



# Facts about print media and the environment

# What kind of footprint does media leave on its environment?

Like all human activity, the media has a certain impact on the environment. Alma Media strives to offer information on the environmental impacts of printed and online media to anyone with an interest in the matter.

## Finland's forests

With over three quarters of its land area covered by forest, Finland is the most densely forested country in Europe. Forest industry output has multiplied over the past 50 years, while the forest resources have grown by just over one third. The increased growth is the result of sustainable forest management. The annual growth of Finnish forests (100 million cubic metres) is greater than the annual cutting volume (approximately 55 million cubic metres), which means that Finland's forest resources are increasing. In fact, the use of forests for wood processing could be increased by 25% and Finland's forest resources would still maintain a positive growth rate.

Read more about Finnish forests and their use [on the Forest Industries Knowledge Services](#).

Of Finland's total area, 78% is land used in agriculture or forestry and 10% is waterways. The total area of forest land is 20.1 million hectares according to the national definition and 22.1 million hectares according to the FAO definition. This represents some four hectares for each Finnish citizen. The European average is 1.3 hectares.

Read more [about European and Finnish forests on the Finnish Forest Research Institute website](#).

By definition, a carbon sink is a process, activity or mechanism that absorbs greenhouse gases, aerosols or their precursors from the atmosphere. The photosynthesis occurring in a growing forest absorbs one tonne of atmospheric carbon dioxide for every cubic metre of growth. One tonne of carbon dioxide corresponds to approximately 367 kilogrammes of carbon. Young forests grow the fastest and thereby absorb the most carbon. As a forest ages, growth slows down and so does the rate of carbon absorption.

Read more about forests as carbon sinks [on the Forest Industries Knowledge Services](#).

## The origin of newsprint

The raw material for newsprint used in Finland comes from coniferous forests in the North. Newsprint is generally made from spruce. While Finnish forests are growing, tropical forests are shrinking in many parts of the world. The most common reasons for the loss of rainforests are agriculture and the need for energy for domestic consumption. Nearly half of all wood cut globally is used for these purposes. Rainforests may feature on the pages of Alma Media's publications as a story, but never as a raw material.

Read more about the process of producing newsprint from the [Finnish Forest Association's "The many opportunities of wood" information package](#) and the status of the world's rainforests on the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations' [forest website](#).

Domestic wood species play a key role in promoting biodiversity. Some 90% of the total Finnish forest area is commercial forest. This means that commercial forests are home to the majority of the species and populations that live in Finnish forests, making the management of commercial forests crucial for biodiversity. Commercial forests in Finland have been surveyed to determine the locations of particularly valuable natural habitats, which are then exempted from cutting and processing. Areas used for logging are also carefully managed, with retention trees and deciduous trees left standing and parts of the forest burnt over to preserve and promote the typical structures of natural forests.

The forestry industry has made significant investments in protecting the diversity of commercial forests by providing training to their personnel and forest machine contractors on environmental matters and by funding research on forest biodiversity. Finland has the highest percentage of strictly conserved forests in Europe (9% of total forest area).

In addition to the ecosystem management of commercial forests, the conservation of Finland's forests is best achieved through voluntary conservation practices. They are also often the fastest solutions to adopt. The voluntary basis is also important due to the fact that some 70% of the forests in southern Finland are privately owned.

For more on forest management and biodiversity, please refer to the Ministry of the Environment's [Biodiversity in Finnish Forests brochure](#) and [the Forest Industries Knowledge Services](#).

## Recycling

Newsprint is mainly produced from surplus from wood use, such as leftovers from the saw mill and plywood industries. Due to fluctuations in the availability of such materials, there is occasionally a need to also use raw wood material. In such cases, newsprint is produced from trees that are unsuitable for use in the

furniture industry, for instance. Recycled fibre plays a larger role in the production of newsprint than other printing stock. Paper fibre can be recycled 5-7 times.

Read more about the production of newsprint and the use of recycled fibre [on the Forest Industries Knowledge Services](#) and [the UPM Newsprint Information Package](#).

Finland has one of the highest rates of newsprint recycling in the world. Approximately 70-80% of all paper is recycled and it is estimated that the recycling rate for newsprint is as high as 90%. In order to maintain the fibre structure of newsprint at a usable condition, newspapers should be recycled within a few weeks of printing.

Read more about paper recycling [on the Paperinkeräys Oy website](#) and [the Two Sides project information package](#).

## Climate impacts

All human activity has an environmental impact. The climate impacts of a newspaper are easier to understand when they are compared with the climate load of other everyday activities. Comparisons between the results of different studies are only indicative, but they help provide a more concrete understanding of how our daily choices impact our environment.

Our examples compare the carbon footprint of basic food items, a slice of cheese and a beef steak, to that of a newspaper. As the figures are from different studies, the comparison is merely indicative. Nevertheless, it is clear that the climate impact of a newspaper is relatively small compared to many other products consumed on a daily basis.

In terms of their direct climate effects, i.e. carbon dioxide emissions, a slice of cheese and a daily newspaper are roughly equal. However, a newspaper with inspiring contents may encourage readers to make responsible and sustainable consumption choices, thereby having the indirect effect of curbing climate change.

Read more about the climate impact of a newspaper on [the VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland's Leader Research Project Website](#) and the climate impact of food items on the [Meat Information Association](#) and [MTT Agrifood Research Finland websites](#).