

Paper's next chapter: innovation, sustainability, and growth

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Ricoh Europe, London, July 18 2025 – The digital evolution has transformed demand for paper and sparked a wave of innovation.

Future growth in the paper and forest products industry will reflect population expansion, economic development, and rising consumer preferences for environmentally friendly products, according to [research from McKinsey](#).

Demographic shifts and consumer trends such as the demand for convenience and sustainability will influence consumer packaging while e-commerce will promote growth in transport packaging over the next several years.

This changing landscape is driving pioneering approaches and fresh product diversification that meet the expectations of environmentally conscious consumers.

They include innovative alternatives to:

Pulp fibres A [wide variety](#) of renewable sources can be used including agricultural residues (e.g. straw, corn stalks), grasses (e.g. switchgrass, miscanthus), and fast growing crops like bamboo and hemp. Moving away from traditional wood fibres helps paper manufacturers reduce their environmental impact. They can also support the production of high quality, environmentally friendly pulp and paper products that meet the increasing consumer demand for sustainable products. Examples include Favini's [Tree Free](#) family that uses bamboo and Shiro Alga Carta conceived as a way to use the damaging algae in the [Venice Lagoon](#), Fedrigoni's [Bamboo WS FSC](#) self adhesive range, and Antalis's [Curious Particles](#) options.

Plastic Renewable and biodegradable paper based packaging offers a solution to the international reliance on single use plastics. The challenge is to create a solution that meets

the expected environmental and performance standards. Finland's Metsä Group has developed its [Muoto™ 3D](#) fibre line, that uses moulded pulp technology to create lightweight, durable packaging solutions. Smurfit Westrock's Better Planet Packaging Initiative aims to redefine packaging as a sustainable, circular solution, and has resulted in the creation of [AgroPaper™](#), a degradable paper alternative to plastic film in agriculture, which can enrich the soil post-use; [TopClip™](#), a recyclable alternative to shrink wrap for multipack beverage cans popular among breweries; and [paper pallet wrap](#), a stretchable paper that can replace plastic stretch film in logistics.

Synthetic textile fibres Dissolving pulp has been developed to replace non-renewable synthetic fibres like polyester and nylon that are made from fossil fuels and used in textiles. Derived from wood cellulose, dissolving pulp can be transformed into regenerated fibres like viscose, lyocell, and modal. Many global pulp and paper companies are expanding their production to meet the textile industry's demand. Innovations in blockchain technology are also enhancing traceability - a growing priority for the fashion sector. For example, Sappi's dissolving pulp brand Verve partnered with a key customer on 'Green Track' blockchain technology to provide a [forest to garment traceability](#) solution. [Södra's OnceMore®](#) initiative focuses on the circularity of textile fibres. The industrial scale recycling process combines textile waste with responsibly sourced wood fibres to create virgin quality dissolving pulp. It separates polyester from cotton, reusing the cotton to create OnceMore pulp while incinerating the polyester to generate energy for its operations. Antalis's [Refit](#) also transforms textile remnants into sustainable paper grades.

Advances in the papermaking process itself have resulted in [high density papermaking](#) and long-fibre papermaking. The former is ideally suited to applications in packaging and industrial sectors where robust materials are essential, while the latter's superior printability and aesthetic appeal make it a preferred choice for premium publications and marketing collateral.

Innovations in machine learning have also optimised fibre blending processes, allowing for precise control over paper properties such as strength, opacity, and surface finish. While

[Nanotechnology](#) is being used to incorporate nanoparticles into paper coatings to improve printability, moisture resistance, and durability. It enables powder fixation processes that reduce the environmental footprint of paper production by minimising chemical usage.

These solutions illustrate how the industry is progressing in many ways to address consumer demand for environmentally responsible solutions.

This is something we at Ricoh are experienced in. Most recently with our development of the [High Caliper Media Customisation](#) service for the RICOH Pro™ C9500 digital colour sheetfed press that enables the production of Green Gift Cards - a highly sustainable, board based, alternative to plastic gift cards. The new press capability also opens doors to high margin applications including luxury business cards, swing tags, and gift card packaging.

Talk to Ricoh and discover the possibilities that can be explored when creative, sustainable, and environmentally responsible substrates are combined with the latest digital printing technology.

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Ricoh is a leading provider of integrated digital services and print and imaging solutions designed to support digital transformation of workplaces, workspaces and optimize business performance.

Headquartered in Tokyo, Ricoh's global operation reaches customers in approximately 200 countries and regions, supported by cultivated knowledge, technologies, and organizational capabilities nurtured over its 85-year history. In the financial year ended March 2024, Ricoh Group had worldwide sales of 2,348 billion yen (approx. 15.5 billion USD).

It is Ricoh's mission and vision to empower individuals to find Fulfilment through Work by understanding and transforming how people work so we can unleash their potential and creativity to realize a sustainable future.

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