

PREPS Stakeholder Survey 2009

The Publishers' Database for Responsible Environmental Paper Sourcing (PREPS) is a joint initiative from 15 of the UK's leading publishers.

Together, these companies have set up a database to hold technical specifications and details of the pulps and forest sources for each of the papers they use. PREPS members then use this information when making decisions on the paper they buy for publications.

PREPS has been in existence for more than two years, and this survey was commissioned to look into how the system should develop in the future. A second objective was to understand external perceptions of PREPS and set out directions for future communication.

www.preps-uk.com

The survey was conducted by Acona Limited, an independent corporate responsibility consultancy headquartered in London, part of Acona CMG Group. With its broad expertise, the company advises large, mainly corporate clients on a full range of social, environmental and ethical matters.

Acona is acting as Secretariat for PREPS, providing independent advice, grading papers and managing the database.

Acona would like to thank the member companies for their help in producing this briefing. As of March 2009, these include Cambridge University Press, Egmont UK, Imago, Hachette Livre UK, Harper Collins, Meld Ltd, Oxford University Press, Parragon Books Ltd, Pearson Education, Penguin Group (UK), Reed Elsevier, Sage Publications, Simon & Schuster, Usborne Books, Walker Books and Wiley.

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1. Methodology

The survey was conducted online during February and March 2009. PREPS' member organisations and Acona jointly came up with a list of relevant respondents. Of the 260 people contacted by email, 121 took the survey, which brings the response rate up to 47%.

Respondents were asked to state what sort of organisation they belong to, resulting in the following statistic:



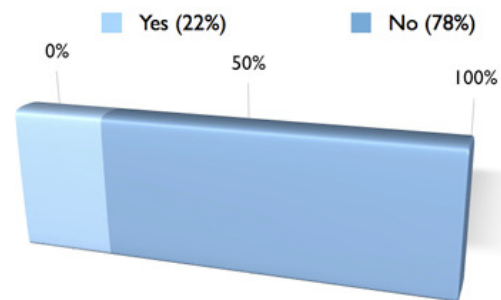
As illustrated, the majority of respondents represented printers (39%) or paper mill companies (32%). Book publishers and paper merchants each accounted for 6% of the responses. The remaining responses came from NGOs, industry associations, certification bodies and forest certification schemes, all individually under 5%.

All respondents were promised full anonymity. The qualitative responses highlighted in this document, although the source is known, are thus never attributed to particular persons.

2. Perceptions of PREPS

A key objective of the survey was to find out what PREPS' stakeholders think of the process. For example, whether it is clear to them what PREPS does and why they are asked to supply data.

Have you engaged with PREPS on any issue?



78% of respondents indicated that they have had no engagement with PREPS on any issue. Of the 22% who have been in contact with PREPS, no one filed any negative comments regarding the engagement process.

PREPS appear to be extremely knowledgeable and open to discussion. Differences of opinion are inevitable, although we would like to see some movement on certain issues.

Paper mill respondent

Very easy, once we found out which publishers were directly involved with PREPS.

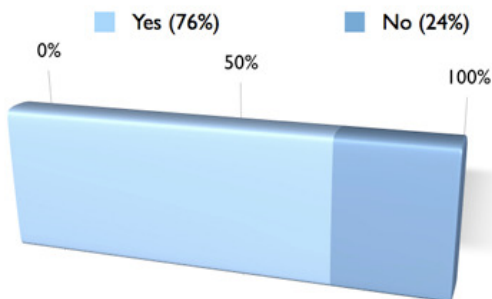
Industry association respondent

I have had a presentation and found it useful.

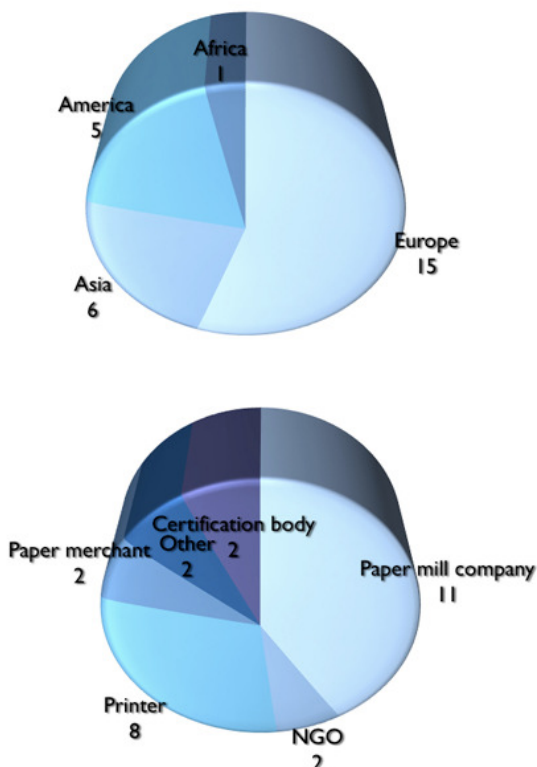
Book publisher

Respondents were probed about their knowledge of PREPS, its purpose and function. 110 people answered this question.

