

Eight things you should know about paper cups



Did you know...

- ... that even in Imperial China, where paper was invented in the second century BC, people were already drinking from paper cups with all manner of shapes, colours and designs? (1)
- ... that your cup has only ever been touched by your lips? You may hunt for lipstick residue and other contamination in vain. Paper cups are produced under the highest of hygienic standards, ensuring you are able to safely enjoy your coffee. (2)
- ... that the paper industry has consistently reduced its water consumption? Around 100 ml of water are used to produce a paper cup. Would you be able to wash a reusable cup with so little water? (3)
- ... that more wood is grown in German forests than is used? Annually approximately 121 million m³ of wood is grown, but only 76 million m³ is felled. (4)
Even accounting for losses during harvesting, bark and dead wood that remains in the forest, the area of forest grows by 15.3 million m³ per year. (5)
- ... that the wood needed to produce all paper coffee-to-go cups for the German market in a year is replaced in less than eight hours in Finnish forests alone? (6)
- ... that the paper industry in Europe obtains 54 percent of the energy it uses from regenerative sources? (7)
- ... that coffee-to-go cups make up less than 0.01 percent of the entirety of generated waste of around 401 million tonnes, or 0.08 percent of the generated household waste of around 50 million tonnes and less than 0.25 percent of the packaging waste per year? (8)
- ... that fees are payable by the provider for coffee-to-go cups under the Duales System (German recycling system)?

Sources

(1) Tsien, Tsuen-Hsueh (1985): Paper and Printing, in: Needham, Joseph (1985): Science and Civilisation in China, Volume 5 Chemistry and Chemical Technology, Cambridge University Press, Seite 38.

(2) See the Landratsamt Günzburg in a letter dated 21.09.2015: "From a technical point of view, the filling of reusable cups provided by the patron is possible, however this is to be considered critically since there is no way of knowing the hygienic status of the self-provided cups. Filling of cups provided by the patron should not be carried out for reasons of hygiene as detailed above."

<http://www.pro-s-pack.de/resources/2015-09-21-Antwortschreiben-mitgebrachte-Mehrwegbecher.pdf>

(3) Verband Deutscher Papierfabriken e.V. (2016) (Association of German paper factories): Papier 2016 - ein Leistungsbericht, page 36 (Paper 2016 - a performance report):

"The water requirements are constantly being reduced thanks to the intensification of the circulation system. On average, it is today around 9 litres per kilogram of paper." Calculated on the basis of a paper cup with a filling volume of 0.3 l and a weight of 11g.

(4) Schutzgemeinschaft Deutscher Wald (2017) (Society for the protection of German forests): General questions with regard to forests at <http://www.sdw.de/waldwissen/wald-faq/index.html> (accessed on 21.03.2017).

(5) Bundeswaldagentur (2016) (German Federal Forestry agency), graphic "Zuwachs und Nutzung" (Growth and utilisation), corr. Dec. 2016 at <https://www.bundeswaldinventur.de/index.php?id=691> (accessed on 21.03.2017).

(6) Message from METSÄ Board to PRO-S-PACK dated 24.03.2016.

(7) Verband Deutscher Papierfabriken (2017) (Association of German paper factories): Vorurteil und Wahrheit (Bias and truth) at <http://www.vorurteilundwahrheit.de/startseite.html> (accessed on 21.03.2017).

(8) Umweltbundesamt (German Federal Environmental Agency), regarding waste generated in Germany, at <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/daten/abfall-kreislaufwirtschaft/abfallaufkommen#textpart-1>

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