



Product Description

Unbound paper products for general use in printing that are primarily composed of virgin wood-based fibers, recycled fibers, or other natural fibers. Includes, but is not limited to, printer paper, copy paper, card stock, photo paper, and loose leaf paper. Does not include stationery, greeting cards, or notebooks.

Mission

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



Managing the Supply Chain

Deforestation

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



Use of Resources

Climate and Energy

Pulp production and final manufacturing of copy and printer paper consume significant amounts of electricity and energy, leading to greenhouse gas emissions. Manufacturers and their suppliers can help abate these impacts by measuring, tracking, and reporting energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, with a focus on reduction. They can also perform preventative maintenance on equipment, replace inefficient equipment, use renewable energy, and encourage efficient energy behaviors throughout their operations.

Land and Soil

The quality of soil in forests may be degraded through physical disruptions associated with harvesting activities that do not use sustainable forest management techniques. To reduce soil and land impacts during timber harvesting, copy and printer paper manufacturers and suppliers should use institutionalized sustainable forestry best management practices or procure wood-based products from certified sources.

Transportation and Logistics

Products are transported by land, sea, and air. Manufacturers should select carriers that use fuel-efficient vehicles to reduce emissions. Carriers can address fuel efficiency through preventative maintenance, the use of alternative fuels, and the selection of optimal vehicles, routes, and transport modes. Transportation efficiency can also be improved by maximizing load capacity in vehicles and optimizing the packing of transport vehicles.

Water

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



Workers and Communities

Community Rights

Timber production can impact the rights of indigenous people and local communities through loss of land and timber rights and reduction of access to resources, especially in places where government controls are insufficient. Manufacturers should have third-party verification embedded in their sourcing policies for wood, paper, and pulp-based products, to protect indigenous and community rights within forestry operations, where applicable. Audits should be performed where needed and audit results made available to the public.

Workers

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