

Boxboard Europe

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Top stories

European cartonboard prices rise in second quarter; overcapacity, imports remain main issues

By Daniela Wortmann - Thursday 25 June

After a rough ride in the first quarter of 2026, the European cartonboard market has not had a chance to catch its breath in the following months.

Prices for both folding boxboard (FBB) and white-lined chipboard (WLC) started to rise in the wake of the Middle East conflict between the US/Israel and Iran, but the final increases fell short of manufacturers' expectations, and contract validities, the undiminished overcapacity in Europe and continuing imports from Asia have limited manufacturers' possibilities to go for another price increase attempt.

"I think everybody's main goal is to make it through the summer now. Uncertainty is high, but I don't expect any big surprises before the end of the main vacation period," one market participant told Fastmarkets in late June.

Prices mostly steady in March: Following decreases of around €40-50 (\$46-57) per tonne in continental Europe and some £30-35 (\$40-46) per tonne in the UK for FBB in January, prices remained at the new levels until the end of the first quarter. The same was true for WLC, where prices had slipped by up to €30 per tonne and £30 per tonne in continental Europe and the UK, respectively.

The Middle East conflict, however, started to show an effect, and several market participants told Fastmarkets that order intake had been better than expected. "Customers saw the increases in gas, electricity and transport costs and anticipated that [paper manufacturers] would try to pass on at least part of that and ordered more than they would have under normal circumstances," one of them said.

Market insiders also reckoned that rising orders on hand in Europe were partly due to concerns about orders placed with non-European suppliers. "Manufacturers [in Asia] will continue to ship to Europe, but it will take more time and I don't think that they will bear the extra costs all by themselves," a source said.

European FBB and WLC manufacturers also started to inform customers that they would implement price increases or temporary surcharges from early April.

Reno De Medici (RDM) Group, for example, informed customers on Thursday March 19 that an increase of 10% would apply to all new orders from March 23. The move was attributed to the inflationary environment, which has affected the manufacturing industry with persistent cost pressure across energy, raw materials, logistics and operations.

Several other market participants separately revealed plans to raise prices at rather short notice as well, but buyers were confident that the last word about the final extent of the announced increases had not yet been spoken.

"It is not only manufacturers who are facing rising costs. It's the same for converters, traders and, in the end, final customers," one of them told Fastmarkets. "I understand that they want to get the ball rolling, but demanding too much too early may pay off badly," they added.

Prices start to rise in April: Despite buyers' concerns about the price increases announced by basically all FBB and WLC suppliers for the second quarter, prices indeed started to increase in April.

While several buyers, mainly in the UK, told Fastmarkets early in the month that they rejected all price increases or were still in negotiations, others said that they had accepted to pay around €30-40 per tonne more than the previous month.

The reasons why they accepted the increases varied. Some market insiders said customers expected more price increase announcements going forward and were trying to secure volumes before that happened.

Others assumed that customers tried to replace orders they placed with non-European suppliers with more readily available European volumes. "Many customers do not know when their orders will arrive and at what price, so it is safer to order from domestic suppliers," one of them said.

Some manufacturers said that the April increases only covered a fraction of the cost increases they were facing for raw materials, energy and transport and did not rule out more price increases or surcharges from May. "What we got does not even cover the increases we had to pay for pulp. We definitely need more," one of them said.

WLC prices also started to head north in April. However, the increases fell short of the initially announced targets and reached an average of around €10-35 per tonne.

Market insiders attributed the development to the fact that a few suppliers only announced increases for new orders or from May. Moreover, they said that WLC manufacturers were reluctant to implement higher increases than those realized on the FBB side.

"If the gap between WLC and FBB prices gets too small, some customers might decide to switch from WLC to FBB, and that is a risk manufacturers do not necessarily want to take, especially if leading FBB suppliers are relatively late in revealing their price plans," a contact told Fastmarkets.

Prices stabilize in May: In May, FBB and WLC prices stabilized at the previous month's levels. Buyers in continental Europe who had generally agreed to pay around €30-40 per tonne more for FBB in April confirmed the increases in May.

