

UPM and paper recycling

Recovered paper represents 31% of all fibre raw materials used in UPM's paper production. Our recycling capacity is about 3 million tonnes which makes UPM the world's biggest user of recovered paper in the graphic paper industry.

UPM uses recovered paper at its European mills which are located in highly populated regions. This ensures that the majority recovered paper used is available close to the paper mills. UPM utilizes mainly graphic recovered paper from household collections, e.g. old newspapers, magazines, catalogues and advertising supplements. The recent economic climate has decreased consumption of paper and this in turn has impacted the availability of recovered paper. To ensure recovered paper supply, UPM will invest GBP 17 million in a materials recovery facility at its Shotton mill in UK. Once fully operational, the facility will sort up to 200,000 tonnes of mixed recyclable material of which 120,000 tonnes will be newspapers and magazines.

Today, seven UPM mills process and de-ink recovered paper onsite. Several steps are necessary to separate and remove foreign particles and contaminants, printing ink and excessively short and brittle fibre from the recovered paper. The higher the paper quality required, the more steps are needed to process recovered paper to the required fibre cleanliness and the greater the potential losses. The alternative is to use high grades of recovered paper such as shavings or office waste paper. Much of this material is either pre-consumer converting waste, and is available in smaller dispersed quantities with greater logistical challenges for collection.

Recycled fibre is mainly used in paper grades for which the processing is as efficient as possible, i.e. for standard and improved newsprint paper. Besides newsprint UPM is using recycled fibre in certain amounts for the production of uncoated and coated magazine papers. The challenge with the use of recycled fibre in fine papers comes from quality requirements such as 'permanent paper that can be archived'. UPM fine paper production includes only these high-quality grades. This requirement restricts the quality of recovered fibre that can be used for the production to chemical pulp based recycled fibre used in similar office paper waste.

Nevertheless, at the end of 2009 UPM has launched its first fine paper grade based on recycled fibre, UPM Copy Recycled. Like most of UPM's other paper grades the product has been awarded with the EU Ecolabel.

Besides our strong position in paper recycling the usage of fresh wood fibre is equally important for us. The input of fresh fibre is essential for a sustainable paper cycle. If the use of fresh wood fibres were stopped the world would simply run out of paper in a few months due to fibre degradation. Wood fibres can be recycled a few times only before they become shortened and too weak for further use in papermaking.

Thus, for UPM paper recycling and usage of fresh wood from sustainably managed forests go hand in hand, and are mutually supportive of each other.