

Itochu reduces stake in pulp producer Metsä Fibre

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Japanese trading company Itochu has reduced its stake in Finnish pulp producer Metsä Fibre. In a transaction concluded on 4 February, Itochu sold 5.1 per cent of the shares to Metsäliitto Cooperative, the parent company of the Metsä Group. Metsäliitto Cooperative has thus lifted its stake in Metsä Fibre to 55.2 per cent. Itochu now holds 19.9 per cent of the shares, whereas Metsä Board's 24.9 per cent share remains unchanged.

Itochu said it had steadily expanded its pulp business since taking a stake in Metsä Fibre via its subsidiary Itochu Fibre Limited (IFL) in 2012. In recent years, however, the pulp business has faced structural challenges, including a market slowdown and a sharp rise in raw material cost, according to Itochu. The Japanese company says it wants to remain on board as a strategic minority shareholder and continue its long-term commercial cooperation with Metsä Group.

Metsä starts up lignin processing demonstration plant

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Metsä Group has brought a lignin processing demonstration plant on stream at its Äänekoski site in Finland. The Andritz-supplied facility marks the first demonstration-scale application of Ligni Ox technology and is expected to pave the way for new lignin products, allowing the company to generate additional value from pulp side streams.

According to Metsä Fibre CEO Ismo Nousiainen, the objective is to use wood as a raw material as efficiently as possible while maximising the value derived from pulp production side streams.

“Lignin is traditionally used as bioenergy. However, there are a number of other potential applications where lignin can replace fossil raw materials. The purpose of the demo system is to confirm the functionality of the production process and the characteristics of the product as well as its market suitability. If everything goes according to plan, the next step would be to design and possibly build a production-scale plant,” Mr Nousiainen commented.

Metsä Group’s bioproduct and pulp mills already produce a large number of by-products. Among the best known are tall oil, turpentine, electricity and heat.

The Äänekoski site also produces sulphuric acid, biogas and methanol, amongst others, on an industrial scale. On the same site, Metsä also operates demonstration plants for textile fibres and firer-based packaging.

Coveris divests paper division

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Austrian packaging producer Coveris has agreed to sell its labels and fibre-based packaging business (“Business Unit Paper”) to US private equity firm Kingswood Capital Management as the group steps up its strategic focus on flexible packaging.

The divestment covers ten sites, nine of which are located in the UK and one in the Czech Republic. The transaction includes the entire labels segment, spanning both paper- and plastic-based products, a company spokesperson told EUWID.

Operating previously under the name Paragon Print and Packaging, the business manufactures fibre-based packaging solutions and labels for a range of end markets such as food, fresh produce, beverages, household goods and personal care.

The agreement was signed in January 2026 and remains subject to customary closing conditions, with completion expected in the first quarter. Once the transaction has been finalised, the division will continue as an independent company under its former brand Paragon Print and Packaging.

Current Coveris COO Jo Ormrod is to assume the role of CEO, while the broader management team will remain unchanged, signalling continuity for the business.

Paragon Print and Packaging is projected to achieve annual revenue of roughly €270m and employ about 1,400 people. Coveris owner Sun Capital Partners acquired Paragon Print and Packaging in 2013.

Workers launch indefinite strike at Ence's Navia pulp mill amid layoffs dispute

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Ence Navia pulp mill has been on strike since last Friday, with workers protesting planned layoffs affecting 97 people. Negotiations between Ence and workers's representatives are ongoing.



The Navia pulp mill operated by Spanish producer Ence has

been hit by strike action. In response to the company's announcement that 97 of the nearly 370 positions at the Navia site would be eliminated under Spain's collective redundancy procedure ERE, employees launched an indefinite strike on 13 February.

At the Navia mill in north-western Spain, Ence produces 685,000 tpy of bleached eucalyptus kraft pulp (BEK). The mill's employees had already been on strike from 28 January to 4 February.

Negotiations with Ence have so far failed to produce the desired outcome, according to the Uso Industria trade union. In an initial step, Ence reportedly offered to reduce the planned layoffs to 89 positions, but employee representatives are demanding that the job cuts be halted or minimized and implemented in the most socially responsible manner.

Ence says the job reductions in Navia form part of a programme aimed at improving efficiency and competitiveness in its pulp division. The programme, scheduled for implementation in 2026-2027, is based on the introduction of AI solutions, the redesign and automation of processes, and the improvement and rationalisation of operational workflows. Implementation of these measures would lead to an "orderly reduction of the company's workforce structure by 2027." Negotiations with employee representatives are ongoing, and the company is working to reach an agreement, a company spokesperson said.

Ence has presented the possibility of implementing a new moulded fibre packaging project in Navia. This would reportedly diversify production at the site, strengthen its long-term future, and create new employment opportunities. However, the investment decision is tied to the outcome of the negotiations and to "the existence of a stable and collaborative environment that ensures the long-term viability of new industrial investments," the spokesperson said.

Employee representatives, led by the works council, remain unconvinced by the investment proposal, even though it could involve the reintegration of around 40 employees within two years. They criticised the company for presenting the project only shortly before the start of the major strike. Moreover, it would not provide genuine employment guarantees, the works council stated in a communication released by the Uso Industria union.

Zeus Packaging acquires Koex, partners with E&B

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Ireland-based Zeus Packaging has continued its expansion strategy with the acquisition of Koex Packaging Solutions and the launch of a strategic partnership with UK machinery supplier Engelmann & Buckham (E&B). The moves are aimed at strengthening the group's international footprint while broadening its automation and high-value packaging offering.

Koex is headquartered in Madrid and specialises in premium and retail packaging, with sites in Miami, Paris as well as manufacturing operations in Fuzhou, China. Koex manufactures paper and plastic bags, cartons, transport and e-commerce packaging, gift wraps and other packaging formats and serves customers across the United States and Europe.

With the takeover, Zeus aims to enhance its premium retail and luxury packaging expertise while increasing production and logistics capacity in Europe and extending its reach into North America.

E&B partnership targets integrated automation solutions

In parallel, Zeus has entered a strategic collaboration with Engelmann & Buckham to deliver integrated packaging automation and consumables solutions for UK customers. Together, the companies intend to provide manufacturers, logistics operators, food producers and e-commerce businesses with a single-source offering covering machinery specification, installation and ongoing consumables supply as well as maintenance support.

Under the agreement between the two companies, Zeus will act as the commercial partner, working with clients to assess production processes and automation needs. For its part, Engelmann & Buckham will handle machinery design, integration, installation and commissioning, the companies say.

Lower prices put Sappi's results under pressure

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Amid difficult market conditions, Sappi reported significantly lower results in the first quarter of its financial year (October-December 2025) than in the same quarter of the previous year. Sappi's net result was negative (\$-37m), as was its operating result (\$-18m), with slightly lower sales of \$1.29bn.

Macroeconomic pressures, low consumer confidence and overcapacity led to price declines in all of the company's product segments. Furthermore, planned and unplanned operational disruptions affected production, sales volumes and costs, the company said.

Sappi's sales volumes of graphic papers declined by 9 per cent year-on-year, which the company attributed primarily to the conversion of fine paper machine PM 2 to SBS board at the Somerset mill in the US. Oversupply and the ongoing structural decline in demand put pressure on sales prices, although prices in North America were more stable due to the better regional balance between supply and demand.

Sappi recorded higher sales of packaging and speciality papers in all three of its regions. However, the company described underlying demand for corrugated board in Europe and North America as weak, with oversupply prevailing. 4 per cent lower sales prices and higher costs weighed on the division's results. Sappi cited the scheduled shutdown at the Somerset mill and the restart of the PM 2, as well as operational disruptions in North America, as the biggest cost drivers.

Demand for dissolving pulp remained solid, with Sappi increasing its sales in the pulp segment by around 10 per cent. However, there was considerable price pressure, with prices in US dollars 12 per cent below the previous year.

In December, Sappi announced its intention to merge its graphic paper business with that of UPM in a joint venture. Against the backdrop of a shrinking market, Sappi said it was necessary to consolidate the supply side. The company expects synergy effects of at least \$100m per year. Sappi and UPM intend to sign definitive agreements in the first half of 2026 and expect the transaction to be completed by the end of the year, subject to all conditions precedent being satisfied.

