

## National Tree Week: the case for sustainable forest management

*By Winfried Muehling, General Manager, Pro Carton*

Trees are, and have always been, an integral part of our ecosystem. The first trees grew over 300 million years ago, and they have been the lung of our planet ever since, absorbing more than 40% of global fossil fuel emissions. Not only do trees clean the air by removing harmful pollutants, but they also play a crucial role in protecting our natural habitat – from preventing flooding and soil erosion to boosting biodiversity. That's why Pro Carton is proud to support National Tree Week because we understand that protecting trees is essential.

In fact, *actively* managing trees and forests is crucial, particularly as climate change concerns continue to rise. Thanks to sustainably managed forestry, European forests grew by 58,390 sq. km between 2005 and 2020. This is an area about 1.5 times larger than Switzerland and equivalent to 1,500 football pitches of forest growing every day. Plus, the European forestry industry has also expressed its commitment to plant an additional 3 billion trees by 2030 on top of the scheduled reforestation of harvested areas.

Of course, as European forests provide the raw material for cartonboard and carton production, the pulp and paper industry has a strategic interest in maintaining and promoting sustainable forest growth across the continent. This symbiotic relationship has ensured that both the industry, and the forests can thrive.

We are sourcing our raw materials locally, more than 98% of the wood fibres used in the European paper and board industry come from European forests – mainly in Sweden and Finland – where the annual growth of new wood exceeds the amount harvested by a large margin. Today, the general rule is that, in sustainably managed forests, for each felled tree, two to three new trees are planted.

Of course, this isn't the case for forestry in the rest of the world and in many areas, there is significant deforestation. However, at the recent COP26 Summit, more than 100 world leaders – representing 85% of the world's forest areas – pledged to end and reverse deforestation by 2030. This is a fantastic move, and one that Pro Carton fully applauds.

As General Manager of Pro Carton, my key aim is to promote the benefits of cartons as they are made from the wood fibre from sustainably managed forests *and* are fully recyclable and biodegradable making

them the perfect example of the circular economy. But as aforementioned, for the paper and cartonboard industry to be successful, we need to have healthy and productive forests. For this year's National Tree Week, I implore you to increase awareness of forest management and sustainable packaging for yourself and those around you. Or perhaps you could show your support for a greener future by planting a tree itself. For example, our TICCIT (Trees into Carton, Carton into Trees) programme involves teaching school children about trees, recycling and paper and then assists them with planting a tree sapling inside a carton. A learning experience for a lifetime and always another reason to come back home and see the tree growing. And it clearly demonstrates the circularity of cartons.

To find out more about Pro Carton and TICCIT, visit: <https://www.procarton.com/>

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