



**American  
Forest & Paper  
Association**

[www.afandpa.org](http://www.afandpa.org)

# Paper Bags

*The American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) is the national trade association of the forest products industry and advances public policies that promote a strong and sustainable U.S. forest products industry in the global marketplace. The industry is an integral part of our nation's green job base and generates approximately 6 percent of the total annual U.S. manufacturing GDP.*

*AF&PA's member companies make pulp, paper, packaging and wood products, and own forest land. Our companies make essential products from renewable and recyclable resources that sustain the environment. Nationwide, the U.S. forest products industry:*

- Employs more than one million workers — on par with the nation's automotive and plastics industries.
- Provides green jobs that reduce greenhouse gases by sustaining the forests that absorb carbon dioxide; making the paper and wood products that store it indefinitely; generating and using more renewable energy than anyone else—28.5 million megawatts annually, enough to power 2.7 million homes; and recycling paper to avoid methane emissions and reduce waste.
- Is among the top ten manufacturing sector employers in 48 states.
- Is a significant taxpayer, paying approximately \$7 billion annually in federal, state, and local taxes.



## BENEFITS OF PAPER BAGS

- Paper bags are a renewable resource, and are made from a natural fiber.
- They are biodegradable, making them ideal for composting applications and, importantly, transporting compostable items to composting facilities.
  - The vast majority of trees used to produce paper, more than 80 percent, are sustainably grown and replanted by private landowners specifically for the purpose of making paper and other products.
  - These forests provide habitat for animals, help enhance water quality, and remove large amounts of carbon dioxide from air we breathe.
- Many paper bags contain more than 30 percent recycled material. In some cases, retailers use paper bags made of 100 percent recycled paper.
  - In 2007, 56 percent of the paper consumed in the U.S. – a total of 54.3 million tons, or 360 pounds for each man, woman, and child in the United States – was recovered for recycling.
  - Every ton of paper recycled saves more than 3.3 cubic yards of landfill space and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

## PAPER BAG MANUFACTURING 101

- Energy use – American paper mills are the country's largest producers of carbon-neutral renewable energy.
  - Our mills produce nearly two-thirds of their own power by using biomass material from the manufacturing process.
  - This renewable fuel is used very efficiently. In a process referred to as "co-generation," the fuel is used to create steam that drives turbines which generate electricity, but the heat from the steam is also diverted from the turbines and used in the manufacturing process, further saving energy.
    - In some cases, this process enables mills to generate enough carbon-neutral electricity to sell back to the grid.
- Water Quality – There is no bleach used in the manufacture of brown paper grocery sacks.
- Responsible Harvest and Replanting – All AF&PA members operate under certified sustainable guidelines.
  - More than half the forestland in the U.S. is privately owned – roughly 424 million acres.
  - Private landowners in the U.S. plant about four million trees each day – 5 trees each year for every man, woman and child in America.
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) – The forest products industry has made great strides in reducing its carbon footprint.
  - Between 2000 and 2006, AF&PA members collectively reduced their GHG emissions intensity by 14 percent.
  - In the U.S., carbon sequestered by forests and products each year is enough to offset approximately 10 percent of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions – that's the equivalent of removing 108 million cars from U.S. roads each year, according to the U.S. EPA.