-sourced fibre and minimising transportation wherever possible.

Ensure Clean Production

- Minimise energy consumption and use only renewable energy sources.
- Use the best available technology to minimise the use of water, energy, chemicals and other raw materials and minimise emissions to air and water, solid waste and thermal pollution.
- Eliminate toxic waste and mill discharges.
- Reduce brightness of products to reduce levels of bleaching.
- Eliminate the use of chlorine and chlorine compounds for bleaching.
- Design production systems to minimise waste by maximising reusability and recyclability of end products.
- Ensure production systems do not hinder local food production, or jeopardise environmental services or ecosystem assets, such as water quality, and their equitable use.

Working Together Towards a Solution

We, the undersigned, come together for positively transforming paper production and consumption. We understand that achieving these goals may involve significant trade-offs and that further research is needed on some issues. We also recognise the unique and complementary role that each company, organisation, government and individual plays in moving the paper industry towards social and environmental sustainability.

We call upon governments and industry to implement this vision with full transparency, by:

- developing binding policies and targets and committing to a time-bound process for achieving these goals;
- committing to transparent, regular, publicly available and comprehensive reporting on progress on these goals, using the Global Reporting Initiative guidelines as a framework.
- demonstrating and reporting on chain of custody for all products;
- ensuring that all end-products are labelled to inform consumers about fibre content and to give locations where information about sources and production methods is publicly available.

We commit to:

- campaign against socially and environmentally damaging pulp and paper industry activities;
- monitor the progress of industry towards this vision;
- develop collaboration/dialogue between NGOs, progressive industry and other institutions;
- encourage governments to develop legislative and fiscal measures consistent with the vision;
- work with organisations from regions outwith Europe that are impacted by the European paper industry;
- articulate responsible procurement and purchasing guidance.