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European Tissue Symposium

Position on Sustainable use of New and Recovered Fibre Types

Introduction

ETS is the European Tissue Paper Industry Association. The members of ETS represent the majority of tissue paper producers throughout Europe and around 90% of the total European tissue production.

ETS was founded in 1971 and is based in Brussels.

Sustainability and the tissue Industry

Tissue paper products have become an important part of the daily life of consumers. They improve personal hygiene in both the home and in professional/public environments. Their contribution to hygiene practices is unquestionable

As manufacturers of single use products, the tissue sector is committed to promoting sustainable development through its business activities and this includes the use of different fibre raw materials. The tissue industry makes a range of different products for different hygiene applications. The decision of a manufacturer to use recovered or new fibres depends upon a number of factors. These include amongst others availability, end use, technology, and customer demands.

Recovered fibres tend to be used more in business to business grades, such as hand towels and industrial wipers while new fibres are more prevalent in consumer grades, such as facial tissue kitchen towels and in medical applications.

It is a rather common belief that the use of recovered fibres for tissue paper production causes less environmental impacts than that of new fibres. Life Cycle Assessment (LCA¹) studies made for one of ETS' member companies for their own products and processes however show that sustainable tissue products can be produced with both types of fibres. In this study both new fibre and recovered fibre offer environmental benefits and shortcomings.

In addition, five years ago, ETS decided to calculate the carbon footprints of European average toilet tissue. Expert consultants operating to ISO 14040 - 14044 standards for life cycle assessment were commissioned to carry out the work. The results showed that the decision to use either fibre type (new or recovered) did not significantly alter the carbon footprint of European toilet tissue². This study therefore also confirmed that neither fibre type can be considered environmentally preferable when considering carbon emissions.

Total environmental impacts vary case by case, depending on a number of factors as for example the location of the tissue paper mill, availability of fibres close to the mill, energy

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http://www.europeantissue.com/Files/positionpapers_and_studies/091126%20Carbonfootprint%20of%20toilet%20tissue12.3.2009.pdf

² Carbon footprint of toilet tissue paper: Comparison of toilet tissue using 100% fresh fibre pulp and 100% recovered fibre pulp. Authors: Catharina Hohenthal & Katri Behm March 2009 – see link/add link

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options and production waste utilisation possibilities. There are opportunities to minimise environmental impacts when using each fibre type.

When using recovered fibres, it is beneficial to:

- Source fibres from integrated deinking operations to eliminate the need for thermal drying of fibre or long distance transport of wet pulp,
- Manage deinked sludge in order to maximise beneficial applications and minimise waste burden on society;
- Select the recovered paper depending on the end-product requirements, which will also allow the most efficient recycling process.

When using new fibres, it is beneficial to:

- Manage the raw material sources to maintain legal, sustainable forestry practices by implementing processes such as forest certification systems and chain of custody standards;
- Consider opportunities to introduce new and more renewable energy sources and increase the use of biomass fuels to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide.

When using either fibre type, it is beneficial to:

- Improve energy efficiency in tissue manufacturing;
- Examine opportunities for changing to alternative, non-fossil based sources of energy for tissue manufacturing operations;
- Deliver products that maximise functionality and minimize consumption; and
- Investigate opportunities for alternative product disposal systems that minimize the environmental impact of used products.

Conclusion

Both new and recovered fibres have been important raw materials for the tissue industry for many decades and both materials are used responsibly.

When using new fibres the tissue sector is committed to use cellulose wood pulps which are derived from sustainably and legally³ managed forests. These forests ensure the long term health of the forest, capture carbon dioxide and mitigate climate change.

- In the case of recovered papers used as raw materials, ETS is a member of the European Recovered Paper Council which is committed to increase the recovery of paper within Europe. The European Recovered Paper Council (ERPC) is committed to meet a voluntary recycling rate target of 70% in the European Union plus Switzerland and Norway by 2015, which is a higher rate than in any other region in the world.
- All ETS members are committed to reduce the environmental impacts of their operations, regardless of whether they utilise new or recovered fibres.

For more information, please contact:

Roberto Berardi - tel. + 39 011 8128810 - roberto.berardi@europeantissue.com
www.europeantissue.com.

³ The EU Regulation 995/2010 introduces obligations and lays down procedures for the assessment of the legality of wood and its derivatives introduced on the European market. Wood pulp is considered a wood derivative and as such subject to the regulation.