



# Paper Guide

On the face of it, paper would seem a simple product. You put it in the printer/copier and away you go! However, with the different expectations customers may have, the different types of paper available and the various environmental and sustainable accreditations – well it can all get a bit confusing. Hopefully this simple guide will help answer some of the many questions customers ask.

## The environment explained

One of the issues for paper is that there is not an International or even European industry standard that covers environmental and sustainability issues. Various schemes have evolved in different regions to the point where there are several standards. To choose which is the “best” really comes down to what the customer also recognises as a good environmental policy.

There is also a big differentiation between environmental and sustainable development programs. The sustainable development schemes do not concern themselves with other environmental issues eg, does the mill have low emissions. Likewise, the environmental schemes do not cover sustainable development so do not measure whether a mill is using quality sustainable pulp. Ideally a mill will have accreditation for both of these concerns. The only scheme that currently covers both areas is the EU Flower (more details overleaf).

## Sustainable development schemes;

FSC is the most well known, however the largest forest certification organisation is the PEFC.

**FSC** (Forest Stewardship Council) - FSC is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit organisation established to promote the responsible management of the world's forests. It provides standard setting, trademark assurance and accreditation services for companies and organisations interested in responsible forestry. Products carrying the FSC label are independently certified to assure consumers that they come from forests that are managed to meet the social, economic and ecological needs of present and future generations.

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

**PEFC** (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes) - The PEFC Council is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, founded in 1999 which promotes sustainable managed forests through independent third party certification. The PEFC provides an assurance mechanism to purchasers of wood and paper products that they are promoting the sustainable management of forests.

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

## Environmental Production Techniques;

Generally speaking, pulp is bleached to lighten the natural colour in order to produce a white paper. There are two techniques used applicable to papers supplied by Lyreco;

**ECF** - Elemental Chlorine Free is a bleaching process that eliminates chlorine and hypo chemicals in the manufacturing process. Chlorine Dioxide is used to bleach the pulp. Toxicity is greatly reduced along with the effluent left over from the production process.

**TCF** - Totally Chlorine Free is bleach free process where Ozone is used to whiten the pulp. Ozone is an oxidizing agent that reacts with carbon bonds in the pulp. The by-product reaction whitens the paper.

In terms of which one is the most eco-friendly... well it's probably better for the customer to research and decide. Research has suggested that the TCF method releases less chlorinated material into the environment. However, there is further research to suggest that the TCF method releases more Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) into the atmosphere than the ECF technique. 85% of the world's paper is produced using the ECF technique.



## Environmental management schemes;



**ISO 14001** is an international environmental control standard. Accredited companies actively work towards improving environmental standards in their organisation. All accredited companies are audited by an external agency.

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

**EMAS** - the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme, is a voluntary initiative designed to improve companies' environmental performance. Its aim is to recognise and reward those organisations that go beyond minimum legal compliance and continuously improve their environmental performance. In addition, it is a requirement of the scheme that participating organisations regularly produce a public environmental statement that reports on their environmental performance. It is this voluntary publication of environmental information, whose accuracy and reliability has been independently checked by an environmental verifier, that gives EMAS and those organisations that participate enhanced credibility and recognition.

[www.iema.net](http://www.iema.net)

**Nordic Swan** is the official Nordic ecolabel, introduced by the Nordic Council of Ministers. Products carrying the Swan label meet extremely high environmental standards. The Swan takes into consideration the product's impact on the environment from the raw material to waste - i.e. throughout the product's lifecycle. The Swan also sets criteria with regard to quality and performance. The Swan's criteria are specific for different product groups.

[www.ecolabel.nu](http://www.ecolabel.nu)

**The Blue Angel** is the first and most well-known eco-label worldwide. It sets the standard for eco-friendly products and services selected by an independent jury in line with defined criteria. The Blue Angel is awarded to companies as a kind of reward for their commitment to environmental protection. Accredited companies use it to professionally promote their eco-friendly products in the market.

[www.blauer-engel.de/en/index.php](http://www.blauer-engel.de/en/index.php)

**The EU Flower** is a scheme designed to encourage businesses to market products and services that are kinder to the environment and for European consumers. The European Eco-label is part of a broader strategy aimed at promoting sustainable consumption and production. Where paper is concerned, the EU Flower takes into consideration both sustainable and environmental factors. The EU Flower is managed directly by the EC.

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/index_en.htm)



## Recycled Paper VS Sustainable Paper

Debate rages as to whether recycled paper is more environmentally friendly than sustainable paper. There is a multitude of research that claims to have superiority over the other. There have been several arguments in recent years, such as;

- Recycled paper consumes more resources to produce. This is because paper has to be collected for recycling (high carbon footprint) and consumes more resources in production.....
- Virgin papers use up our natural resources causing deforestation and consume more water and chemicals in production.....

Basically the arguments and counter arguments will rage on. It is very difficult to judge this on a macro level as each manufacturer has different approaches to production.

From a supplier perspective it is better to talk in facts;

### **Benefits of recycled paper;**

- They print as well as virgin papers
- They will work on all forms/types of machine
- They divert large amounts of waste away from landfill and turn it into usable product
- Gases (such as methane) emitting from landfill sites are greatly reduced
- They save on valuable natural resources

### **Benefits of paper from sustainable sources;**

- Forests are well managed, with constant re-planting of new trees to protect the eco-system
- Indigenous communities are not adversely affected
- A "young" tree takes more CO<sup>2</sup> out of the atmosphere as it grows (as opposed to a mature tree)
- Quality environmental practises from the mills ensure a cleaner/safer environment
- There will always be a need for virgin paper, choosing sustainable sources helps better safeguard the environment

Ultimately, it is up to us all to do our own research and decide which type of paper fits with our respective environmental policy. If you are concerned about waste and want to help reduce landfill, then consider recycled paper. If you are looking to purchase sustainable product from a source that is managing our natural resources, then there is no reason not to choose paper from sustainable sources.