Sappi results		
million \$	October - December	
	2025	2024
Key figures		
Sales	1,287	1,363
Operating result	-18	121
Net result	-37	70
Business area review		
Europe		
Sales	532	552
Operating result	10	12
North America		
Sales	395	458
Operating result	-34	46
South Africa		
Sales	360	353
Operating result	9	69
Deliveries (1,000 t)		
Pulp	379	346
Packaging + specialty papers	343	325
Graphic papers	490	536
Forestry	333	294
Source: Sappi		

SCA ramping up output on Obbola kraftliner machine as planned

Weak market environment and low pulp prices weigh on FY results

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Swedish forestry and paper group Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget (SCA) continues to gradually ramp up production on the new kraftliner machine at its Obbola mill in Sweden. Last year, PM 2 achieved a production volume of around 600,000 t. In the coming quarters, it will be crucial to synchronise the increasing production with the market recovery and improving deliveries in Europe, SCA says.

The progress is in line with its plans, according to the company. PM 2 was started up at the end of 2022 and has a design capacity of 725,000 tpy when fully utilised, according to SCA. The company had originally said that it was planning to reach target capacity in 2026.

At present, however, the production ramp-up is not a technical issue but rather a question of sales opportunities. Anders Edholm, Senior Vice President Sustainability and Communications, said during the presentation of the latest financial figures in early February that weak market conditions in Europe currently made it impossible to place additional volumes in the region. As a result, the company had to target overseas markets, albeit at significantly lower margins.

The focus right now was on continuing the planned ramp-up of the machine, he added. Simultaneously, SCA is hoping for a market rebound, which it could especially take advantage of. Mr Edholm added that the company is now awaiting a market recovery, which would allow it to benefit significantly from the additional volumes.

At the beginning of the first quarter of 2026, prices in the kraftliner business declined by around €20/t, according to SCA. It remains to be seen whether the price increases announced by suppliers of recycled corrugated case material in mid-January will go through. If these are successfully implemented, this could also have an impact on fresh-fibre papers. "When that happens, then, of course, that will give a price push also for kraftliner in a later stage," Mr Edholm said.

Decline in full year 2025 earnings

In an ongoing difficult market environment, SCA's consolidated sales were nearly stable in 2025, but the group recorded a significant drop in earnings. Negative earnings effects had a particularly adverse impact, along with higher raw material costs and lower sales prices in several product areas, the company said in its recently published annual report. Ebitda sank to SEK6.6bn,

compared to SEK7.1bn in 2024. Operating profit came in lower at SEK4.4bn, while net earnings declined to SEK 3.2bn.

According to the company, the industry was affected in 2025 by weak demand in large swaths of the market, high wood input costs and unfavourable exchange rates. These factors weighed on margins, even though delivery volumes increased in several business areas. SCA also pointed to the advantages of its integrated value chain, which ensures a relatively cost-efficient supply of raw materials and energy.

The downward earnings trend was especially evident in the pulp business, where Ebitda tumbled by 55 per cent. This was attributed to lower sales prices, negative currency effects and increased raw material costs for wood.

The earnings pressure continued in the fourth quarter. The ongoing weakness in Europe's industrial production particularly affected the packaging paper market, while the pulp markets in Europe and the USA remained subdued. Only in China did the company see more stable demand.

Pulp: NBSK list prices rise, discounts reduce near-term revenues

In the pulp segment, reference prices have been rising again recently. However, according to the company, these initially only offset the higher annual discounts in the mid-single-digit percentage range that were granted in the European market. Several price rounds in the first quarter should gradually compensate for this effect, according to SCA. Nevertheless, the average price level in the first quarter will initially be below that of the fourth quarter. Moreover, the strengthening of the Swedish krona versus the US dollar adversely impacts the earnings situation.

SCA also said it is continuing the strategic realignment of its portfolio. The group has exited the publication paper business and is increasingly investing in growth areas such as fibre-based packaging, pulp, wood products and renewable energy. Several major investment projects that are currently being implemented aim to strengthen cash flow generation in the medium term and improve competitiveness.

SCA results				
million SEK	October - December		January - December	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
Key figures				
Sales	4,893	5,135	20,427	20,232
EBITDA	1,236	1,649	6,564	7,143
Operating result	697	1,113	4,432	5,027
Net result	485	820	3,205	3,639
Business area review				
Forest				
Sales	2,544	2,323	9,962	8,830
EBITDA	927	901	3,788	3,531
Wood				
Sales	1,350	1,416	6,125	5,539
EBITDA	78	234	856	927
Pulp				
Sales	1,758	2,052	7,143	8,058
EBITDA	-71	286	752	1,680
Deliveries, 1,000 t	265	257	987	988
Containerboard				
Sales	1,744	1,618	6,992	6,434
EBITDA	227	242	1,111	932
Deliveries kraftliner, 1,000 t	246	209	948	893
Renewable Energy				
Sales	577	531	2,051	2,050
EBITDA	142	90	442	451
Source: SCA				

Norske Skog raises sales and earnings as Golbey PM 1 still continues to impact profitability

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Norway's paper producer Norske Skog has reported a better performance in 2025. Sales revenues rose by around 2 per cent, and both operating profit and net profit were well above the previous year's level – despite higher material and distribution costs and increased depreciations. The main drivers were substantially lower impairment charges and positive contributions from derivatives and other fair value measurements.

Looking at the company's fourth-quarter performance, Norske Skog underscored a positive Ebitda and better earnings than in the same period one year earlier. However, the company was unable to return to profitability in the fourth quarter of the year.

Norske Skog's Publication Paper business saw declining sales volumes and lower prices last year. However, this segment reaped the rewards of lower input costs and reduced staffing and distribution costs. Lower impairment charges also had a positive impact on earnings. As a result, full-year Ebitda rose by 44 per cent compared to the previous year.

At the same time, Norske Skog posted much weaker full-year earnings from its Packaging Paper division. The new recycled corrugated case material PM 1 in Golbey, France, has increased packaging paper capacity since May last year, driving sales volumes up by 80,000 t compared with the previous year. This also led to a 44 per cent increase in sales revenues in the packaging paper segment. However, ramp-up costs for the new machine in Golbey, together with low selling prices – not least because of high export volumes – made a dent in these operations' profitability.

According to Norske Skog, the ramp-up of the new recycled corrugated case material machine in France is proceeding as planned, and the company expects PM 1 to reach full capacity in the first half of next year. The company expects the margins to improve in 2026, as roughly 80 per cent of PM 1's output in Golbey will be delivered to Europe and around 60 per cent will be sold on annual contracts.

Book paper project at Skogn mill slated for completion in second quarter

In addition to the PM 1 in Golbey, Norske Skog has launched several development projects to broaden its portfolio and strengthen its position in what remains a challenging market environment. One of these projects is currently under review at the Saugbrugs mill in Norway (see separate article). If it goes ahead, Norske Skog would extend its corrugated case material paper portfolio to include primary fibre-based grades.

Another project is currently underway at the Skogn mill and is scheduled for completion as early as the second quarter. In the future, Norske Skog plans to use PM 1 not only for newsprint but also for book paper, which will be marketed under the Nor Book brand. The company lists the production capacity of PM 1 at 140,000 tpy.

Looking ahead, the Norwegian paper producer is striking a distinctly combative tone. While Norske Skog still expects highly volatile raw material prices, structural overcapacity and frequently changing operating conditions, the company still plans to continue growing its market share. To remain competitive in this difficult market environment, the group says it is increasingly focusing on lower production costs and reducing working capital.

Norske Skog results				
million NOK	October - December		January - December	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
Key figures				
Sales	2,473	2,488	9,445	9,233
EBITDA	13	33	769	736
Operating profit	-194	-353	563	-60
Net result	-235	-745	404	-982
Business area review				
Publication Paper Europe				
Sales	2,040	2,226	8,056	8,359
EBITDA	144	40	1,107	769
Production 1,000 t	277	281	1,093	1,124
Deliveries 1,000 t	286	291	1,092	1,115
Packaging paper				
Sales	310	187	1,036	721
EBITDA	-126	3	-308	6
Production 1,000 t	90	40	264	164
Deliveries 1,000 t	82	41	248	162
Other activities				
Sales	163	220	827	802
EBITDA	-5	-10	-32	-39
Source: Norske Skog				

Stora Enso increases packaging paper production capacity

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Paper and packaging manufacturer Stora Enso has expanded production capacity at two of its packaging paper mills, Varkaus and Ostrołęka, adding a combined 20,000 tpy, according to information published in the company's 2025 annual report.

The report shows that capacity at the Varkaus mill in Finland has risen by 10,000 t year-on-year to 420,000 tpy. The site produces unbleached and white-top kraftliner on PM 3 and employs around 270 people. In addition, Stora Enso also reports that annual production volume of the Polish Ostrołęka paper mill increased by 10,000 tpy to 670,000 tpy. The integrated site in eastern Poland (north of Warsaw) is designed to produce testliner as well as other packaging paper qualities such as sack kraft paper and brown, lightweight MG kraft paper.

