

# SHREDDING THE PAPER MYTHS

# PAPER

MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA (PAMSA)

## Farming trees. Making paper. Growing the economy.

- All paper in South Africa is produced from plantation-grown trees, recycled paper or bagasse (sugar cane fibre). Plantation-grown trees are farmed for paper, just as maize is planted for cereals and wheat for bread.
- Our fibre is not sourced from the wood of rainforests, indigenous or boreal trees. This is a myth, often wrongfully perpetuated by e-mail footnotes.
- In South Africa, 600 million trees across 762,000 hectares are specifically grown for use in pulp and paper manufacture and the industry plants in excess of 260,000 trees every single day.
- The industry has made significant advances in terms of environmental sustainability over recent decades.
- The use of renewable biomass-based energy has enabled the industry to avoid the use of 1,3 million tons of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas annually and therefore the associated carbon emissions.
- The industry is a significant employer and contributes to jobs in rural areas, foreign exchange earnings and GDP growth.
- Over 146,000 people are employed because we grow trees and conduct all the downstream activities. Roads are developed in deep rural areas, and clinics, hospitals, schools and communities are sustained.



## STORING CARBON. FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE.

- Plantations are atmospheric carbon sinks which mitigate greenhouse gas emissions by absorbing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and releasing oxygen through the natural process of photosynthesis.
- South Africa's timber plantations, which cater for pulp and paper, furniture and other wood based-products, lock up 900 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> — a key environmental service and a means of mitigating climate change. (Forestry South Africa, 2011)
- Only 9% of the total plantation area is harvested annually. This is replanted within the same year.
- Only mature trees are harvested.
- Carbon absorption continues as the new trees grow and young trees are able to absorb carbon more rapidly than the older trees. These trees, and thus paper products, are a renewable resource.
- If it were not for the pulp and paper industry operating world-wide for the last 150 years the CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the atmosphere would be 5% higher (about half a degree in Celsius) than they are at present. (National Council for Air and Stream Improvement, Special Report No 07-02. The greenhouse gas and carbon profile of the global forest products industry, February 2007)

*Forestry is the most sustainable of all the primary industries that provide us with energy and materials. To address climate change, we must use more wood, not less. Using wood sends signals to the marketplace to grow more trees.*

**Dr Patrick Moore, Greenpeace co-founder**

Visit us at [www.thepaperstory.co.za](http://www.thepaperstory.co.za)  
Follow us on Twitter @PaperRocks\_SA

## Paper versus digital. The great debate.

'Go paperless'. 'Save a tree – don't print this email'. 'Go green and keep it on screen'. 'Consider the environment before you print this email' – these are all messages founded on myth and misconception.

- While the paper and print industries cannot swim against the digital tide, online communication and electronic document storage should not be touted as more environmentally friendly than print and post. It is simply about improving efficiency and reducing cost (to the service provider) and improving convenience to you as the user.
- One email with a 400kb attachment sent to 20 people is equivalent to burning a 100w light bulb for 30 minutes.  
*BBC, Costing the Earth, Global Warming, April 2009.*
- Reading a newspaper can consume 20% less carbon than viewing news online. *Swedish Royal Institute for Technology.*
- Greenpeace has identified electronic waste as the fastest growing component of the municipal waste stream.  
*Greenpeace, The E-waste Problem 2009.*

## RECYCLING IS REWARDING.



- Recycling reduces pollution and litter. One tonne of paper equates to three cubic metres of landfill space.
- Recycling paper does not save trees. Trees are sustainably farmed for paper.
- Without new fibres, from new trees, the paper cycle cannot begin. Recycled fibres degrade after six to seven times and new fibres are always needed.  
*Two Sides UK.*
- Recycling paper keeps carbon locked up for longer.
- Always consider the source of your recycled paper. FSC-certified, locally manufactured virgin paper is also a sustainable means for printing, packaging and communications.
- Recycling plays a big part in job creation and poverty alleviation.
- With 65% of recovered paper used as raw material in paper mills, more than half of the country's paper mills depend on recycled fibre and a number of them use it as their only fibre source.

[www.prasa.co.za](http://www.prasa.co.za)

## Sustainable plantation management makes all the difference.

- South Africa has the highest level of international certification of its plantations in the world. Over 80% of our plantations are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). PAMSA members subscribe to the FSC's Chain of Custody which tracks certified material through the production process – from the forest to the consumer, including all successive stages of processing, transformation, manufacturing and distribution. **Consumers should look out for paper and wood products bearing the FSC mark of certification.**
- The industry has 1,6 million hectares of FSC-certified land of which only about one million hectares are planted to trees. The majority of the other 600,000 hectares are grasslands. These have been assessed by South African National Biodiversity Institute to be the best conserved grasslands in the country. It is therefore important when referring to impacts of monocultures on biodiversity, that they are considered at landscape level and not at stand level.
- Our plantations require neither irrigation nor regular fertilising. The total annual water requirement/usage for timber plantations was calculated to be 428 million m<sup>3</sup> per year, approximately 3% of the total annual water usage in South Africa. By comparison, water used for irrigating crops amounts to 7,9 billion m<sup>3</sup> or 62% of the total annual requirement. (National Water Resource Strategy: Dept. Water Affairs and Forestry 2004)
- The industry has also voluntarily reduced its plantation area by 80,000 hectares in riverine and other ecologically sensitive areas.
- Further downstream, pulp and paper manufacturers have implemented water recycling technologies to reduce the industry's water footprint.
- The water footprint of one A4 page of locally produced copy paper is approximately 24ml, not 10 litres as is assumed.

