**Your choice of paper can mean life or death for forests**

If you’re in charge of procuring paper or printed materials for your organisation, you have the power to ensure that your choices support responsible procurement and sustainable forest management.

**Why is paper choice important?**

Most paper is made from tree fibres. Trees are a renewable resource, but only when it is ensured that those that are cut are replanted or allowed to regrow. Sadly, forests around the world are under threat from deforestation and one of the main drivers or this is our consumption of forest products. Some paper products contribute to this destruction.

**So, is it best to choose recycled paper?**

Recycling paper and wood products not only makes the best use of the yield of the tree (by extending the life span of its fibres), it also reduces the amount of waste going to landfill sites. Choosing recycled paper helps to reduce the demand placed on forests as sources of pulp to make paper.

However, the fibres in paper do start to break down after they’ve been recycled a few times. This means that it is necessary for more new fibre to be created, much of which comes from trees. But this doesn’t have to bad news for forests! Choosing paper made using pulp sourced from responsibly managed forests boots the economic value of a forest and provides an incentive for it to be managed sustainably.

**Forest-friendly paper**

The Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) is a global organisation that helps to take care of forests and the people and wildlife who call them home. FSC sets standards for responsible forest management and for companies throughout the supply chain who use the FSC trademarks to promote their forest products.

There are three FSC labels that can appear on FSC-certified products: FSC 100%, FSC Recycled and FSC Mix. All forest-based materials in FSC 100% products must be from well-managed, FSC-certified forests. All forest-based materials in FSC Recycled products must be verified as being pre- or post-consumer reclaimed. And all forest-based materials in FSC Mix products must be a mix of materials sourced from some or all of the following: FSC-certified forests and/or recycled sources and/or other controlled sources. You can make sure that the paper you buy is made with recycled materials and/or materials from well-managed forests by asking your supplier for it to be FSC-certified. FSC-certified paper tends to be sold with a FSC Recycled or FSC Mix label. The FSC 100% label is more commonly found on solid wood products or non-timber forest products such as cork, bamboo or latex.

**Picking your paper**

If you’ve decided to choose FSC-certified paper, whether you’re opting for FSC Recycled or FSC Mix, it is recommended that you source your paper from an FSC-certified supplier. Suppliers with FSC certification can be found and/or verified using the online database at <https://info.fsc.org>, which lists all FSC-certified organisations around the world. It’s also essential to specify FSC (and whether you’re looking for FSC Mix or FSC Recycled) when you place your order as many suppliers stock both FSC and non-FSC products.

**Printing and promotion**

Research conducted in 2018 on behalf of FSC UK by survey company TNS, revealed that three-quarters of respondents thought it important for products to be responsibly-sourced and 55% recognise the FSC logo. When comparing two identical products, 75% would rather purchase the one bearing a FSC label. However, an assessment by FSC UK earlier this year revealed that less than half of prospectuses produced by UK universities carried a FSC label. If you use an FSC-certified printer to produce prospectuses, or any other items printed on FSC-certified paper, you can ask them to apply the FSC label to demonstrate your commitment to responsible sourcing.

**Getting help**

For help finding suppliers of FSC-certified paper or FSC-certified printers or information on any other aspect of FSC you can contact FSC UK for free guidance. Their website is available at [www.fsc-uk.org](http://www.fsc-uk.org).