Responding to a query from EUWID, a Stora Enso spokesperson said that the expansion primarily results from efficiency-enhancement measures and not from specific investments or upgrades.

Stora Enso also announced to have adopted a new financial reporting structure as of 1 January 2026 as part of its increased focus on renewable materials and packaging.

Indian publishers warn of newsprint shortage

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The Indian Newspaper Society (INS), an association representing the country's newspaper publishers, has warned of a persistent supply bottleneck for newsprint. The organisation reported that India consumed an average of roughly 1.2 million tpy of newsprint, while domestic production was struggling to pass the 500,000 tpy mark. This meant that local paper mills covered only around 40 per cent of demand.

The INS warned that the acute shortage of newsprint risked inflicting long-term structural damage on the domestic press. Since no significant expansion of domestic production capacity had taken place for many years, publishers had been forced to rely on imports to secure supply for more than two decades. The association stressed that these imports were essential to ensure the “uninterrupted supply and distribution” of newspapers and to safeguard a functioning supply of information to the public sphere.

In addition to the tight supply situation, the continuing 5 per cent customs duty on imported newsprint is placing a heavy burden on publishers in India. The INS has repeatedly urged the Indian government to abolish this duty, according to the association's 2024/2025 annual report. In view of rising prices driven by the depreciation of the Indian currency, ongoing supply chain issues, and logistical disruptions, the association said there was no substantive justification for the duty.

The INS also pointed to geopolitical tensions, particularly in connection with the Russia-Ukraine war, which have restricted transport options. Supply constraints were likewise being exacerbated by structural issues in India, including quality concerns, production bottlenecks, the conversion of machines to packaging grades, and the lack of availability of standard and improved newsprint as well as LWC grades below 70 g/m².

In light of India's reliance on imports, the free trade agreement (FTA) concluded between the EU and India at the end of January 2026 takes on added significance for European paper producers. The deal provides for the phased elimination of tariffs on more than 90 per cent of goods traded and, according to information obtained by EUWID, also covers products in HS chapters 47 to 49, including pulp, paper and board.

The entry into force of the FTA and any subsequent adjustment of the 5 per cent import duty on publication papers entering India might improve market access for foreign suppliers.

FEAD, Recycling Europe and other associations call for postponement of Diwass launch

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Beginning 21 May, the exchange of documents in administrative procedures related to transboundary shipments of waste is to be handled digitally via the EU platform Diwass (Digital Waste Shipment System). However, there have been delays, and some stakeholders argue that there continue to be aspects of the system which are unsuited in practical application.

For this reason, eight European associations from the recycling and waste management, glass, copper and plastics industries sent a letter to EU Environment Commissioner Jessika Roswall last week. In this letter, they request a one-year extension to the transition period before the Diwass is introduced, in order to ensure a “smooth and efficient implementation” of the new rules, in particular for shipments within the Union.

The new digital system is intended to apply both to the prior notification and consent procedure for hazardous waste and to the Annex VII form for cross-border shipments of “greenlisted” waste, such as recovered paper, which is not subject to the notification procedure.

Delays in practical implementation

The associations point out that when the revised EU Waste Shipment Regulation (WSR) was adopted in 2024, a 24-month implementation period, meant to allow authorities and businesses to prepare, was foreseen to. “In practice, however, preparation has been delayed: the Diwass implementing rules were only adopted in July 2025, key technical documentation for system integration was only published at the end of January 2026, the user interface is not yet operational, and pre-registration of the thousands of affected operators has not begun,” the letter states. As a result, operators were left with only a few months to adapt to a complex new system, making a transitional period essential.

The signatories also stress that automated interconnections between company IT systems and Diwass or equivalent national tools are necessary to reduce transition costs, avoid duplicate data entry and ensure that digitalisation delivers “real operational added value”.

According to the letter, several EU member states have already granted similar transition periods for the introduction of their own digital systems in order to ensure a smooth changeover. The associations urge the Commission to lead and coordinate a harmonised approach among member states with regard to an extended transition period for the use of Diwass, even while

acknowledging that the Commission's influence over national enforcement decisions is limited.

During an extended transition period, the associations support allowing shipment documents to be made available by means other than the Diwass platform, with alternatives to include paper form carried in the transport vehicle.

Two-day lead time deemed impractical

With regard to the use of the Annex VII form for transports of waste not subject to the notification procedure under the new digital system, the eight associations are calling for the repeal of the requirement to submit the form at least two working days before the start of the shipment.

They also argue that it should be permissible to enter estimated waste quantities before departure, as actual quantities can only be confirmed upon arrival at the weighbridge of the receiving facility.

The letter's signatories maintain that the two-working-day notification requirement is unrealistic and impractical. Unlike maritime transport, shipments – particularly within the EU – are often planned only hours in advance in order to meet customer demand or optimise transport efficiency. The issue is especially acute in border regions, where spontaneous shipments are common as logistics companies attempt to avoid empty return trips. In addition, the requirement hampers immediate take-back when shipments are refused by a receiving facility.

New Eren Paper PM could sustainably reshape UK market structure

Overcapacities weigh on British market for recycled containerboard grades

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The UK containerboard market is entering a phase of structural change, driven by growing European overcapacity and the start-up of Eren Paper's 750,000 tpy machine in Shotton, Wales. The Shotton machine alone is expected to shift the UK from a net importer to a potential export market, heightening displacement competition. These developments were at the centre of a presentation given by Frauke Schmidt, EUWID Pulp and Paper, at the 113th SPA (Sheet Plant Association) conference in Silverstone.

Over the past two years, price developments for brown recycled containerboard in the UK have been significantly more stable than on mainland European markets. Cost-driven price increases implemented on the Continent in several instalments at the beginning of the year typically reached the UK market with a delay, and the final instalment frequently failed to materialise on the British market.

At the same time, recycled containerboard prices in the UK then tended to remain comparatively stable for several months, while on the continent they often declined as quickly as they had risen. In many cases, price increase attempts in mainland Europe collided with a downward trend already emerging in the British market.

A similar pattern was evident at the beginning of 2026. Price reductions of €10-30/t for brown recycled containerboard grades, largely implemented on the Continent in January, were often only introduced in the UK in February – at a time when continental European producers had already announced new price increases.

European RCCM supply overhang has increased since 2023

Whether the pattern observed in 2024 and 2025 will repeat itself in 2026 remains uncertain. While the cost situation for paper producers resembles that of previous years, with recovered paper and energy prices rising at the start of the year, the market balance has shifted further towards oversupply.

Since 2023, around 3 million t of new capacity have entered the market, while only about 2 million t have been withdrawn. Over 1 million t of new European capacity are expected this year from machine start-ups at Eren Paper in Shotton and at DS Smith in Lucca. Moreover, more than 2 million t of new capacity have been added in the Turkish market since the start of 2024.

Against this backdrop, it is becoming increasingly difficult for paper producers to enforce their price targets. High costs combined with limited market growth are intensifying margin pressure and raising the likelihood of further capacity closures, Ms Schmidt expects.

New Eren machine set to intensify displacement competition

The UK containerboard market is facing a profound shift with the start-up of Eren Paper's new machine, which has a capacity of 750,000 tpy. With the new machine, the UK recycled containerboard market is expected to shift from a net importer to an export market, with tougher displacement competition on the horizon.

Industry observers expect noticeable effects on the recovered paper market as well as on competitive intensity and market concentration. Declining collection volumes in the UK recovered paper market will be coinciding with additional demand when the new machine is being ramped up. For 2025, collection volumes are expected to fall further to around 6 million t, compared with approximately 8 million t in 2015, while Eren Paper's fibre requirements amount to 830,000 t.

RCCM Import volumes most likely affected by start-up of Shotton mill

Apart from Saica's mill in Partington, recycled containerboard machines in the UK – including DS Smith Kemsley and Smurfit Westrock's mills in Snodland and Birmingham – each have capacities below 300,000 tpy and could therefore come under increased competitive pressure. However, these companies are highly integrated with own recycling and converting operations.

Experts therefore expect the new machine in Shotton primarily to substitute import volumes. According to data from the Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI), around 750,000 t of recycled corrugated case material were imported into the UK, out of total consumption exceeding 2 million t. By far the largest share of these imports – over 300,000 t – originated from Germany, followed by France with more than 100,000 t.

Turkey has rapidly increased its market presence, becoming the third-largest supplier with shipments exceeding 70,000 t in the same period, compared with around 16,000 t in full-year 2024 – more than quadrupling its volumes. This is also reflective of the new capacities that recently came onstream in Turkey, according to Ms Schmidt.

