

PRESS RELEASE

6 October 2026



Carbon footprint of paper carrier bags quantified for the first time

Karlstad, 6 October 2026: For the first time, new data quantifies the carbon footprint of paper carrier bags in Europe. Commissioned by The Paper Bag platform and conducted by RISE Research Institutes of Sweden, the study finds a cradle-to-gate fossil carbon footprint of 16.6 to 82.9 g CO₂e per bag, based on three typical bag types and applications. The findings provide retailers and brand owners with a credible basis for informed packaging decisions.

“Reliable carbon footprint data is becoming increasingly important,” says Jan Lif, Secretary General of CEPI Eurokraft. “It helps businesses understand where emissions occur across their supply chains. With this study, we are creating greater transparency and establishing a baseline to measure our industry’s progress over time.” The study assessed the cradle-to-gate fossil carbon footprint of machine-glazed (MG) and machine-finished (MF) kraft paper used to manufacture paper carrier bags, as well as the bags themselves. Cradle-to-gate covers emissions from raw material extraction through production up to the factory gate. The results reflect the market and technology situation in 2024.

Three typical bag types examined

Three typical kraft paper bag types were examined: a small takeaway bag without handles (20 g), a medium shopping bag with twisted handles (55 g) and a large shopping bag with flat handles (100 g). Paper carrier bags are primarily made from virgin-fibre kraft paper supplied by members of CEPI Eurokraft. Bags with a high recycled content are available but were not included in the study. The fossil carbon footprints calculated for the three bags are 16.6 g CO₂e, 45.6 g CO₂e and 82.9 g CO₂e respectively.

A paper carrier bag's carbon footprint – in metres travelled by car 🚗



Sources: RISE Bioeconomy (2026); German Environment Agency (UBA), 2024 data.
Car equivalent based on 164 g CO₂/passenger-km (1.4 persons/car). Illustrative comparison.



Putting the numbers into perspective

To make these figures more tangible, they can be compared with an everyday mobility equivalent. Based on 2024 emissions data from the German Environment Agency (UBA), the footprints

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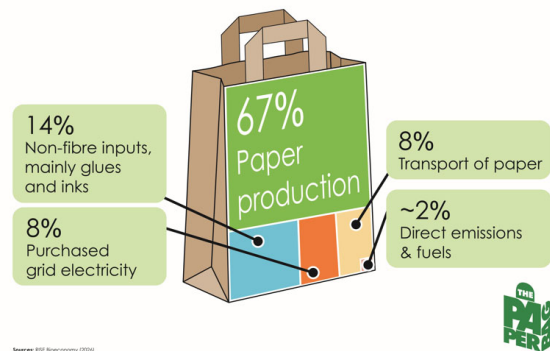


correspond to approximately 100 metres, 280 metres and 500 metres of average passenger car travel for the small, medium and large paper carrier bags respectively.¹

Paper production is the main contributor

Paper production is by far the largest contributor, accounting for around 67% of the cradle-to-gate fossil carbon footprint. The remaining footprint mainly comes from non-fibre inputs such as glues and inks, electricity used at converting plants and the transport of paper to converting sites. “Beyond their carbon footprint, paper carrier bags are made from a renewable, bio-based material and can be recycled, which keeps valuable paper fibres in circulation,” says Lif. “Choosing and using packaging responsibly can contribute to positive change.”

Main contributors to the carbon footprint of a paper carrier bag



Detailed information about the research have been summarized in a [fact sheet](#).

“Carry the change”

The Paper Bag platform will celebrate the ninth European Paper Bag Day on 18 October 2026 under the motto “Carry the change”. [Activities across Europe](#) will raise awareness of paper carrier bags and paper sacks, highlight the environmental characteristics of paper packaging and encourage informed and responsible packaging choices. Retailers, brand owners and consumers are invited to join the celebrations and share their activities on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn using the hashtag **#EuropeanPaperBagDay**.

For further information, please visit thepaperbag.org, or contact us by email: info@thepaperbag.org.



The Paper Bag “The Paper Bag” platform was founded in 2017 by the leading European kraft paper manufacturers and producers of paper bags. They dedicate themselves to promoting the advantages of paper packaging. “The Paper Bag” is steered by the organisations CEPI Eurokraft and EUROSAC. thepaperbag.org

CEPI EUROKRAFT
European Producers of Sack Kraft Paper and Kraft Paper

CEPI Eurokraft is the European Association for Producers of Sack Kraft Paper for the Paper Sack Industry and Kraft Paper for the Packaging Industry. It has ten member

¹ German Environment Agency (UBA), Comparison of average emissions from different modes of passenger transport, reference year 2024; TREMOD 6.71B (10/2025).

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companies representing a volume of three million tonnes of paper produced in 11 countries. cepi-eurokraft.org



EUROSAC is the European Federation of Multiwall Paper Sack Manufacturers. The federation represents over 80% of European paper sack manufacturers. Its members operate in 20 different countries. They produce some five billion paper sacks per year, representing 630,000 tonnes of paper converted in 55 plants. Sack manufacturers from all continents and bag manufacturers also contribute to the federation as corresponding members, and more than 30 suppliers (paper, film, machine or glue manufacturers) are registered as associate members. eurosac.org