

Household Paper Products

Sustainability Snapshot



Product Description

Household Paper Products include personal care and cleaning products composed primarily of virgin wood-based fibers, recycled fibers, or other natural fibers. Product types include toilet tissue, paper towels, facial tissue, and paper napkins.

Mission

The mission of The Sustainability Consortium (TSC) is to improve the sustainability of products when they are made, purchased, and used, with a focus on manufacturers and the retail buyers who decide what products to carry in stores. The information in this document is drawn from our detailed research on known and potential social and environmental impacts across product life cycles. TSC acknowledges that other issues exist, but we have included here those that are most relevant to the decision making of retail buying teams and manufacturers. The topics are listed alphabetically for ease of reading; the order does not represent prioritization or other criteria.



Managing the Supply Chain

Deforestation

When sourcing wood and wood fiber, look for manufacturers that use sourcing policies that monitor progress on zero deforestation commitments. Sourcing policies should also promote protection of high conservation value forest habitats, which have unique plants and animals. Requiring third-party audits or certifications based on site-specific observations can reduce risks of deforestation. This also reduces risk of biodiversity loss, reduced ecosystem quality, and increased greenhouse gas emissions from unsustainable forest management for wood-based product production.



Use of Resources

Climate and Energy

Pulp production and final manufacturing of household paper products consume significant amounts of electricity and energy, leading to greenhouse gas emissions. Manufacturers and their suppliers can help abate these impacts by measuring, tracking and reporting energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, with a focus on reduction; performing preventative maintenance on equipment; replacing inefficient equipment; using renewable energy; and encouraging efficient energy behaviors throughout their operations.

Packaging

Packaging design should be optimized to ensure that packaging performs its essential functions of containment and protection while minimizing use of material, energy resources, and environmental impacts across the life cycle of the packaged product. Under-packaging and over-packaging can both lead to increased impacts. These impacts may be mitigated through more energy efficient manufacturing, creating packaging materials from renewable resources, designing packaging to be recyclable, and the encouragement of consumer recycling.

Water

Pulp production for making household paper products may use a significant amount of freshwater, which can be problematic in water-stressed regions, however most of the water used in paper making is returned to the environment. Manufacturers should procure pulp from suppliers that measure water use, and perform water use assessments throughout their supply chain in order to map water risk in different geographical regions to mitigate impacts associated with freshwater depletion. Manufacturers should assure that water pollution is avoided throughout their supply chain, especially where local government monitoring is insufficient.



Workers and Communities

Workers

To help ensure worker health and safety and labor rights, manufacturers should have a documented health and safety management plan, including a chemical management plan, where needed, and provide safety training and personal protective equipment to workers. Manufacturers should procure materials from suppliers that address worker health and safety and labor rights transparently and should perform audits when needed. This is important because workers may be exposed to dust, noise, chemicals, or other industrial hazards.