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Sustainably Managed Forests: The Backbone of the European Paper and Board Industry

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In 2012, The United Nations General Assembly announced that the 21st of March would be known as the *International Day of Forests* to celebrate and raise awareness of the importance of all types of woodland. Forests play a vital role in mitigating the risk of climate change, preserving biodiversity, protecting areas of recreation for generations to come, and as a source of valuable raw materials for different industries.

The cartonboard and forest industry enjoy a harmonious and important relationship. More than 90% of the wood fibres used in the European paper and board industry originate from EU woodland, of which more than 78% are sourced from sustainably managed and certified forests¹. Europe's forest-fibre industry is committed to sustainable forest management: for every tree harvested, 2-3 are newly planted, enabling them to grow by 58,390km² between 2005 and 2020. In fact, every year new growth exceeds the wood harvested by an area equivalent to 1,500 football pitches every day. Active reforestation is fully supported by all members of the European paper and board industry.

What's more, under the umbrella of the [Confederation of European Paper Industries](#) (Cepi), the entire pulp and paper industry supports the EU Forest Strategy for 2030. Part of the Fit for 55 package presented by the European Commission in 2021, it includes a roadmap to planting three billion trees by 2030, on top of an estimated three billion that are expected to grow on their own by the end of the decade. This close collaboration and belief in the absolute importance of sustainably managed

¹ Cepi Key Statistics 2020

forests means our industry is on track to achieve these ambitious targets and enable European forests to continue fulfilling their many ecological, economic, and social functions.

This demonstrable impact of sustainably managed forests in mitigating climate change has elevated forest preservation up the political agenda². Its tangible role in carbon sequestration was clear for all to see last month, when we announced new research that proved the European carton and cartonboard industry has succeeded in reducing its carbon footprint by 24% since 2018.

The findings of [The Carbon Footprint of Carton Packaging 2023](#) study demonstrate that carton packaging not only meets the demands of a bio-based and circular economy but has a key role to play in the transition to a low-carbon economy. In fact, the cradle-to-gate carbon impact, which refers to the impact our industry has complete control over, totalled just 148kg CO₂ equivalents per tonne of cartons, a drastic reduction from three years ago. With fossil and biogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and removals one of the key factors measured, we can clearly see that sustainable forest management played a critical role in these impressive figures next to process improvements and replacement of fossil energy with renewable energy sources.

Europe's forest-fibre industry, and forests in general, are good for the planet, good for the people, and good for the world's economies. Let's continue to celebrate and protect them, not just today, but every day.

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² <https://www.fao.org/forestry/sfm/85291/en/>