



Paper bags contribute to fighting climate change

natural and renewable resource

Paper is based on wood, a natural and renewable material.

from sustainably managed forests

The cellulose fibres that are used as raw material to produce paper bags in Europe are extracted from tree thinning and from process waste from the sawn timber industry. In Europe, they are sourced from sustainably managed forests. Thanks to the continuous replanting of trees, Europe has had a positive net change in forest area during the last 25 years. During this period, the forest area has increased by 17.5 million hectares. This corresponds to almost half of the area of Italy.¹ Sustainable forest management maintains biodiversity and ecosystems and provides habitat for wildlife, recreational areas and jobs.

effective against climate change

As young trees grow, they absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere. The average annual sequestration of carbon in European forest biomass reaches 719 million tonnes of CO₂². This offsets the fossil CO₂ emissions generated annually by a country like Germany³. The carbon stored in the tree's wood fibres remains in all forest products, such as paper bags, and is not released during their life cycle. The carbon also stays in recycled fibres.

100% biodegradable

The paper of the bags is biodegradable within two to five months. Thanks to switching to natural water-based colours and starch-based adhesives, paper bags do not harm the environment.

¹ <https://foresteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/INFOGRAFIA1.pdf> accessed on 30.09.2019

² "State of Europe's Forests 2015", FOREST EUROPE, 2015.

³ According to Clean Energy Wire's fact sheet "Germany's greenhouse gas emissions and climate targets, 2016", Germany produces 9.2 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per person per year. With 80 million inhabitants, the annual CO₂ emissions amount to 736 million tonnes.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



100% recyclable

The paper bags' long fibres also make them a good source for recycling. In Europe, the paper recycling rate is 72.3 %⁴. Recycling paper means reducing emissions and is a further contribution to climate change mitigation.

helps reduce plastic waste

Using paper bags as an alternative helps to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags as stated in Directive (EU) 2015/720 of 29 April 2015. At the same time, it prevents plastic littering and the formation of microplastics in the environment.

reliable shopping companion

In addition to the environmental aspects, consumers can rely on a strong packaging for their shopping items – whether for fashion, beauty or decorative items, food or electronics. Thanks to the long and strong cellulose fibres, paper bags have a high mechanical strength. A study has shown that they can withstand loads of up to 12 kg and be reused several times⁵. Paper bag durability can be measured in accordance with the European test standard EN13590:2003. The quality certification system for paper bags is based on this test standard. As a result, the bag is marked with the weight and volume it may carry. It helps retailers to avoid poor-quality carrier bags.

demonstrates environmental commitment

Paper bags are in line with a modern and sustainable consumer lifestyle. Using paper bags involves giving a clear signal of commitment to the environment and improves the quality of life of consumers. By using packaging made from renewable, recyclable and biodegradable sources, retailers and brand owners contribute to reducing the use of non-biodegradable shopping bags and to promoting greater environmental education. Thus, paper bags are a visible part of the corporate social responsibility that a retail brand can develop.

⁴ European Paper Recycling Council, "Monitoring Report 2017", <http://www.paperforrecycling.eu/publications/>

⁵ "Evaluation of physico-mechanical properties of paper bags for use in transporting retail products", ITENE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



attractive to consumers

Paper is very tactile due to its texture and shape. 80% of consumers think that a brand printed on paper is more pleasant and attractive⁶. 79% of consumers believe that paper is more pleasant to handle and touch. 86% agree that when they can choose between paper packaging and another material, they choose paper⁷.

⁶ IPSOS survey for seven European countries

⁷ Ibid