In the UK, where several buyers previously told Fastmarkets that they had rejected all price increase announcements so far, most of them said in May they were up for fresh negotiations and it was very probable that they would have to pay higher prices or surcharges from mid-May or, at the latest, June.

On the WLC side, where market participants in continental Europe had reported average increases of around €10-35 per tonne in April, suppliers who had spread the announced markups over April and May or only announced increases from May managed to raise prices by a total of €30-35 per tonne, and buyers who had so far rejected the announced rises said they agreed to pay around €30 per tonne more from the beginning of June.

Apart from that, May was a comparatively quiet month. Sources on the supply side generally told Fastmarkets that order intake was still quite good but weaker than in April when customers had been trying to secure volumes as they expected more price increase announcements going forward or were trying to replace orders from non-European suppliers.

"There were a lot of public holidays and bridging days in May. I think everybody is starting to focus on negotiations for the third quarter or second half of the year now," a market insider said.

Several suppliers reiterated that they would have needed higher increases to cover rising costs. However, the overcapacity in Europe did not allow them to implement higher mark-ups.

Moreover, the market was facing very competitively priced FBB offers from Asian suppliers that were challenging domestic FBB and WLC suppliers.



According to market insiders, some Asian suppliers were offering FBB at a cut-throat level of \$650-700 per tonne in Europe.

In terms of comparison, Fastmarkets' price assessment for cartonboard/boxboard, folding boxboard (GC2) 270-280 g, free delivered Germany, came in at €980-1,210 per tonne in June, while the Fastmarkets price assessment for cartonboard/boxboard, white-lined chipboard (GD2) 300 g, free delivered Germany, stood at €680-735 per tonne in the same month.

Several market participants in Europe confirmed that they had seen FBB offers in a range of \$650-750 per tonne in Europe. According to them, the offers with a two-year validity were primarily directed at WLC customers to make them switch from WLC to FBB.

"It's an enticing offer, and there might be some cases where suppliers reach their goal," a market insider commented. "But for big brand owners it is probably not an option. The switch from WLC to FBB would take about a year; both quality and delivery continuity are not guaranteed, and in the end, material manufactured in and delivered from Europe might be the better option," they added.

Call for consolidation/closures: With a view to the overcapacity in the European cartonboard market, several market insiders reiterated their call for consolidation and/or capacity closures.

"Take a look at the graphic paper market. We're all following Sappi and UPM's plans to create a graphic paper joint venture very closely," a contact said. "I think the main idea behind it was capacity reduction, and if it goes through as planned, that's exactly what we need on the packaging side as well," they added.

However, it has been very quiet on the consolidation and capacity closures so far this year, and only three deals have hit the headlines.

In February, Metsä Board completed the acquisition of the Winschoten sheeting and distribution hub in Southeastern Netherlands from Finland-based Konvertia Group. The value of the deal, which was announced on January 23 and closed on Thursday February 5, was not disclosed.

The Winschoten facility is one of the largest and most advanced of its kind in Europe, with an annual capacity of approximately 100,000 tonnes, Metsä Board said. Since the completion of the takeover, Metsä Board has been integrating the Winschoten hub into its European operations, aligning production, logistics and customer service processes. According to the company, the integration supports its objective of improving service speed and supply reliability in its key growth market, Europe.

