

The Fiber Cycle

The Fiber Cycle in Canada and the United States Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How much forestland is there in Canada and the United States?

A. Forests cover almost 990 million acres in Canada and 740 million acres in the United States. When combined, that totals almost five percent of the earth's land.

Q. Who owns the forests in Canada and the United States?

A. Almost 95 percent of forestland in Canada is publicly owned, while private parties own more than half of the forests in the United States.

Q. How are forests used in Canada and the United States?

A. In Canada, 350 million acres of forestland is used commercially, but trees are harvested on about one-half of one percent of commercially available lands each year. In the United States almost 70 percent of forestlands are available for commercial harvesting, but trees are harvested from less than 2 percent of forestland each year.

Q. What role do forests play in supplying paper?

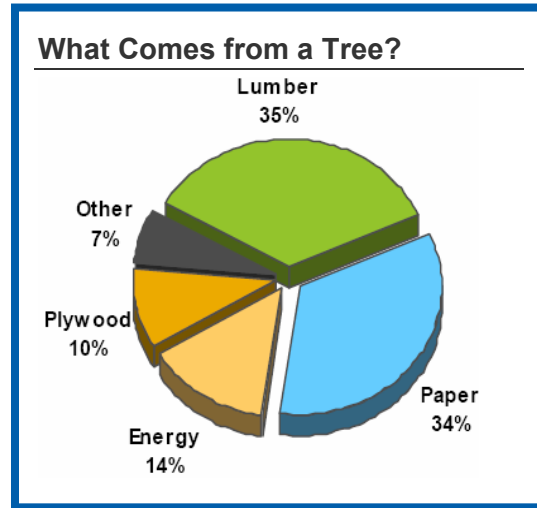
A. Forests are the original source of virtually all of the fresh and recycled fiber used for making paper in Canada and the United States. Wood and wood fiber are also in high demand for a variety of uses in everyday life and business operations. Forests also provide products for houses, furniture, shipping and packaging materials, heat and energy and more.

Q. What is the breakdown of fresh and recycled fiber used for making paper in Canada and the United States?

A. Fresh sources supply 69 percent and recycled sources offer 31 percent of the total fiber input used in making paper.

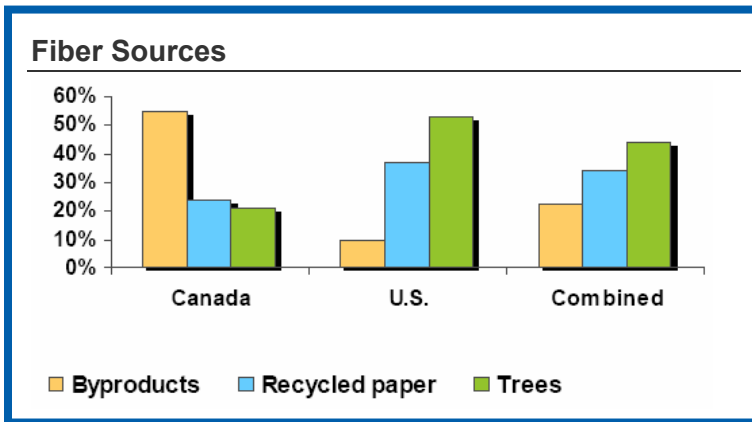
Q. How are harvested trees used?

A. There are many different types of products that come from harvesting trees. The norm is not to harvest a tree for a single product, but to maximize use and derive a diverse range of goods. As a result, on average more than 90 percent of a tree that is harvested in Canada and the United States is utilized to create a product.



Q. What are the different sources of wood fiber for paper?

A. The three principle sources of wood fiber are byproducts from sawmills, recovered paper and direct tree harvests (see graph below). The makeup of wood fiber sources vary substantially among the different regions in Canada and the United States. Byproducts are the dominant input on the West Coast, while direct tree harvests play a larger role in the East.



Q. Has it always been this way?

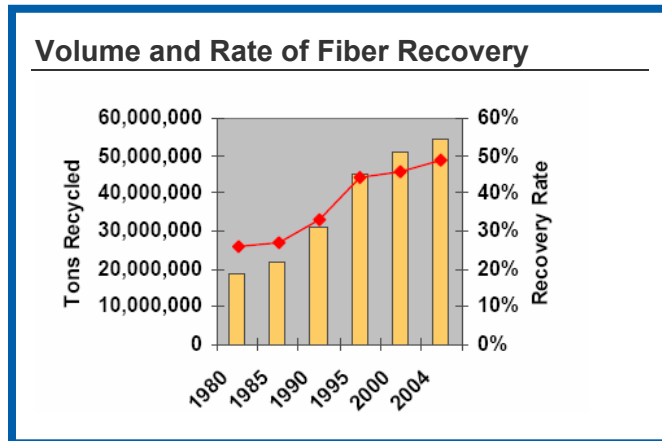
A. No. The use of recovered fiber has grown with the amount of paper that is recycled in Canada and the United States. The volume of recovered paper has grown by 20 million tons in the past 15 years. The

two countries currently recover about 50 percent of all the paper they consume each year.