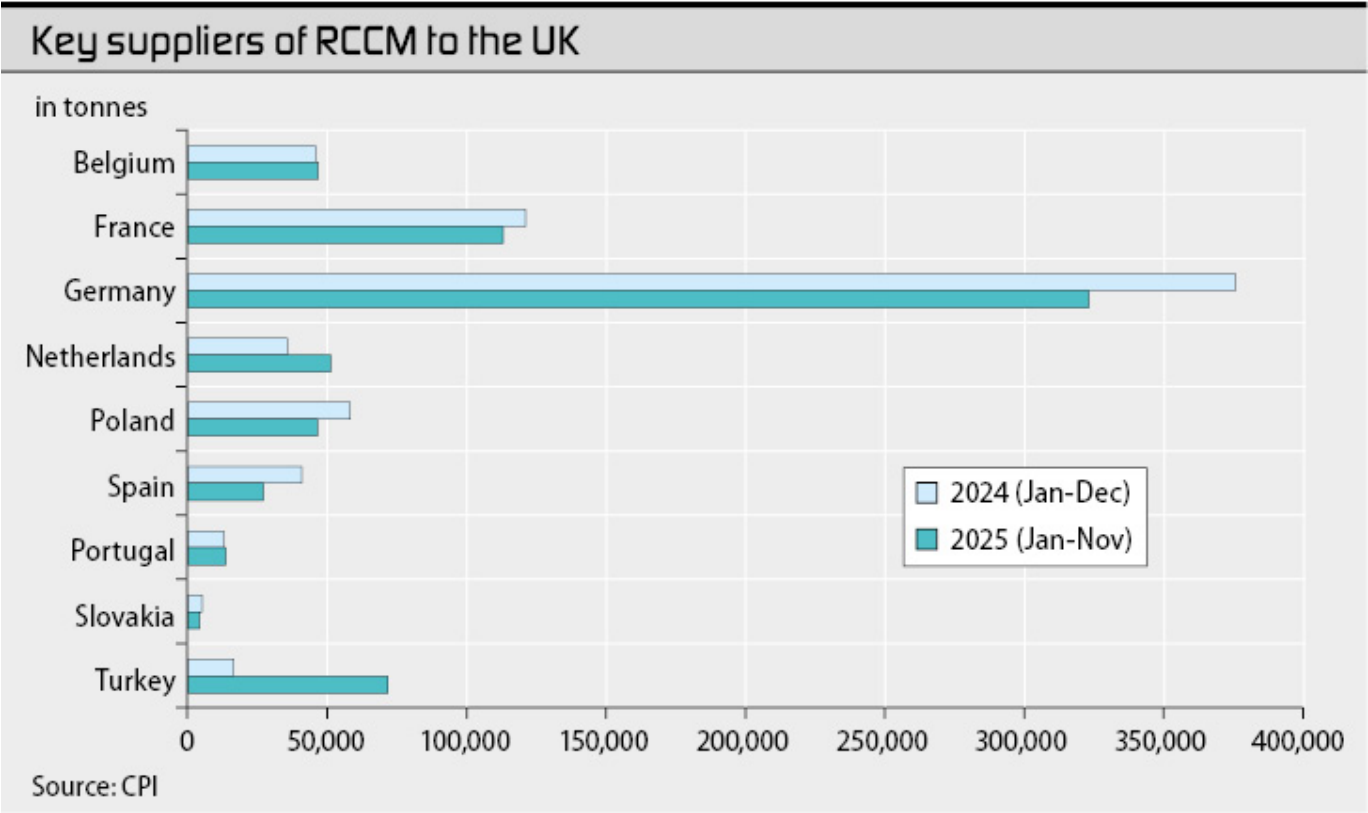
Market concentration in the UK likely to increase further

While concentration on the British corrugated market is already elevated by European standards, further consolidation and integration along the supply chain is widely expected. The UK market is dominated by three major producers – International Paper (DS Smith), Saica, and Smurfit Westrock – which complement their paper operations with in-house recycling and packaging activities. Several continental European producers are also present with converting operations, including Palm Paper (Hargreaves), VPK (Corrboard, Ribble Packaging, Encase, among others), Progroup (Ellesmere Port), and Mondi (Mondi Birmingham).

Eren Paper is pursuing a similar integration strategy. In 2025, the company acquired the UK sheet feeder Onboard from Klingele, marking Klingele's exit from the British market. Eren has also taken over several smaller packaging manufacturers, including

Diamond Box, Westbury Packaging, and BM Packaging.

Planning permission would allow the company to install its own corrugator at the Shotton site. However, CEO and board member Dr Sabri Çimen told EUWID that there are currently no concrete plans to move forward with the project.



Cepi warns of an outflow of recycled fibres from the European internal market

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Europe is accelerating the changeover from plastic packaging to packaging made from paper and board. According to Cepi, this development is based on decades of investments in recycling and circular structures, thanks to which the region boasts globally leading recycling rates. The confederation emphasises that recycled fibres must circulate within the EU's Single Market as far as possible in order to secure Europe's leading role in the area of sustainable packaging systems.

According to Cepi, the latest development was above all triggered by the EU's 2019 Single Use Plastics Directive, which has clearly accelerated the replacement of plastic packaging with paper and board. Cepi reports that paper packaging has meanwhile become the preferred solution for sustainably-minded consumers and brand producers.

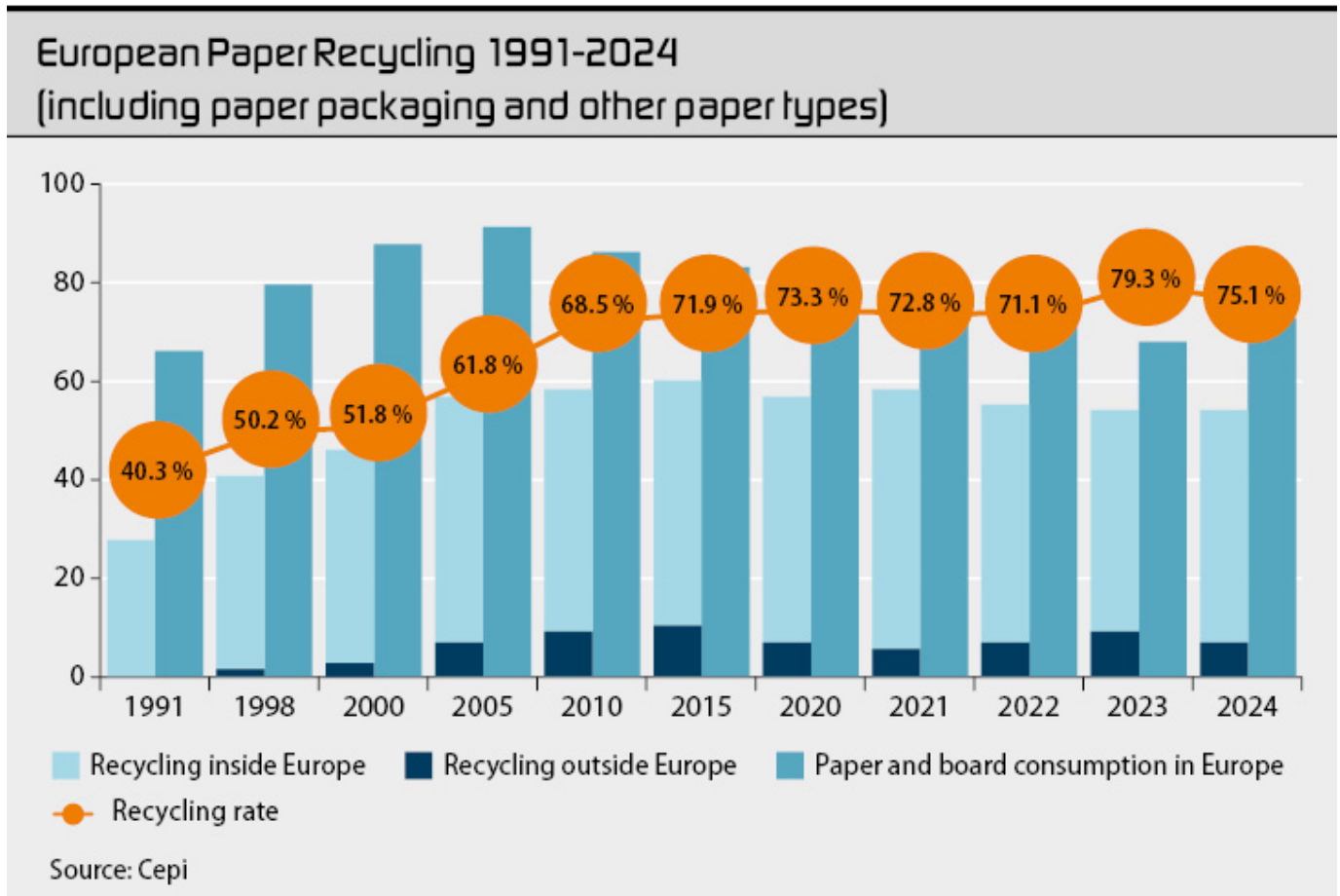
The recycling rate for paper-based packaging in Europe currently stands at 87 per cent, which means it already exceeds the recycling targets set by the EU for the end of the decade, reports Cepi. Europe's paper value chain aims to reach a 90 per cent recycling rate for paper-based packaging by 2030. Compared globally, Europe therefore attains the highest recycling rates for paper packaging.