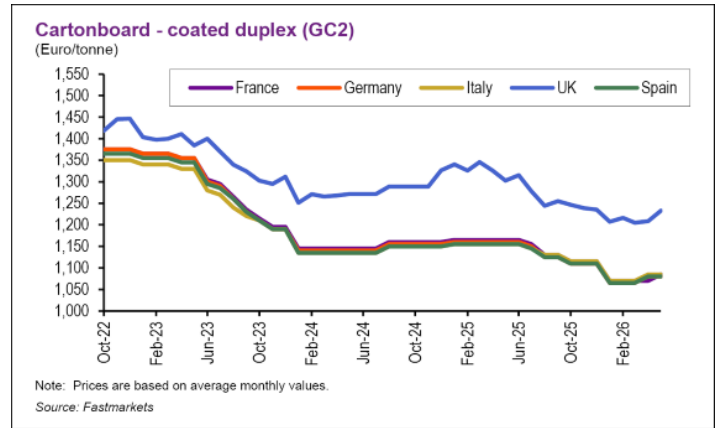
Also in February, Coveris, a leading European flexible packaging manufacturer, announced the sale of its Paper Business Unit, comprising its labels and board business, to US private equity company Kingswood Capital Management. The deal closed in April, and the former Coveris unit adopted the name Paranova Print and Packaging (Paranova) as part of the transition to being an independent organization.

Paranova produces paper-based packaging solutions for food, household and personal care and specializes in products such as self-adhesive and linerless labels, lined board, cartons and trays. The company has been active in the packaging industry for more than 30 years.

Last but not least, Graphic Packaging International (GPI) confirmed in April that it agreed to sell its GPI Istra facility in Barići, western Croatia.

"In line with our recently announced selective portfolio review, we have reached an agreement to sell 100% of the shares of our Istra, Croatia, subsidiary," a spokesperson for the company told Fastmarkets. "We are in the final stages of the transaction, with completion expected within the second quarter," they added.

The Istra facility became part of GPI through the acquisition of Swedish AR Packaging, which closed in early November 2021. Currently, GPI owns and operates more than 30 sites across Europe.



German FBB manufacturer FOLBB subsidiaries file for insolvency

By Daniela Wortmann - Thursday 25 June

The subsidiaries of the German FBB producer FOLBB Baiersbronn Frischfaser Karton and Folding Boxboard Eerbeek have filed for the initiation of insolvency proceedings and a suspension of payments.

Business operations at FOLBB's two sites in Germany and Netherlands reportedly continue without restrictions, wages and salaries are secured through insolvency benefits, and the company is seeking an investor solution.

In Germany, the District Court of Rottweil appointed Jan Markus Plathner of the law firm Brinkmann & Partner as provisional insolvency administrator. According to the law firm, the FOLBB subsidiaries had been under considerable economic pressure due to persistently high energy costs, structural overcapacity and a challenging market environment. Despite operational cost-cutting measures, the liquidity situation could not be sustainably stabilized.

The provisional insolvency administrator and his team will now initiate stabilization measures in the short term and analyze the financial situation. To safeguard wages and salaries, the administrator has already arranged pre-financing of insolvency benefits for the months of June, July, and August 2026. The goal is to ensure the continuation of business operations and to develop a sustainable restructuring solution.

"Our initial focus is on stabilizing business operations and ensuring delivery capacity. At the same time, we are creating transparency regarding the financial situation and examining restructuring options. The goal is to implement an investor solution as quickly as possible through a structured process, one that also secures the jobs of our employees in the long term," Plathner said in a statement on Wednesday June 24.

"Business operations continue. Initial discussions with key customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders have already begun to ensure the company's operational stability," he added.

The Baiersbronn and Eerbeek mills used to be part of Austria's Mayr-Melnhof Group until they were sold to a group of funds managed by Oaktree Capital Management in August 2021 and jointly became FOLBB.

The Baiersbronn mill in southwestern Germany has a capacity of about 95,000 tonnes per year and employs 210 people. The Eerbeek mill in the province of Gelderland, eastern Netherlands, can produce around 150,000 tonnes per year of FBB and has 220 employees.

