



# Think Local, Act Global

A number of non-governmental organisations working on paper, recycling and forestry issues have called on the paper industry to adopt precautionary principles regarding the use of natural resources and chemicals. During the first Environmental Paper Summit in Sonoma County, California in November, representatives from over 70 organisations met to ratify the framework for a common vision for transforming the paper industry, writes **Anna Maris**

**T**he call for improved practices in the paper industry comes at a time when the use of recycled paper in the US is plummeting. Despite extensive procurement programmes, 95 per cent of printing and writing paper in the US is made from virgin wood fibre and there are now calls to save the infrastructure for manufacturing recycled paper in North America. Meanwhile, global production in the pulp, paper and publishing sector is expected to increase by 77 per cent between 1995 and 2020, according to OECD Environmental Outlook figures. The pulp and paper industry is the single largest consumer of water used in industrial activities and the third greatest industrial greenhouse gas emitter after the chemical and steel industries.

The logging and paper manufacturing industries operate in a global market, and it was on the same premise that the Environmental Paper Summit came about. It was the first attempt of its kind to coordinate a number of diverse non-profit and campaigning organisations on an international scale with a view to reaching consensus on the way forward.

Many of the organisations present at the summit campaign on specific issues, for example sustainable forestry, recycled content or elimination of chlorine from the papermaking process. "It is confusing for the industry to deal with a number of environmental messages, sometimes at cross purposes with each other. We need to get everyone on the same page with regards to paper campaigning," explained Susan

Kinsella, Director of Conservatree in San Francisco and event coordinator. "It doesn't mean that organisations will not campaign independently, it is just a matter of gaining an understanding and awareness of what others are doing and recognising the value in that."

A number of core organisations including Alliance for Environmental Innovation, Center for a New American Dream, Conservatree, Co-op America, Dogwood Alliance, ForestEthics, the Green Press Initiative, the Markets Initiative, Natural Resources Defense Council and the Recycled Products Purchasing Cooperative drafted the resulting vision statement.

The document is divided into three parts. The Common Vision outlines the goals for achieving an environmentally and socially sustainable paper industry. The paper focuses on four different areas of concern where the organisations want to see change: clean production, responsible fibre sourcing, a commitment to maximising recycled content and minimisation of paper consumption. The second section, Guidance to Best Practice, provides guidelines for best practice in terms of working with specific sectors, including manufacturers, governments, suppliers and purchasers. The third part, the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Guidance, is designed as a more immediate response to the paper markets.

The three-day event focused on workshop sessions aimed at contributing towards a more extended list of action points. Issues including reducing consumption, alternative fibre development, reducing production impacts and toxics, government policy and post-production purchasing were worked through in detail by small breakout groups, and the results assembled in a shared action plan on the last day of the summit.

It wasn't just environmental issues that were addressed. The logging industry has had a huge negative impact on a number of indigenous communities in the tropical rain forests and the northern Boreal forests. Steve Fobister, of First Nations Canada, spoke of the devastation of his community after mercury poisoning, resulting from logging, was discovered in 1970.

But there were also some triumphs during the conference. The success of a long-running campaign to convert office supplies retail chain Staples to selling recycled content printing papers was announced during the summit. Under the new guidelines, an industry first, Staples will achieve an average of 30 per cent post consumer recycled content across all paper products it sells and phase out purchases of paper products from endangered forest. The company will also create an environmental affairs division and report annually on its progress. The two-year campaign involved celebrity support from the rock band R.E.M., more than 600 demonstrations at Staples stores in the US and tens of thousands of letters and calls to the company's CEO.

Staples branches in the UK will also adhere to the new guidelines. "Staples source paper products centrally, so we fully expect to comply with the new commitments," said Joe Irons, Marketing Director of Staples UK. 

For more information about the summit contact: [seek@susankinsella.com](mailto:seek@susankinsella.com)

For more reference see:

[www.dogwoodalliance.org](http://www.dogwoodalliance.org)