Q. Where does this recovered fiber go?

A. Most stays in Canada and the United States and is used for making

new paper products. About 30 percent overall is exported mostly to Asian countries, primarily China that have rapidly rising paper demand and limited forest resources. Much of this recovered fiber returns as packaging for goods imported from China.



Q. What determines the mix of fresh and recycled fibers in a paper product?

A. The mix of fibers is determined by the demands of the people who are using the product. People use paper for many different reasons, such as cleaning and drying, storing other goods, and communicating. As such, different types of fibers are blended together depending on the distinct strength, brightness and absorbency needs for different grades of paper.

Q. What would happen without fresh fiber?

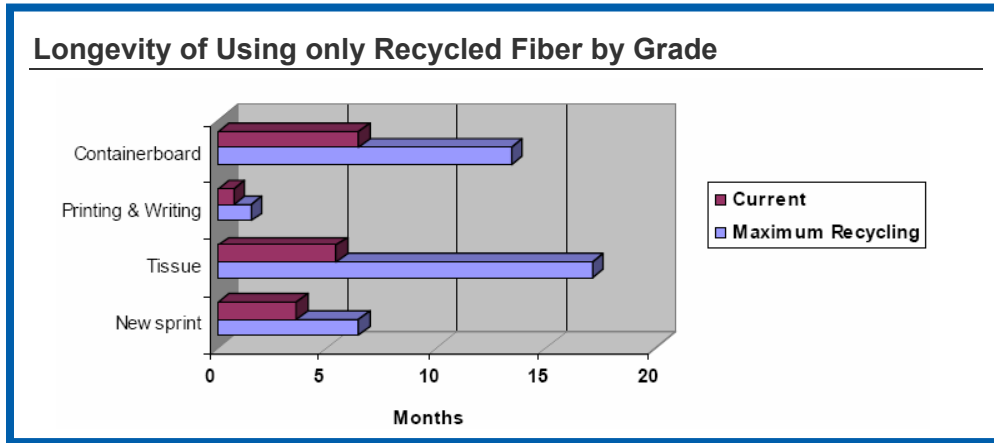
A. We would run out of fiber for making some products in a matter of weeks and be completely out of fiber in months.

Q. Would this be true if we maximized recycling?

A. Yes. Recycled fiber breaks down with each use so without continually adding fresh fiber; we would not be able to maintain our use of different paper products.

Q. Would we run out of certain products sooner than others?

A. Yes. Not all fiber is created (or recreated) equally, as performance and technical constraints determine the ability to produce a product using recovered paper. As the graph below indicates, we would run out of some types of paper sooner than other types.



Q. How much fresh fiber is needed to maintain current levels of paper use?

A. It depends on the characteristics of the paper product and the level of recovered fiber that is available. For example, maintaining newsprint consumption would require 77 percent fresh fiber at current recycling levels and 64 percent fresh fiber at maximum recycling.

Q. What would happen if we didn't use recovered paper?

A. If we used paper fiber only once, we would be failing to take advantage of a usable good. Recovered paper has many uses. In addition to being an input for new paper products, it could also be used as an energy source, insulation, or for creating compost. Further, disposing of the paper that is currently recovered in Canada and the United States would require a lot of space. If the equivalent of all of the paper recovered each year is placed as bundles of 500 sheets of copy paper, it would cover almost the entire area of Texas.

Q. Can we recover all of the paper that is being produced?

A. No. Some types of paper are not recoverable, such as tissues and toilet paper, while others are not available for recovery for extended periods, such as library books and medical files. These products account for about 15 percent of the paper consumed every year.

Q. How much is out there that can be recovered?

A. Approximately 37 million tons of reusable products are sent to landfills or to municipal solid waste incinerators each year. While it

might not be technically or economically feasible to recover the entire amount, more can be done to expand recovery efforts. However, expanding the pool of recovered fiber should not be left up to one party.

Q. What can be done to increase the use of recycled fiber?

A. Consumers can support recycling in their community and place of work. Businesses can work in collaboration with suppliers, municipalities and other businesses to increase the availability and efficiency of recovery mechanisms. Everyone has a role in making sure more fiber is recovered for making paper.