Boxboard/Cartonboard Europe Key Attributes

Symbol	Description	Date	Price	+/-	Month	Monthly Average
FP-CBB-0098	Cartonboard/boxboard, folding boxboard (GC2) 270-280 g, free delivered France, €/tonne	01 Jun 2026	980 - 1220	15 (1.38%)	Jun 2026	980 - 1220
FP-CBB-0100	Cartonboard/boxboard, folding boxboard (GC2) 270-280 g free delivered Germany €/tonne	01 Jun 2026	980 - 1210	15 (1.39%)	Jun 2026	980 - 1210
FP-CBB-0099	Cartonboard/boxboard, white-lined chipboard (GD2) 300 g, free delivered France, €/tonne	01 Jun 2026	700 - 740	15 (2.13%)	Jun 2026	700 - 740
FP-CBB-0101	Cartonboard/boxboard, white-lined chipboard (GD2) 300 g, free delivered Germany, €/tonne	01 Jun 2026	680 - 735	15 (2.17%)	Jun 2026	680 - 735

Boxboard/Cartonboard Germany Markets

Symbol	Description	Date	Price	+/-	Month	Monthly Average
FP-CBB-0100	Cartonboard/boxboard, folding boxboard (GC2) 270-280 g free delivered Germany €/tonne	01 Jun 2026	980 - 1210	15 (1.39%)	Jun 2026	980 - 1210
FP-CBB-0101	Cartonboard/boxboard, white-lined chipboard (GD2) 300 g, free delivered Germany, €/tonne	01 Jun 2026	680 - 735	15 (2.17%)	Jun 2026	680 - 735

Boxboard/Cartonboard Spain Markets

Symbol	Description	Date	Price	+/-	Month	Monthly Average
FP-CBB-0104	Cartonboard/boxboard, folding boxboard (GC2) 270-280 g, free delivered Spain, €/tonne	01 May 2026	970 - 1190	0 (0.00%)	May 2026	970 - 1190
FP-CBB-0105	Cartonboard/boxboard, white-lined chipboard (GD2) 300 g, free delivered Spain, €/tonne	01 May 2026	695 - 720	15 (2.17%)	May 2026	695 - 720

Boxboard/Cartonboard France Markets

Symbol	Description	Date	Price	+/-	Month	Monthly Average
FP-CBB-0098	Cartonboard/boxboard, folding boxboard (GC2) 270-280 g, free delivered France, €/tonne	01 Jun 2026	980 - 1220	15 (1.38%)	Jun 2026	980 - 1220
FP-CBB-0099	Cartonboard/boxboard, white-lined chipboard (GD2) 300 g, free delivered France, €/tonne	01 Jun 2026	700 - 740	15 (2.13%)	Jun 2026	700 - 740

Boxboard/Cartonboard Italy Markets

Symbol	Description	Date	Price	+/-	Month	Monthly Average
FP-CBB-0102	Cartonboard/boxboard, folding boxboard (GC2) 270-280 g, free delivered Italy, €/tonne	01 Jun 2026	980 - 1220	15 (1.38%)	Jun 2026	980 - 1220
FP-CBB-0103	Cartonboard/boxboard, white-lined chipboard (GD2) 300 g, free delivered Italy, €/tonne	01 Jun 2026	680 - 730	15 (2.17%)	Jun 2026	680 - 730

Boxboard/Cartonboard UK Markets

Symbol	Description	Date	Price	+/-	Month	Monthly Average
FP-CBB-0094	Cartonboard/boxboard, folding boxboard (GC2) 270-280 g, free delivered United Kingdom, £/tonne	01 Jun 2026	990 - 1175	15 (1.41%)	Jun 2026	990 - 1175

Symbol	Description	Date	Price	+/-	Month	Monthly Average
FP-CBB-0095	Cartonboard/boxboard, folding boxboard (GC2) 270-280 g, free delivered United Kingdom, €/tonne	01 Jun 2026	1145 - 1359	19.5 (1.58%)	Jun 2026	1145 - 1359
FP-CBB-0096	Cartonboard/boxboard, white-lined chipboard (GD2) 300 g, free delivered United Kingdom, £/tonne	01 Jun 2026	715 - 765	15 (2.07%)	Jun 2026	715 - 765
FP-CBB-0097	Cartonboard/boxboard, white-lined chipboard (GD2) 300 g, free delivered United Kingdom, €/tonne	01 Jun 2026	827 - 885	19 (2.27%)	Jun 2026	827 - 885