



PAPER PRODUCTION AND SUSTAINABLE FORESTS

The paper industry depends on, and promotes, sustainable forest management to provide a reliable supply of wood fibre, the key raw material for its products. Well-managed forests bring multiple benefits for society, such as livelihoods, ecosystem services and biodiversity. European forests, from where the region's paper mills source over 90% of their wood fibre, have been growing by an area equivalent to 1,500 football pitches every day. Over 70% of this forest area is certified to FSC or PEFC standards, thanks in part to the support of the print and paper industry.

Forest products such as paper create an incentive for sustainable forest management.

Cellulose fibre is the primary raw material for papermaking. Of the fibre used by the European pulp and paper industry, 46% comes from woodpulp and 54% from paper for recycling.¹

In principle, cellulose fibre can be obtained from almost any plant and some non-wood fibre is used in the industry, such as agricultural residues. However, wood is the dominant source because of its renewable and recyclable nature, technical properties, relative low cost and all-year-round availability.

“ Forest stewardship, motivated by a commercial interest in maintaining wood supply, can help protect vulnerable forests from illegal logging, encroachment or conversion to farmland. ”

WWF, Living Forests Report, 2012

Commercial interest in maintaining wood supply can promote good forest stewardship. Production forests can provide buffers for protected areas and help to protect vulnerable forests from illegal logging, encroachment or conversion to farmland.

However, the capacity of production forests to provide ecosystem services and sustain timber yields varies greatly depending on how well they are managed.²

Well managed forests bring multiple benefits for society.

Forests directly affect the livelihoods of 20% of the global population and can have recreational and cultural importance too. They provide products and renewable energy as well as natural carbon capture and storage and other ecosystem services such as controlling floods and droughts, reducing erosion risks and protecting watersheds that are a source of our water. Forests are also home to 80% of terrestrial biodiversity.

As part of well-planned landscapes, managed forests play a key role in reducing pressures on natural forests and make a meaningful contribution to conserving biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being.³

European Forests have been growing by over 1,500 football pitches every day.

Between 2005 and 2015, European forests grew by 44,160km² - that's an area larger than Switzerland and equivalent to over 1,500 football pitches of forest growth every day.⁴

This has been due to afforestation (e.g. planting and seedling of trees on land that was not previously forested) and through natural expansion of forests such as on abandoned land.⁵

Forest area amounts to 215 million hectares in Europe, accounting for 33% of total land area, and other wooded lands cover an additional area of 36 million hectares. In comparison to other regions in the world, only South America has a higher percentage of forest cover (49%) than Europe.

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“ Forest area in Europe keeps increasing, offering great opportunities for mitigating climate change as well as for the development of the forest sector and its transition to a green economy. ”

Forest Europe, 2015.

Semi-natural forest accounts for 87% of Europe's forest cover, with plantations a further 9%. Around 80% of the total forest area is available for wood supply yet net annual growth exceeds fellings in all European regions. The total area of forests that are protected (for biodiversity or landscape reasons) is over 47 million hectares and the area of forests undisturbed by man is about 4% of the land area.⁶

Most deforestation happens in the tropics, with agriculture being the primary cause.

According to WWF, more than 80% of deforestation between 2010 and 2030 is likely to happen in just 11 'deforestation fronts'. Most of these are in the tropics, where rates of forest loss are expected to be highest.

The most common pressures causing deforestation and severe forest degradation are agriculture, unsustainable logging, mining, infrastructure projects and increased fire incidence and intensity. However, in some areas, conversion of forest to plantations for woodpulp is an important secondary cause of deforestation. Forest degradation also still occurs in temperate countries, through replacement of native forests with plantations of commercial species, and because of increased fire, pollution, invasive pests, poor management and over-exploitation.⁷ This highlights the ongoing importance of responsible forest management.

The print and paper industry is a major supporter of forest certification.

Forest certification provides assurance that the wood in a product comes from a well-managed forest, with an audited chain of custody running from the forest floor to the customer.⁸ Globally, 432 million hectares (about 11% of all forest area) is certified as well managed, much of this in North America and Europe.⁹

“ Over 90% of wood fibre used by the European paper industry originates from Europe. ”

CEPI statistics, 2016.

The European paper industry supports forest certification with widespread procurement of certified wood fibre and pulp and the use of FSC and PEFC labels (the two most prominent forest certification schemes) on products. The vast majority (over 90%) of the European paper industry's wood fibre originates from within Europe, a region where more than 70% of the forest area is certified as being well-managed. About a quarter of chain of custody certificates in Europe (around 7,000) are estimated to relate to paper and printed materials, demonstrating that the sector is a major supporter of forest certification.¹⁰

Sources

1. CEPI, Key Statistics, 2016.
2. WWF, Living Forests Report, Chapter 4, 2012.
3. World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2015.
4. Two Sides analysis of UN FAO data, 2016.
5. European Environment Agency, 2016.
6. Forest Europe, State of Europe's Forests, 2015.
7. WWF, Living Forests Report, Chapter 5, 2015.
8. WWF, Living Forests Report, 2012.
9. UNECE/FAO, Forest Products Annual Market Review, 2017.
10. Based on Two Sides analysis of FSC and PEFC published data, 2017.

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