

Statement

European pulp and paper sector maintains essential operations to help EU citizens tackle the COVID-19 pandemic

Brussels, 23 March 2020

Cepi, the European paper industry association, and its members across Europe are shocked and saddened by the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically impacting people globally and in Europe, with a growing number of lives lost.

We have taken the situation very seriously and implemented ***all necessary measures to guarantee the safety of our people***: employees, transport operators and customers.

Our ***main priority now is to ensure that EU citizens can access the products that they desperately need for hygiene, health and food purposes*** in the current lockdown context.

For that reason, we are relentlessly working with other industries in our value-chain ***to operate as much in a “business as usual” mode as possible and guarantee security of supply*** to our fellow Europeans.

Our ***tissue and hygiene products are of vital importance to citizens***, particularly to implement the recommendations issued by national governments and the World Health Organization (WHO): frequent hand washing and proper hand drying is vital. Tissue offers the safest option.

Our ***fibre-based packaging is also essential to transport and deliver all types of food and pharmaceutical supplies*** such as medicines in protective packaging.

We ***depend on the quick availability of fibres from recycled paper to manufacture our packaging***. Therefore we call on local communities to help us serving them, by ensuring that the collection of paper and board continues smoothly during the crisis. Otherwise, it would create a shortage of raw material within weeks and force us to stop our production.

We also have the obligation to ensure the timely and safe delivery of essential goods to our communities. Many of our ***companies are currently struggling due to extra border control checks and related delays within Europe*** due to lack of container capacity after the closure of China's harbours. We need support to avoid delays in deliveries of these key supplies.

For all these reasons, ***we have been calling for our sector (NACE code 17) to be recognised as an essential supplier in several critical European value chains and to be eligible for state aids*** to ensure continuity of vital supplies to the society during the health crisis and facilitate a sustainable recovery of the European economy after we overcome the health crisis.

We expect the Corona virus to prompt many changes in the way businesses are operated and society is organised. ***We call the European Commission to review the recently adopted Industrial Strategy in the light of the changes to ensure it remains valid and a strong policy for the new industrial realities.***

Solidarity has to come first; we will strongly support the work of the EU institutions and national governments with our reiterated commitment to invest in Europe and for maintaining European jobs in the next 5 years.

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