Cepi attributes this achievement to long-term investment in recycling capacities and circular structures. For more than a decade now, Europe has recycled more paper and board packaging by weight than all of the other packaging materials together. For large parts of the European packaging industry, recycled fibres have become a major raw material.

Cepi writes: "This achievement is the result of a process in which Cepi has played a proactive role, in close coordination with the whole pulp and paper value chain, including waste management companies and fast-moving consumer goods producers." The confederation refers to the 4evergreen alliance as a central platform, which was founded shortly after the Single Use Plastics Directive took effect. Cepi additionally refers to standardised recyclability test methods and a European network of corresponding testing laboratories. According to the confederation, these initiatives form the technical bases for the implementation of the EU's Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) and the related "design for recycling" criteria.

Cepi emphasises that recycled fibres are internationally increasingly regarded as a precious resource, with global competition clearly growing over the past two decades. However, in line with the EU's Waste Shipment Regulation, exports of recyclable waste are only allowed exceptionally, and are restricted to countries and facilities able to demonstrate operating standards equivalent to those of the European Union's.

According to Cepi, Europe has a strategic advantage in this regard: the new EU Bioeconomy Strategy published last November aims at strengthening European leadership in bio-based materials. With paper numbering among the most frequently used bio-based materials, the new strategy's ambitious objectives underline the urgency of keeping recycled fibres within the EU Single Market, helping it to stay at the forefront of the paperisation of packaging.



UK to test food packaging under first PFAS plan

 **EUWID +** 18 February 2026 |  ~ 1 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

The UK government has presented its first national plan to address the risks posed by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The strategy outlines a coordinated framework for regulators, industry and businesses to better understand the sources, environmental entry pathways and exposure routes of these so-called “forever chemicals.”

PFAS are widely used in industrial applications. However, due to their persistence in the environment, they are increasingly suspected of posing long-term risks to human health and ecosystems.

For the paper and packaging sector, the plan contains a potentially significant measure: authorities intend to test food packaging – including microwave popcorn bags and pizza boxes – to trace the presence of PFAS and support possible future regulatory action.

The initiative suggests that fibre-based packaging with grease- and moisture-resistant barriers could face closer scrutiny as policymakers consider further regulatory steps.

In addition, the UK government plans to work with businesses to explore how production processes can be adapted to enable PFAS-free products while ensuring they remain affordable for consumers.

At the same time, new guidance is set to help regulators and plant operators improve the handling, monitoring and disposal of PFAS in order to reduce industrial emissions.

Muted recovery in decor paper demand

 **EUWID +** 18 February 2026 |  ~ 2 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

Following a slowdown in November and December 2025 and the production stoppages that many producers and converters extended over the Christmas and New Year period, decor paper markets in virtually all regions and sales segments got off to a sluggish start in January 2026. Many converters did not resume business until the second week of January. Capacity utilisation is barely better than in the fourth quarter, meaning that most companies are buying decor paper only cautiously. There are still no signs of any real pickup in demand, and some market players expect conditions to soften again rather than seeing a turnaround in February and March.

In response to weak fourth-quarter performance, most wood-based panel and surface producers had already gradually scaled back output towards the end of the year and reduced their stocks of intermediate products by reducing their purchases. Over the Christmas and New Year period, production was suspended for somewhat more than two weeks in many cases, with some plants staying closed for even longer. Additional production cutbacks are now planned in January.

Production trends in the decor paper industry have followed a similar pattern in recent weeks. Due to insufficient order intake, a few manufacturers had already taken some downtime in November, before returning to relatively normal output levels in the first half of December. Most paper machines were then taken offline again before Christmas and, after roughly two weeks, restarted in the second week of January. In some cases, the ramp-up took longer. Most paper machines have been running normally since the third week of January.

Market-related stoppages are not planned for the time being, and decor paper producers are aiming to run continuously until Easter. However, as order intake remains subdued, doubts are growing about whether this target can be achieved. If inventories build up too strongly, production may have to be adjusted as early as February or March.

As expected, talks to determine decor paper prices for first-quarter deliveries dragged on, with concrete talks not taking place until January in many places. Decor paper producers sought to push through increases, citing higher pulp and energy costs, although increased pulp cost are being partially offset by the weaker dollar and higher discounts at the start of 2026. Titanium dioxide prices had declined slightly in the fourth quarter, and some prices were further adjusted downwards in the first quarter.

Many newly concluded decor paper contracts ultimately rolled over existing prices in the first quarter, although manufacturers reported securing slight increases for certain product groups. Major buyers said they largely fended off the price increase demands, in some cases keeping prices unchanged by shifting around orders.

Navigator launches a price hike initiative for kraft papers

 **EUWID+** 18 February 2026 |  ~ 1 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

The Navigator Company has decided to increase prices for its bleached and unbleached kraft papers. The price hikes are effective for all shipments as of 1 April and will vary from 5 to 10 per cent depending on market and segments, according to Navigator. The company cites a “significant cost escalation across key input factors, including most raw materials, energy, logistics and labour” as the reason for the price increase.

Heinzel to increase kraft paper prices

 **EUWID +** 18 February 2026 |  ~ 1 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

Austria's **Heinzel Group** has announced plans to raise prices for its entire range of kraft papers. According to the company, kraft paper prices are set to rise by €70-100/t, depending on the type and segment. Heinzel says these plans reflect significantly higher raw material costs. The mark-ups are to be implemented no later than 1 April.

Sappi Europe to increase label paper prices

 **EUWID +** 18 February 2026 |  ~ 1 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

Sappi Europe is set to increase the prices for label papers by 8-10 per cent as of 1 April. The price hike will apply to the entire range of Sappi's label papers, including wet and non-wet strength glue label paper as well as self-adhesive face paper. The company attributes this decision to low and unsustainable prices for label prices, following an extended period of downward pressure.

Burgo to hike woodfree coated and uncoated paper prices

 **EUWID +** 18 February 2026 |  ~ 1 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

Burgo Group plans to hike prices for its entire range of woodfree papers. Prices for woodfree coated and uncoated reels and sheets are to increase by a minimum of €50/t for deliveries with effect from 1 April, according to the company.

Lecta to increase prices for coated woodfree papers

 **EUWID+** 18 February 2026 |  ~ 1 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

Lecta has announced a price increase for its entire range of two-side coated woodfree papers due to a progressive rise in production and raw material costs. Prices are to go up by 8 per cent effective 1 April 2026.

Mercer reduces steam demand and fresh water consumption at Rosenthal pulp mill

 **EUWID+** 18 February 2026 |  ~ 1 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

Mercer International has started up a new evaporator system at its Rosenthal pulp mill (360,000 tpy NBSK) in Germany. The upgrade to the cooking liquid evaporator (CLE), supplied by Valmet, will enable more efficient use of steam in the cooking process and greater condensate recovery. According to Mercer, the efficiency measures will reduce total steam demand at the site by optimising steam use. This will also free up additional capacity for electricity generation, reduce freshwater withdrawal through improved condensate recovery and lower the need for water treatment chemicals.

Germany: more fine paper mills announce price hikes in February

Kraftliner market increasingly feels the downward pressure

 18 February 2026 |  ~ 7 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

Price increase announcements are piling up on Germany's fine paper market. Coated and uncoated woodfree paper manufacturers are looking to push through hikes of varying magnitudes and at different points in time. However, printers doubt that these rises will be implemented anytime soon in Germany.

Paper manufacturers doing business on the magazine paper market in Germany feel that higher prices are urgently needed for LWC and SC paper, as well. Producers report feeling under pressure, not least from advertising industry clients, saying that this had recently led to special prices in what was an increasingly competitive market.