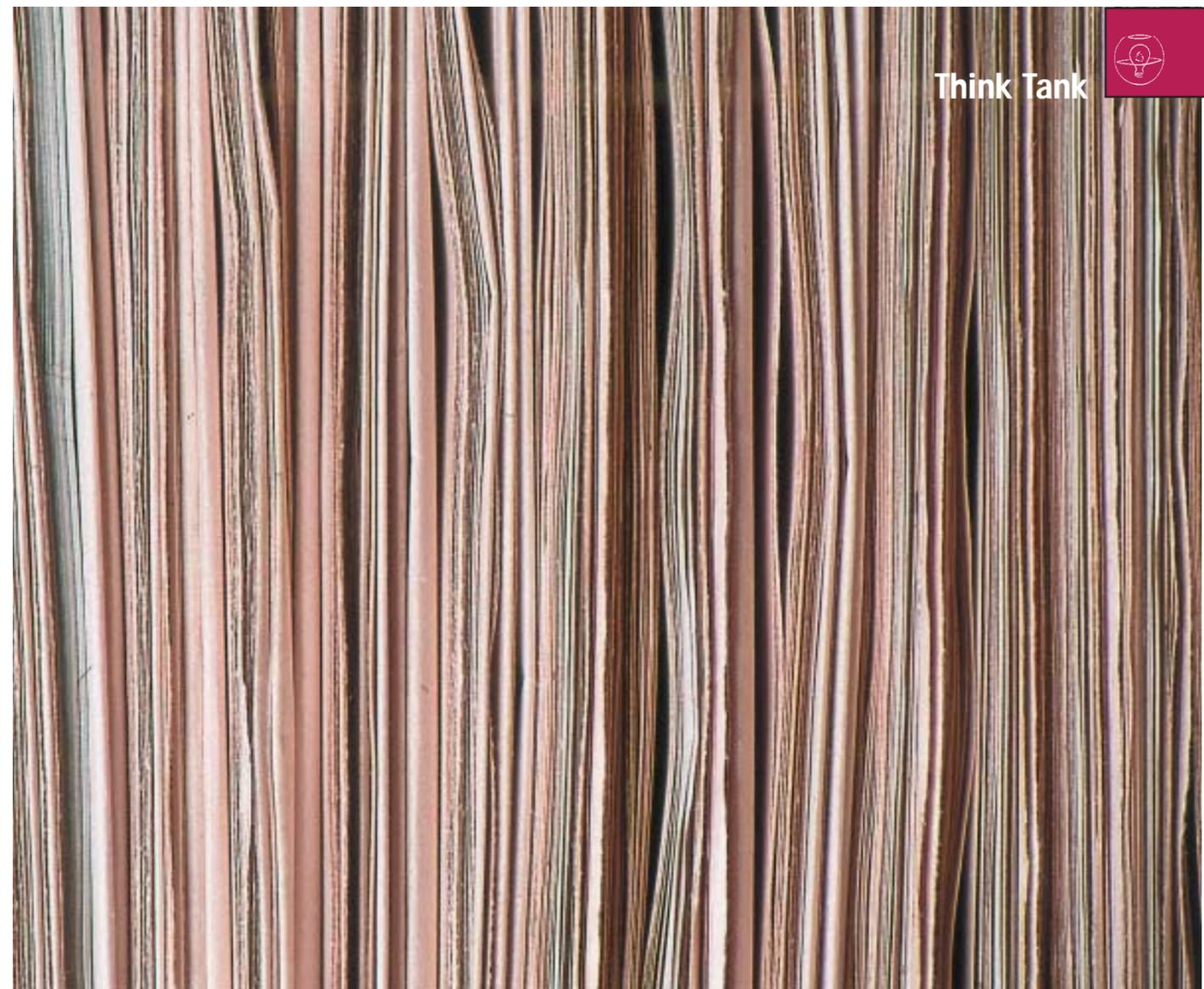
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[www.certifiedwood.org](http://www.certifiedwood.org)

[www.forestworld.com](http://www.forestworld.com)



## Clean production:

- Minimise the combined impacts of water, energy, wood and chemical usage, as well as air, water, solid waste and thermal pollution across the entire paper production system. This includes all aspects of fibre production and sourcing, pulping, production, transportation, use and disposal.
- Elimination of harmful pulp mill discharges and the use of chlorine and chlorine compounds for bleaching.

## Responsible fibre sourcing:

- End the use of wood fibre that threatens endangered forests. Some forests are so rare, threatened, or ecologically vulnerable, or are of such global biological or cultural importance, that any logging or commercial use could irreparably damage their conservation value.

- End the clearing of natural forest ecosystems and their conversion into plantations for paper fibre.
- Source any remaining virgin wood fibres for paper from independent, third-party certified forest managers that employ the most environmentally and socially responsible forest management and restoration practices. Currently, Forest Stewardship Council is the only acceptable international certification programme that satisfies this requirement.
- Use alternative crops for paper if comprehensive and credible analysis indicates that they are environmentally and socially preferable to other virgin fibre sources.
- Eliminate widespread industrial use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers in plantations and fibre production.
- Stop the introduction of paper fibre

from genetically modified organisms, particularly transgenic trees and plants with genes inserted from other species of animals and plants.

## Maximise recycled content:

- Eliminate paper manufactured solely of virgin fibre and fundamentally reduce reliance on virgin tree fibres.
- Maximise post-consumer recycled fibre content in all paper and paper products.
- Increase the use of other recovered materials (eg agricultural residues and pre-consumer recycled) as a fibre source in paper.

## Minimise Paper Consumption

- Eliminate excessive and unnecessary paper consumption