



PRESS RELEASE

Average recycled content of Canadian made paper packaging increases to nearly 82% domestically

PPEC Releases 2020 Industry Environmental Sustainability Survey Results

(29 July 2021) – Today the Paper and Paperboard Packaging Environmental Council (PPEC) announced the results of its 16th biennial Recycled Content Survey.

Every two years, PPEC surveys Canadian mills that make packaging grades about their paper packaging import and export shipments, to determine the average recycled content used to make paper-based packaging products in Canada.

The average recycled content of domestic Canadian shipments of the three major packaging grades – containerboard (used to make corrugated boxes), boxboard (used to make boxboard cartons), and kraft paper (used to make paper bags) – is 81.7% according to the 2020 survey, up from 73.5% in 2018. The average has steadily increased from 47% in 1990, when PPEC first started collecting recycled content data from Canadian mills.

“PPEC is proud that the average recycled content of paper-based packaging products continues to increase in Canada,” said Chris Bartlett, Chair of PPEC’s Board of Directors. “Recycled content is a key component of a circular economy, as it keeps raw materials flowing longer, reducing the need to extract virgin materials.”

Paper packaging is one of Canada’s original circular economies. Mills produce the raw material used to make paper-based packaging – and the majority use 100% recycled content – which is sent to a converter, where it is made into packaging products. Once used by the customer, it is recycled, making its way back to the mill to be remade into new paper packaging products.

“Recycling plays a critical role in the environmental sustainability of the Canadian paper packaging industry,” says Rachel Kagan, PPEC’s Executive Director. “Canadians actively recycle their paper-based packaging, which allows mills to continue to maintain high levels of recycled content in Canadian made paper packaging.”

2020 PPEC Recycled Content Survey Key Findings:

- Total Canadian mill shipments: 3.37 million tonnes
- Total recycled content shipments to domestic and export markets: 2.35 million tonnes
- Average recycled content of domestic shipments for all three major packaging grades: 81.7%
- Average recycled content for domestic shipments of boxboard, which is used to make cereal or shoe boxes: 79.8%.
- Average recycled content for domestic shipments of containerboard, which is used to make corrugated shipping boxes: 86.5%.



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For more information on recycled content (how it's defined, how it's measured, what averages mean, the difference between pre and post-consumer recycled, how the packaging grades differ, the need for virgin material, and the problem with regulating minimum recycled content levels) see the latest version of PPEC's backgrounder [Understanding Recycled Content](#)

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About the Paper and Paperboard Packaging Environmental Council

The Paper and Paperboard Packaging Environmental Council (PPEC) is the national voice for the Canadian paper packaging industry on environmental issues. PPEC's members include more than 30 packaging mills and converters operating across Canada, representing over 90% of the industry, and manufacturing recyclable paper packaging products, including cardboard boxes, cartons, and bags.

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