In the corrugated case material market, brown kraftliner has come under increased pressure in recent weeks. Higher prices are said to be necessary for these grades, too. However, the price gap to recycled corrugated case material grades is already very wide, and any further adjustment at this stage would only accelerate substitution.

Fine paper producers take first tentative steps towards mark-ups

A fortnight after players expressed hopes of things calming down, the German woodfree paper market remains under strain. While some market participants are seeing stable capacity utilisation in sporadic cases, there is still no sign of lasting relief. The sector's focus is now shifting to the first initiatives to raise prices, even as doubts persist about whether they can actually be pushed through.

On the whole, observers describe demand for fine paper as uneven and still offering little basis for planning. For their part, paper converters report satisfactory demand in segments such as school supplies. Others point to noticeably weaker business for seasonal products such as calendars or catalogues, where experts expect further softening as the year progresses.

Several market players reported that paper producers were planning to charge 6-8 per cent more. With the latest announcements in February, some demands are now reaching as high as 10 per cent. Meanwhile, paper merchants told EUWID that leading producers were calling for increases of around €20 to roughly €50/t. However, the targets vary in how concrete they are, and actual implementation of higher prices still appears a long way off in some cases.

Producers are once again justifying their move by underscoring rising pulp costs. Paper buyers frequently countered this argument by pointing to higher rebates that pulp suppliers are said to have granted the mills in contracts negotiated at the start of the year.

Observers anticipate that more producers will follow suit in announcing higher prices in the weeks ahead.

A striking feature, according to several market participants, was the longer lead times at paper mills, in some cases stretching to seven or eight weeks. Opinions in the industry vary as to whether this is merely a temporary phenomenon or a sign of deliberately tighter supply management.

Market players are still adopting a wait-and-see attitude to the joint venture announced by industry heavyweights Sappi and UPM. The planned venture is being closely monitored, insiders report, adding that no concrete effects on the current supply structure have yet become apparent, making it difficult to draw up any specific strategic responses for the time being.

Publication paper producers criticise advertisers' calls for price reductions

In a tight German market for magazine paper, several sources from the paper and printing industries are sending some positive signals. Despite ongoing price pressure and a great deal of uncertainty about how business will develop, several companies report operating at decent capacity utilisation. Most advertising customers have extended their print contracts into the new year. Although these often involved smaller volumes, several representatives from the paper and printing industry felt that this at least secured a basic workload looking ahead to the second quarter. They also highlighted signs of a shift in how printed products were perceived, with several recent studies underscoring their advantages over digital advertising in terms of customer impact and sustainability.

At the same time, paper mills and printing companies are pushing ahead with their transformation to prepare for the future, industry sources told EUWID. The Bruck paper mill recently attracted attention with a change of fibre mix in its LWC production. By switching from recycled to fresh fibre, another continental European site has been added to the supply base in this segment. Perlen has also taken strategic measures, with the coated and uncoated publication paper producer diversifying its portfolio and, among other things, expanding its range of packaging paper grades.

Experts stressed that the paper industry was making a concerted effort to improve profitability in many respects. They pointed to margins, which came under severe pressure in 2025 due to high costs and falling selling prices.

The latest round of price talks for magazine paper has brought only relatively modest changes. Contracts for SC paper grades reportedly show slight reductions, while LWC producers have managed to hold their price levels despite ongoing downgrading, a result that is often viewed as a success.

Industry observers also see several question marks hanging over the current situation on the German LWC and SC paper markets. European mills' order books appear to vary widely: a few players report being more satisfied with current business than expected, while others entered the new year without the hoped-for momentum. Some market players took a distinctly more critical view,

saying that overall business was weak and increasingly short-term in nature. Sources told EUWID that publishers and advertisers were accelerating the digital shift – with corresponding consequences for print products.

On the whole, expectations are that the downward slide in already sharply reduced demand for LWC and SC paper will continue into 2026. Experts said that there were no signs of any near-term improvement in print volumes, either in publishing or in advertising. Competition among paper manufacturers and printing companies was thus intense, as both fought over an increasingly limited pool of orders.

Advertisers are exploiting this situation to their advantage, insiders agreed. In an environment of surplus supply in both the paper and printing markets, they are pushing hard for further cost cuts. Paper manufacturers and printing companies are partly yielding to this pressure, not least in the hope of securing volumes with attractive offers.

Critics remarked to EUWID that such volumes were “dearly bought”. These project prices, which should really be confined to one-off special deals, have recently been gaining in market share, they say. Observers said that everyone in the value chain needed higher prices. Yet in recent months, it had not only been paper prices that have come under pressure from advertisers, but also prices for print services.

According to industry contacts, the paper sector remains under severe economic pressure. A stabilisation driven by price increases is currently considered highly unrealistic. At the same time, high production costs were limiting the financial leeway for urgently needed transformation investments, market insiders pointed out.

Brown kraftliner producers worried about substitution

The brown kraftliner segment in Germany proved to be more stable than recycled corrugated case material last year. According to market reports from 2025, both stronger demand and a smaller influx of additional capacity made planning easier in this segment. This situation changed towards the end of last year. Kraftliner producers are now also feeling weaker demand and stronger price pressure than a year ago. Sources clearly said that they have therefore not yet followed in the footsteps of recycled corrugated case material producers by announcing higher prices. A similar move would only be conceivable for kraftliner if higher recycled containerboard prices could be successfully implemented, something that kraftliner manufacturers needed just as much as producers of recycled corrugated case material, insiders said.

But this is not the only reason why kraftliner producers are holding back. Market discussions this year have also featured a much stronger focus on the risk of substitution by alternative grades than in the recent past. The price gap between the two grades was already very wide, insiders said. Any additional attempts to widen it further would only accelerate the switch.

While a few sheet feeders have been somewhat surprised by better-than-expected demand for a few weeks now, this effect has yet to reach kraftliner producers. Demand for fresh-fibre corrugated case material was decent, in line with expectations, but did not exceed them, insiders told EUWID. The prospect of potential price hikes would not encourage buyers from the sheetfeeding industry to buy more paper at current prices, either.

White-top kraftliner prices did not fall as much as those for brown grades at the start of the year, even though these prices usually tend to move in a similar pattern. The grade has also decoupled from trends in the white-top testliner segment, which serves end uses subject to less stringent certification than white-top kraftliner. Market players repeatedly cited food packaging as a key application where fresh fibre containerboard could outperform recovered paper.

German recovered paper market continues to see little price movement

Good availability of woodfree grades encounters subdued demand

 18 February 2026 |  ~ 5 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

The German recovered paper market continues to be very balanced. While collection volumes are low, overall demand from the paper industry is also modest. Prices for the ordinary grades therefore remained stable again in February. Slight adjustments were only reported in scattered cases in some regions. For the other recovered paper grades as well, market participants report only minor price tweaks in the current month.

Recovered Paper Germany				
January 2026				
Monthly changes in €/t	Jan 2026	Dec 2025	Nov 2025	Jan 2025
Mixed paper and board (1.02)	-2.50	-4.00	-8.00	± 0.00
Supermarket corrugated paper and board (1.04)	-1.00	-6.00	-8.00	+6.50
Used corrugated kraft II (4.03)	± 0.00	-5.00	-8.50	+8.00
Sorted graphic paper for deinking (1.11)	-4.50	-7.00	-6.50	-5.50
Coloured letters (2.05/2.06) ¹⁾	+0.50	-10.00	-9.50	+4.50
Multi printing (3.10)	+1.50	-16.00	-13.00	+5.00
White newsprint/magazine paper (3.14/3.15)	-3.00	-6.00	-3.50	+13.50
White woodfree uncoated shavings (3.18.01)	-2.00	-5.50	-9.50	-1.50

¹⁾ From January 2026, price reports for grade 2.05 will also be included in the assessment for coloured letters.
Changes based on free delivered prices within Germany.
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Recovered paper prices have remained largely unchanged in Germany since the start of the year. Accordingly, the analysis of the prices reported by recovered paper suppliers and consumers for January showed a decrease of €2.50/t for mixed paper and board (1.02), while quotes for supermarket paper and board (1.04) slipped by €1.00/t. Meanwhile, there were no changes for used corrugated kraft II (4.03).

Prices for sorted graphic paper for deinking (1.11) softened by €4.50/t. By contrast, coloured letters (2.05/2.06) saw a tiny uptick of €0.50/t in January. Prices for multi printing (3.10) rose by €1.50/t. A €3.00/t decline was recorded for white newsprint/magazine paper (3.14/3.15) and white woodfree uncoated shavings (3.18.01) inched €2.00/t lower.

