



Memo to NRDC's Corporate Greening Partners

Date: August 21, 2009

To: NRDC's corporate greening partners

Subject: Greening info update from NRDC

Recently, Kimberly-Clark announced that it will incorporate higher levels of Forest Stewardship Council-certified (FSC) fiber into the manufacture of its tissue products. This memo is intended to clarify what this announcement means, and NRDC's reaction to it. As you know, FSC harvesting practices are better than most other approaches to harvesting timber, although even FSC practices often engender meaningful ecological impacts.

Kimberly-Clark's announcement that it will move to incorporate higher levels of FSC-certified fiber is a meaningful step in the right direction. We hope all paper companies will similarly adopt FSC forestry management practices in order to reduce the ecological and cultural destruction typically associated with the paper industry's intensive logging practices.

However, the reason we are writing to you is to remind you that virgin fiber, even if it is FSC certified, is not the optimal fiber source for disposable tissue products. Instead, disposable tissue products should be made from recycled fibers, which avoids forestry impacts entirely.

Kimberly-Clark's new policy is to ensure that 40 percent of its North American fiber is either recycled or certified by FSC by 2011. But its policy does not publicly commit to specific targets for increasing total recycled content or postconsumer recycled content. Currently, most of Kimberly-Clark's at-home products lack any recycled content, while many competing tissue products have much higher levels of recycled content than this agreement offers. Under the agreement, there's no guarantee that Kimberly-Clark's at-home products will improve at all.

Kimberly-Clark's policy also allows Kimberly-Clark to use wood fiber from forest lands which have been converted to biologically impoverished monoculture tree plantations, provided that the supplier can verify "through certification by FSC or another forest certification system" that the pre-existing forest lands were not Special Forest Areas. As defined in the policy, Special Forest Areas are a small subset of natural forests, and FSC is not the only forest certification system recognized under the policy. This means that Kimberly-Clark can use wood fiber from converted lands certified under SFI or another forest certification system which does not guarantee sufficient environmental protection, transparency, or third-party verification. Conversion of natural forests to monoculture tree plantations contributes substantially to loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and many other ecological and social impacts.

NRDC hopes that Kimberly-Clark's new policy is a stepping stone toward further environmental improvement, including an increased reliance on recycled fiber for its products. NRDC continues to recommend that purchasers seek tissue products with the highest levels of recycled content (including postconsumer recycled content) available. For a list of top recycled content at-home tissue products, check out our guide here:

<http://www.nrdc.org/land/forests/qtissue.asp>.