Is it clear to you what PREPS does?



The respondents indicating they lack knowledge of what PREPS does are neither confined to any particular region nor profession. This is demonstrated graphically below:



Although the sample size is only 27 people, the finding suggests that those lacking knowledge of PREPS are located somewhat evenly 'across the board' geographically and professionally.

I would like to know more about your activities. The only things I know about PREPS is an organization of 14 UK-based publishers and devoting in environmental friendly issues for publishing industry.

Paper mill employee, Taiwan

What is done with historical data once new data is provided? Can we control which customers see our data, or once it is submitted do all PREPS subscribers have access?

Pulp and paper mill employee, USA

We are asked/forced to provide information based on PREPS user questions but have not received any formal assessment or information on use of our data.

Pulp/paper mill and merchant employee, USA

It was presented as a database, which is clear. How that data is being used by the stakeholders is not clear.

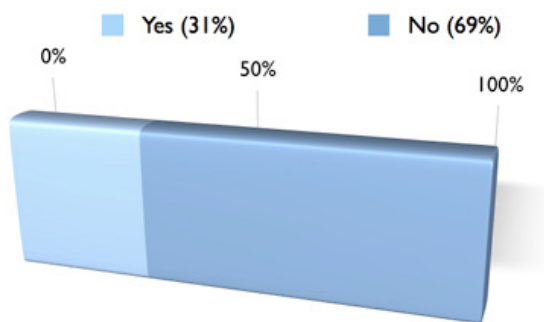
Paper mill employee, USA

It would be better if it was more transparent.

NGO employee, UK

As part of getting to know better what people think of PREPS, respondents were asked if they know about the Process Document, which outlines how PREPS works. 110 people answered this question.

Have you looked at the PREPS Process Document?



Of those respondents answering 'yes', no one has problems understanding the document and very few provided recommendations for how to improve it.

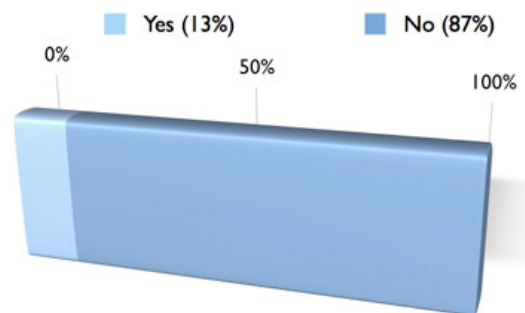
The document seems very clear. Perhaps it could include an explanation of why printers cannot be members or at least have access to which papers have which grade.

Printer, UK

2.1 Paper Mill Satisfaction

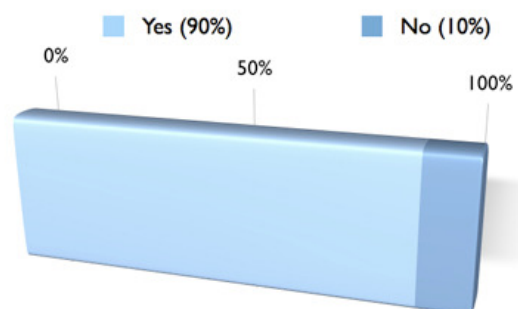
The survey comprised a paper mill sub section to gather specific views from those facing 'extra' work imposed by PREPS. Questions in this section were only posed to mill employees.

Have you provided information on your papers to PREPS?



Of those answering 'yes', the vast majority found the request for information easy and clear to understand.

Do you think the PREPS safety measures are sufficient?



While 9 out of 10 respondents found the current safety measures sufficient, the qualitative responses highlighted a number of concerns. Below are some examples:

It still remains unclear, what happens with the detailed information regarding fibre sourcing - e.g. details about the chemical pulp providers is regarded as sensitive information. In direct customer communication this type of information is discussed but providing company sensitive information to databases is another thing. If CoC's are in place, why this level of detail?

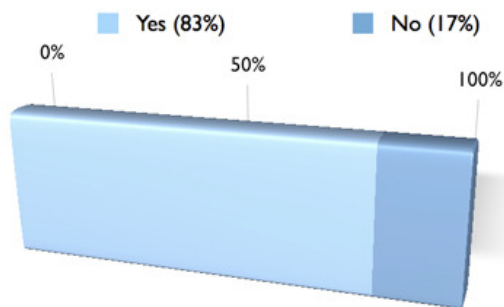
Anonymous

It would be good for suppliers also to have some limited access and be able to view the information entered for their own products, or at least the final scores.

Anonymous

Mill company respondents were asked about their experiences dealing with PREPS information requests.

Are you generally happy with the communication between you and PREPS?



Asked how the communication could be improved, there is no clear trend. Below are two qualitative statements.

A little more clarity around objectives and stakeholders early on would have helped.