The same trend more or less continued in February. Amid persistently weak capacity utilisation in the paper industry, demand for recovered paper remains subdued. Since the targeted price hikes for finished paper could not be implemented on the market, paper mills are facing mounting economic pressure.

However, limited recovered paper demand coincides with still-modest volumes on the supply side. Waste management and recycling companies unanimously reported that any inventories that had built up around the turn of the year could be moved quickly again. Moreover, in northern Germany at least, a stretch of wintry weather has further restricted collections. In the meantime, as one respondent puts it, there is “not a single gram of excess paper in the yard”.

Consequently, recovered paper suppliers are not too concerned even when buyers cancel deliveries on short notice. Therefore, there was no need to make price concessions, commented one waste management firm. According to market information, in southern and eastern Germany, less expensive spot offerings were also available, at least on a regional basis.

By contrast, in the western and northern parts of the country, there are occasional reports of price increases, which are attributed to the proximity to deep-sea ports. According to market participants, exports are largely steady. The recent slight dip in export shipments due to Chinese New Year celebrations and the beginning of Ramadan had been offset by higher demand primarily from India and Turkey. Due in part to the still-low freight rates, prices being offered by buyers on the export market were definitely competitive with those on the domestic market, EUWID was told.

Major uncertainty about future price development for ordinary grades

On the whole, the German market for ordinary recovered paper grades appears to be largely balanced, with unchanged prices. However, this could change in the coming weeks. Waste management companies believe that considerable price increases might be possible: They point to the traditionally weak arisings in February and March, the prospect of logistics bottlenecks around Easter, potential further acceleration of export activity, and especially the experience from previous years. Respondents say they are eagerly awaiting an improvement in the market and are prepared for a price rally. Some suppliers may also hold back volumes in the coming weeks in the hope that prices will go up. Some buyers in the paper industry say they are therefore already adopting a cautious procurement strategy. It also appears that a few paper mills have built up significant stocks of recovered paper – sometimes using additional rented storage facilities – to be better prepared for a potential price surge.

Yet, other market participants believe the announced paper machine stoppages are more likely to lead to reduced demand from the industry in the near future. Moreover, mills had delivered significantly more finished paper in January because their customers had moved forward their ordering in anticipation of rising prices, explained one respondent from the paper industry. The situation is therefore not comparable with last year, and a sudden rise in recovered paper demand, along with higher prices, is unlikely, EUWID was told.

A few paper industry representatives said they would use the month of March to continue building up recovered paper inventories prior to Easter. And after Easter there will still be around three weeks to get ready for the traditionally difficult month of May, stresses one buyer, who also does not expect prices to rise.

Pressure persists for deinking paper

In most cases, respondents also describe stable prices for sorted graphic paper for deinking. As demand for grade 1.11 continues to shrink, however, prices may soften slightly again in February. Paper producers continue to face pressure from high costs and overcapacity in the market, a situation reflected in the renewed insolvency filing of the Hainsberg paper mill in Saxony.

The supply situation is also comfortable for woodfree grades in February. Availability of coloured letters (2.05/2.06) and multi printing (3.10) is high – supported by year-end archiving (and shredding) activities that typically ensure higher supply levels in the first quarter. Nevertheless, the long-term availability of these grades is clearly declining. In February, prices for these grades edged lower again, mostly by €5/t, or by as much as €10 in rarer cases.

Market players also report that numerous printing companies are now trying to establish direct relationships with paper mills, bypassing waste management and recycling firms. However, according to insiders, the important buffer role played by waste firms in the supply chain should not be underestimated, as the direct-to-the-mill sales model requires immediate acceptance of larger volumes, which is not always practical or possible for paper mills.

Once again, the EUWID market survey found very low demand for bright white grades, amid somewhat elevated supply. Volumes covered by long-term agreements are still being accepted at stable prices, but it is almost impossible to find takers for additional volumes, insiders say.

Most market players expect prices for graphic and woodfree grades to either remain stable or to come under further downward pressure in March.

MEP calls on EU to provide support for Europe's paper industry

Italian associations split over bolstering domestic mills versus recovered paper exports

 **EUWID** + 17 February 2026 | Valeria Buß | ⌚ ~ 3 min | Published in issue 8/2026

In a parliamentary question, Anna Maria Cisint, a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) from the Patriots for Europe (PfE) group, has called on the European Commission to examine measures to strengthen paper manufacturing in



Europe. The question comes against a backdrop of the "EU's growing dependence on third countries for paper recycling and production," the letter says.

Ms Cisint, who is a member of Italy's Lega party, pointed out that while member states such as Italy achieved high collection and recycling rates, the gradual closure of paper mills meant that less recovered paper (RCP) could be processed within Europe. As a result, the EU exported large quantities of recovered paper, for example, to India, only to import the resulting finished goods back again, Ms Cisint added. This "illogical arrangement" undermined the competitiveness of Europe's pulp and paper industry and increased dependency on external markets, she said.

Ms Cisint thus asked the European Commission to explain whether it was planning measures such as investment incentives, streamlined authorisation procedures or initiatives supporting technological innovation with a view to supporting European paper manufacturing and helping the industry to increase its production capacity.

Ms Cisint also sought clarity on whether and how the European Commission will ensure that the implementation of the EU's circular economy goals does not give rise to secondary raw materials being exported but instead takes the form of measures that will bolster European production chains.

Assocarta concerned about mill closures in Italy

The Italian paper manufacturers' association Assocarta has recently struck a similar tone. Speaking at a forum on the Clean Industrial Deal in Italy, the association's director general, Massimo Medugno, stressed that policy-makers needed to take action to promote local recovered paper converting activities. The association's president, Lorenzo Poli, also sounded the alarm in an interview with newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, pointing out that six paper mills had closed (or shut down machines) in Italy in recent

months after the domestic paper industry had gone virtually a decade without losing a single mill.

As previously reported by EUWID, these closures mainly affect machines producing recycled corrugated case material. In total, the latest shutdowns have reduced national capacity for these papers by more than 500,000 tpy.

Mr Poli noted that Italy exported an average of 1.7 million t of recovered paper per year while also importing paper and cartonboard at the same time. This high-quality end product was made out of its own raw material. The problem, he argued, was not a shortage of mills or sales markets within the country. "Italian demand for packaging paper could be met in full by domestic mills," he commented. Yet these mills were operating at only around 70–75 per cent of capacity on average, whereas a utilisation rate of 90–95 per cent was needed for production to be economically viable. Assocarta is therefore calling for policy measures to promote recycling and downstream processing within Italy.

RCP association Unirima warns against restricting recovered paper exports

In response to Assocarta's comments, the Italian recovered paper association Unirima issued a statement underlining the importance of exports for the sector. The association described recovered paper recycling as the centrepiece of the circular economy. In 2024, 6.8 million t of recovered paper were collected in Italy. Domestic consumption – amounting to 5.2 million t in that year, according to statistics – was not enough to absorb this volume, Unirima explained. The structural surplus is managed through exports, which amounted to 1.9 million t in 2024. These were also helping the EU to meet its recycling targets, the association argued.

"We firmly reject any idea of legally restricting exports," remarked Unirima's managing director, Francesco Sicilia. "Such proposals risk creating serious imbalances and, without a global market, the recovered paper sector would collapse." Limiting exports would not only compromise companies' economic stability but also increase costs across the collection and recycling supply chain, jeopardizing the achievement of European environmental targets, the association added.

According to Unirima, there are around 700 recycling facilities in Italy, employing more than 20,000 employees.

Saica's Zaragoza paper mill resumes operations with limitations after fire

17 February 2026 | [Frauke Schmidt](#) | 🕒 ~ 1 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

A fire broke out on Saturday, 14 February, at Saica's paper production and recycling site in Zaragoza, Spain. Firefighters from the Zaragoza municipal brigade extinguished the blaze by Sunday afternoon. No injuries were reported.



Saica restarts production at fire-hit Zaragoza mill under operational constraints

According to a company spokesperson, one of the two buildings at the site was affected, with machinery inside

severely damaged. Paper production was interrupted but resumed on 16 February, albeit with some limitations. The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

At the Zaragoza site, Saica operates two paper machines that produce high-performance containerboard from 100 per cent recycled fibre, primarily testliner and corrugating medium in various grammages. PM 6 has a capacity to produce 235,000 tpy and PM 7 can produce up to 330,000 tpy.

The company operates another paper mill in Spain, three in France, two in Poland and one in the UK, with a total recycled containerboard production capacity of around 4 million tpy.

Saica is one of the leading integrated paper and packaging companies in Europe with its own recycling (Saica Natur) and corrugated packaging (Saica Pack) operations. The company also offers flexible packaging solutions (Saica Flex).

