

# Double A Finds Sustainable Ways to Make Paper

Paper products are used daily in ever-increasing quantities as newspapers, printing and writing paper, tissue, industrial carton boards and more. As climate change confronts our society, with dire consequences if left unchecked, do we think about where our paper comes from?

Thirawit Leetavorn, Double A Senior Executive Vice President, draws from the company's experience in making environmentally-friendly paper to discuss why it is time for paper manufacturers to measure their environmental impact against their bottom line.

It is hard to imagine a life without paper. Paper products are used every day all over the world in homes, offices, schools, factories, indeed, in every imaginable situation, and in larger quantities despite our increasingly digital world.

According to the WWF, around one million tonnes of paper are used every day around the world, and paper consumption continues to increase. If we look just at cut-size paper, which is printing and photocopying paper, the overall demand grew at a rate of five percent a year from 1995 to 2004.

That is a lot of paper, and begs the question: where does it come from? As the environmental context we live in continues its rapid change, what are we as consumers and manufacturers doing in the fight against global warming that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has concluded is very likely to be man-made? Consumers rarely pay attention to where this universally-used material comes from.



Thai farmers had to be convinced to grow trees.



Double A paper, on a roll.

## The Industry and the Environment

The pulp and paper industry has been criticised for negatively impacting the environment and contributing to global warming on several fronts. The industry accounts for half of the commercial timber cut worldwide, a large amount of which comes from illegal logging and old growth forests. This activity also contributes to global emissions of carbon dioxide, and other greenhouse gases because rainforests hold a significant stock of the world's carbon dioxide and deforestation releases the carbon dioxide stored in trees.

The industry is also one of the world's largest industrial consumers of energy — mainly fossil fuel that requires a lot of water and can cause water pollution if chemical waste is not treated properly before disposal. For example, the bleaching process can result in the release of toxic chlorine compounds; and if a mill releases its waste water into a river without first treating it properly, this can adversely impact freshwater and marine ecosystems.

## A Responsible Approach

At Double A, we believe paper manufacturing can and should be done in a socially responsible manner, which is why we have developed an approach and process that has a measurably low impact on the environment. Our holistic approach, which we have employed for about 20 years, covers pulp sourcing, energy self-sufficiency and management of water resources and waste.

Double A gets the raw material for its pulp and paper production from our farmed trees process. We grow the seedlings for our paper trees and sell them to the farmers who plant the trees in the unused land around their existing traditional crops — rice, cassava and others. The trees mature in three to five years, after which the farmers can fell and sell the trees to Double A for a guaranteed sum, thereby enjoying an additional source of income.

Using farmed trees means that, unlike logging and land clearing, there is no adverse impact on the natural biodiversity of the land. In addition, Double A's farmed trees absorb about 2.4 million tonnes of CO2 from the atmosphere every year.

## Farmers Needed Persuasion

This approach is unusual but also quite logical for us, as our parent company Advance Agro is in the agricultural business,

and Thailand is still largely an agricultural country. However, it was difficult to get farmers to cooperate and work with us in the beginning.

When we first started speaking to them about this, they were reluctant to plant the trees. They asked us a lot of questions about how to plant and care for the trees, what sort of trees they were, how long they had to grow the trees before they matured, and who was going to cut them down.

With our experience in working with farmers, we were able to convince them to participate in the programme. We pointed out that this would provide them with a significant additional source of income for a small investment. The farmers have to buy the seedlings, but we give them a buy-back guarantee of 1,200 baht per tonne and we pay them in cash.

## A Regular Income

Each farmer's revenue varies according to the number of trees grown. If a farmer plants about 100 Double A Paper Trees, they will earn about 8,000 baht in three years. But they can ensure a regular flow of additional income annually by ensuring that they have trees to harvest every year.



On average, farmers get about six to eight percent extra on top of their normal annual income from their traditional crops by growing Double A trees.

We are also self-sufficient when it comes to fuel and water. Double A generates electricity for its mills using biomass fuel rather than fossil fuel. By using tree waste such as bark and lignin as fuel, we save an estimated 340 million litres of diesel oil annually.

As for water, all our water needs are more than met by the rainwater collected in our purpose-built 36-million-cubic-metre reservoir. We have also used less and less water in our process over the years, as we have improved our technology to the point where we now use 90 percent less water than the average mill. In addition, used water is treated and then recycled to irrigate trees.

## Towards Sustainable Social Responsibility

As climate change becomes an increasing global issue, it is time for paper manufacturers to measure

their environmental impact against their bottom line. Paper manufacturers should be looking at their fibre sourcing and mill-processing practices with a view to reducing their environmental impact, as well as finding new and innovative ways for sustainable growth.

A study we commissioned from Access Economics, an Australian research firm, measured the environmental cost of paper manufacturers around the world, including Australia, South Africa, Finland and Indonesia. The results showed that Double A has the most environmentally-sound paper production method — an estimated environmental cost of \$0.04 per ream, compared to \$0.20 per ream for an Australian mill and \$0.39 per ream for an Indonesian mill.

We are not saying that the Double A way is the only way; it is however, a tested way that has made us also the leading paper brand in many of the markets in which we operate.

That said, paper manufacturers are only one part of the equation. Consumers should also become more socially responsible in understanding where the paper they use comes from, how it is produced, and exercising their right to choose paper products which do not adversely impact the environment.

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Farmers are trained on how to grow trees in addition to their usual crops.



Double A paper is a hit.