Anonymous

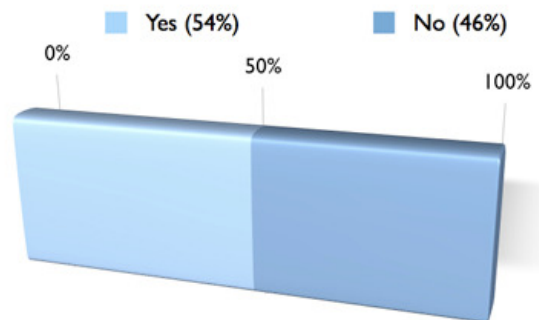
We are not listed as a 'super user'. I feel this should be open to other suppliers of papers who are in developing economies like India. The progress in other parts of the world will help them to initiate better actions.

Anonymous

2.2 Printers/Merchants Sub Section

The survey comprised a sub question aimed at gathering specific views from printers and merchants.

Have you been asked to source papers specifically because those papers have been graded within the database?

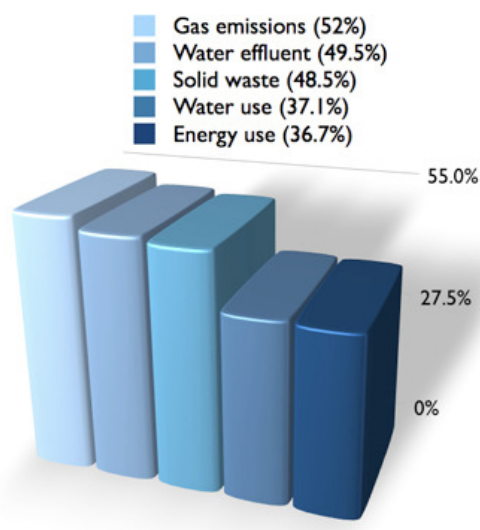


Of the 30 respondents answering 'yes', no one indicated that it was unclear to them why they were asked to source those specific papers.

3. Future directions

In addition to better understanding stakeholders' knowledge of PREPS, the second main objective of the survey was to identify future directions for the database.

Respondents were asked to rate a number of potential mill indicators along the lines of 'not important', 'useful' and 'essential.' 99 people responded to this question. The table below shows the percentage of people ranking each indicator 'essential':



Having prioritised these areas of concern, respondents were then asked to suggest additional mill indicators and provide further commentary. 30 people made use of this opportunity, highlighting for example:

- Impact on indigenous peoples
- Replanting practices
- Employment to local communities
- Support to ILO conventions
- Environmental management systems
- Noise pollution
- Use of renewable energy sources
- Toxic chemicals/REACH Declaration

Several of the responses were slightly more critical towards embracing further indicators.

NO - stick to certification. The number of different surveys, calculators and tools that are thrown at us are so different and time consuming that it takes resources away from doing the real work at hand - improving internal processes and products.

Pulp mill employee, USA

These are country dependent and each mill has to comply with their country's regulations.

Paper mill employee, Canada

Comparisons should be made on LCA (Life Cycle Assessment ISO14040) to make sure we speak about the same indicators.

Paper mill employee, France

Respondents were also asked to suggest additional indicators that are not specifically related to paper and pulp mills. 75% of survey participants could not think of other useful indicators. However, among the 25% responding to this query, there is a clear tendency to focus on carbon emissions throughout the supply chain, as witnessed in the indicative excerpts below.

Yes, it's carbon again and the effect of print and bind in cheap countries which involve the shipment of paper and finished books on long transport routes.

Certification body, UK

*Transport of paper to printer - Distance?
Method of transport?*

Printer, UK

Distance raw materials travel to plant (should be included in CO2 emissions). Same for finished products. Transparency - are all the above indicators - and more - publicly available and easy to access and understand? Are the data independently verified?

Forest certification scheme employee, UK

Carbon sequestration through changing from plastics to paper-based packaging.

Paper mill company employee, India

4. Concluding remarks

Key recommendations

-PREPS should identify ways of making it clearer to stakeholders what PREPS is about.

-PREPS should take the suggested sustainability indicators forward as topics for further conversation with its stakeholders.

The survey findings were based on responses from 121 people occupied in the paper industry.

Firstly, we wanted to get an overview of how well PREPS' stakeholders understand what PREPS is, how it is used and why they are being asked to submit data.

- None of the respondents regularly interacting with PREPS had any negative comments to file about the engagement process.
- The same pattern was repeated with regard to the Process Document; only a few people have read it, but those who have understand the purpose clearly.
- One quarter of respondents do not understand clearly what PREPS is about. This lack of understanding is neither restricted to particular regions nor professions.
- Among the paper mill respondents, the vast majority found the existing data safety measures sufficient.

Secondly, we wanted to get some indication as to where PREPS might develop in the future.

- In terms of potential future mill indicators, gas emissions, water effluent and solid waste were all considered significantly more important than water and energy use.
- Asked about potential indicators beyond paper mills, there was a discernable interest in mapping carbon emissions throughout the supply chain.
- 63% of respondents would like to have their say in follow-up sessions to this survey.