Norske Skog mulls kraftliner production at Saugbrugs mill

 **EUWID** + 16 February 2026 | [Igor Dugandžić](#) | ⌚ ~ 2 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

Publication and packaging paper producer Norske Skog has announced new plans for the idled magazine paper machine PM 6 at the Saugbrugs mill in Norway.



The company says it is exploring the possibility of rebuilding and upgrading the damaged PM 6 to produce not only SC

paper but also TMP-based kraftliner. The corresponding study is underway and is expected to be completed in the course of the second quarter of 2026, the company says.

PM 6 was damaged by a rockslide three years ago and has been idled ever since. Prior to the incident, the plant was producing SC paper with an annual capacity of up to 260,000 t.

Norske Skog has since been considering options for restoring and restarting PM 6 for a while, but a decision has been pushed back multiple times.

In light of the persistently challenging situation in the publication paper market, Norske Skog has also been exploring other possibilities for PM 6 from the outset. Most recently, the company had considered producing bleached chemi-thermomechanical pulp (BCTMP) at the plant and applied for an amendment to the emissions permit for the Saugbrugs site in early 2025. However, this BCTMP plans were eventually dropped owing to the high investment costs and difficult market conditions. The company ultimately revived its plans to produce SC paper, but with a smaller capacity of around 230,000 tpy.

The company is currently exploring whether the machine should resume operations making not only SC paper but also have the ability to produce kraftliner from thermomechanical pulp (TMP), Norske Skog management said during the presentation of its fourth-quarter 2025 results.

To enable production of kraftliner, PM 6 would need additional upgrading, for example a new headbox. If the rebuilt machine were to exclusively produce kraftliner, it would have a potential capacity of 270,000-280,000 tpy. However, the aim would be to operate PM 6 as a swing machine producing both magazine paper as well as kraftliner, depending on market demand, according to the company.

Currently, Norske Skog produces around 200,000 tpy of SC paper on two paper machines in Saugbrugs, PM 4 and PM 5. After several years of downtime, PM 5 was restarted following downtime due to a rockslide in spring 2023.

If PM 6 does get rebuilt and recommissioned, then the other two machines at the Saugbrugs mill would be stopped and permanently removed from production, company management says.

ICT UK starts up new tissue machine in Wales

13 February 2026 | [Frauke Schmidt](#) | 🕒 ~ 1 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

Italian tissue manufacturer Industrie Cartarie

Tronchetti (ICT) has started up its first tissue paper machine at the new greenfield plant in Deeside, Britain. In recent months, the site had already begun production activities with converting lines and the new automated warehouse.



ICT has started up its first tissue machine in the UK

With the start-up of the paper machine, the plant now completes the integration of the production cycle, enabling greater flexibility and integrated management from paper production to converting and through to finished product logistics, ICT UK said. However, the company did not indicate the capacity of the new machine or converting lines.

ICT announced [first plans](#) for a tissue paper and converting plant in Wales in 2021. According to the planning permission, the new plant would be built in three phases, with the first comprising a tissue paper mill, converting lines and a warehouse.

In the second phase, 12 months after the completion of phase one, ICT would build another facility for tissue paper production – an additional pulp warehouse, a tissue paper mill and a jumbo reels storage warehouse, according to the planning permission. However, ICT did not confirm these plans or time frames.

ICT's venture into the UK market began with the establishment of Industrie Cartarie Tronchetti UK in 2018. The Deeside facility represents ICT's first tissue production and converting unit in the UK.

ICT, based in Lucca, Italy, has an annual production capacity of approximately 620,000 t. The company operates facilities in Italy, Poland, Spain, and France, producing tissue products under the Foxy brand and for private labels.

SCA announces March price hike for NBSK pulp in Europe

13 February 2026 | 🕒 ~ 1 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

Pulp manufacturer SCA plans to further increase the price for northern bleached softwood kraft (NBSK) pulp in Europe.



The Swedish company has announced a \$100/t increase for NBSK pulp "effective for March deliveries and invoicing."

As a result, the [list] price for March deliveries of NBSK pulp in Europe will be \$1,710/t, according to SCA.

SCA runs one NBSK pulp mill in Östrand, Sweden. The company puts the annual production capacity of the mill at 900,000 tpy.

Julius Schulte Söhne to close Düsseldorf paper mill

 **EUWID +** 12 February 2026 | [Kristin Trede](#) | ⌚ ~ 1 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

German coreboard producer Julius Schulte Söhne GmbH & Co. KG is set to close its board mill at the Düsseldorf-Bilk site. Containerboard production at its Trebsen facility will remain unaffected by the decision, Stefan Brüggen, sales director and member of the management board, told EUWID.



Julius Schulte will cease board production at the Düsseldorf site at the start of Q2 2026.

At the Düsseldorf mill, the company primarily manufactures coreboard for the tissue market and for industrial cores. The product portfolio also includes laminating paper and greyboard. The paper machine has a design capacity of 100,000 tpy, and nearly 90 employees will be affected by the planned shutdown.

The company cited both structural and cyclical market pressures as the main reasons for the closure.

Under current plans, paper and board production in Düsseldorf will cease at the beginning of the second quarter of 2026.

The Düsseldorf facility will continue to operate on a transitional basis – likely until mid-2027 – converting parent reels supplied from Julius Schulte Trebsen in Trebsen.

Marking its 140th anniversary this year, the long-established company said the move is intended to safeguard its future competitiveness.

Julius Schulte Söhne plans to consolidate expertise in containerboard and coreboard while upgrading the Trebsen site to meet evolving market requirements. The transition is to be carried out gradually, the company added.

Mayer Group to close envelope production in Heilbronn

 **EUWID +** 11 February 2026 | [Konstantin Stoll](#) |  ~ 1 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

Germany-based Mayer Kuvert, a Europe-wide producer of envelopes and lightweight packaging, is closing envelope manufacturing at its Heilbronn headquarters as part of a consolidation driven by declining demand for envelopes and mailing bags. Production is set to cease in 2026, with around 40 jobs affected, the company confirmed to EUWID.



Mayer Kuvert closes envelope production in Heilbronn

The company said future production of envelopes and lightweight packaging will be concentrated at Torgau-Kuvert in Süptitz and other European sites to improve capacity utilisation, secure jobs and enhance competitiveness.

The company cited overcapacities and rising costs in a sharply contracting market as the main reasons for the move. Mayer Kuvert pointed to the continued shift towards digital media and the digitalisation of public authorities, which have been driving sales volumes down for years. Against this backdrop, spare capacity has also emerged in Torgau, where lightweight packaging can now be produced as well.

Mayer Kuvert noted that an initial step to consolidate envelope production in Germany had already been taken in Torgau in the post-Covid period. Two of the four machines from Heilbronn will now be moved to Torgau, while the remaining lines will be relocated to bestpac UK and the Kuvert Polska Group in Poland.

Focus on the growing lightweight packaging segment

Mayer Kuvert is also stepping up its focus on the expanding lightweight packaging segment. In France, the company has consolidated its standard envelope operations in Alsace at GPV France and strengthened the overprint business through targeted acquisitions.

At its Clarques site near Saint-Omer, the company is reorganising lightweight packaging activities, streamlining the bread and bakery bags business while adding coating and printing capacities for wrapping papers.

Hainsberg paper mill files for insolvency proceedings

 **EUWID** + 10 February 2026 | ⌚ ~ 1 min | [Published in issue 8/2026](#)

German Papierfabrik Hainsberg has once again run into financial difficulties. The recycled graphic paper producer has now been forced for the third time to file for preliminary insolvency proceedings.



Recycled graphic paper manufacturer has filed for insolvency proceedings again

After earlier filings in 2017 and 2023, Hainsberg once again filed for insolvency with the Dresden local court in early February 2026. On 5 February, the court appointed a preliminary insolvency administrator.

Hainsberg only successfully completed its most recent restructuring proceedings under self-administration in summer 2024. At that time, the paper mill employed around 100 people. Their wages are secured for three months through Germany's insolvency wage scheme (Insolvenzgeld).

The company's portfolio comprises printing, office and packaging papers manufactured exclusively from recovered paper. According to earlier statements, more than half of Hainsberg's output is exported to other European countries. The company operates a paper machine with a capacity of 40,000 tpy. Managing directors Dietrich Arnhold and Krystyna Saworska are also shareholders of the company.

The medium-sized company concluded its [latest restructuring](#) after just six months of self-administration, with creditor approval granted on 20 June 2024. As a key prerequisite, the paper producer cited its ability to maintain uninterrupted business operations throughout the proceedings.

