



Paper bags – sustainable and efficient packaging of the future

Paper carrier bags are popular among consumers and retailers. Whether for food, fashion, electronics or decorative items – they are strong and reliable shopping companions and have convincing environmental benefits at the same time.

Paper bags provide an important contribution to fighting climate change

- **Paper bags are natural and renewable:** Paper is based on wood, a natural and renewable material. The cellulose fibres that are used as raw material to produce paper bags in Europe are extracted from tree thinning and from process waste from the sawn timber industry. They originate from sustainably managed European forests, and thanks to the continuous replanting of trees, state-owned forest in Europe is growing by 200 million m³ per year¹.
- **Paper bags store carbon dioxide (CO₂):** As young trees grow, they absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere. The average annual sequestration of carbon in European forest biomass reaches 719 million tonnes of CO₂². This offsets the fossil CO₂ emissions generated annually by a country like Germany³. The carbon stored in the tree's wood fibres remains in all forest products, such as paper bags, and is not released during their life cycle and recycled afterwards.
- **Paper bags have a low climate impact:** Paper bags produced have a remarkably low impact on the global warming potential compared to low density polyethylene (LDPE) bags⁴.
- **Paper bags are reusable:** Thanks to the long and strong cellulose fibres, paper bags have high mechanical strength. A study has shown that they can withstand loads of up to 12 kg and be reused several times⁵.

¹ www.eustafor.eu

² "State of Europe's Forests 2015", FOREST EUROPE, 2015.

³ According to Clean Energy Wire's fact sheet "Germany's greenhouse gas emissions and climate targets, 2016", Germany produces 9.2 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per person per year. With 80 million inhabitants, the annual CO₂ emissions amount to 736 million tonnes.

⁴ "A comparative LCA study of various concepts for shopping bags and cement sacks", IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute, 2016.

⁵ "Evaluation of physico-mechanical properties of paper bags for use in transporting retail products", ITENE.

FACT SHEET

September 2018



- **Paper bags are recyclable:** The paper bags' long fibres also make them a good source for recycling. On average, the fibres are reused 3.5 times in Europe⁶. Recycling paper means reducing emissions and is a further contribution to climate change mitigation.
- **Paper bags are biodegradable:** The paper of the bags is biodegradable within two to five months. Thanks to switching to natural water-based colours used for printing and starch-based adhesives, they do not harm the environment.
- **Paper bags help reduce plastic waste:** Using paper bags as an alternative helps to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags as stated in Directive (EU) 2015/720 of 29 April 2015.

Paper bags are strong and reliable shopping companions for all occasions

- **Paper bags provide strong product protection:** High-quality kraft paper is made from 100% natural fibres from European forests. A special arrangement of the long fibres results in a high binding capacity, which gives kraft paper a unique strength.
- **Paper bags are reliable:** Paper bags can hold a wide range of products up to 12 kg⁷ – from luxury, fashion and decorative items to food and electronics.
- **Paper bags have a quality standard:** Paper bag durability can be measured in accordance with the European test standard EN13590:2003. The quality certification system for paper bags is based on this test standard. As a result, the bag is marked with the weight and volume it may carry. It helps retailers to avoid poor-quality carrier bags.

Paper bags are popular among consumers and retailers

- **Paper bags attract attention:** 85% of passers-by notice the messages printed on paper bags they see on the street⁸. 80% of consumers think that a brand printed on paper is more pleasant and attractive⁹.
- **Paper bags show environmental commitment:** Using paper bags is an expression of living a sustainable lifestyle and gives a clear signal of having a commitment to the environment.

⁶ www.paperrecovery.org

⁷ "Evaluation of physico-mechanical properties of paper bags for use in transporting retail products", ITENE.

⁸ MediaAnalyzer Software & Research, 2007

⁹ IPSOS survey for seven European countries

FACT SHEET

September 2018



- **Paper bags are attractive for consumers:** 79% of consumers believe that paper is more pleasant to handle and touch. 86% agree that when they can choose between paper packaging and another material, they choose paper¹⁰.

More information here

- www.thepaperbag.org
- www.facebook.com/Performance-powered-by-nature
- www.linkedin.com/company/eurosac/ or www.linkedin.com/company/cepi-eurokraft/

¹⁰ Ibid