

PPI Pulp & Paper Week

PAPER, PACKAGING AND FIBER MARKET NEWS AND PRICES FOR NORTH AMERICA

As US pulp posts \$20-60/tonne increases, AI-Pac, Paper Excellence, Suzano move on \$80 March hikes

North American pulp market conditions strengthened through February on robust demand from spot and contract buyers, prompting a fresh round of \$80/tonne price increases amid talk of tighter supply despite a reported increase in worldwide producer inventories.

This week, Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries (AI-Pac), Eldorado, Klabin, and the world's largest bleached hardwood kraft (BHK) producer Suzano separately informed customers that they would increase US list prices \$80/tonne, industry contacts said.

The BHK moves came one week after Paper Excellence (PE) slated a Mar. 1, \$80/tonne hike on two key grades of softwood (*P&PW*, Feb. 23, p. 1).

>>> continued on page 12

US recycled brown pulp buyers exit the CNY with demand, prices rise by \$10; ND set on capacity add

After extended mill downtime in China during the Lunar New Year holiday, US recycled brown pulp (RBP) buyers faced shorter supplies of available tons in February, causing prices to increase this week for the first time since September 2023. The \$10/tonne rise for US RBP in February increased pricing to \$310/tonne net CIF to China, according to Fastmarkets' *PPI Pulp & Paper Week* Feb. 28 pricing survey and market report.

Since November 2023, pricing for US RBP held at \$300/tonne net CIF to China after falling \$5/tonne month-over-month from the \$305/tonne in September. That month, in September, US RBP pricing improved by \$5/tonne from August pricing, after steady pricing at *>>> continued on page 4*

PCA/Boise announces UFS \$100 price hike for Apr. 1; Navigator sets up to 5% Mar. rise including for US

Packaging Corp of America (PCA)'s Boise Paper announced a \$5/cwt (\$100/ton) price increase on its uncoated freesheet (UFS) paper rolls and sheets, effective Apr. 1.

This is the first price increase announced in North America since September of 2022, and PCA was the first company to come out with a price hike announcement this year.

PCA is the fourth largest UFS producer by capacity in North America.

PCA's price increase includes "private label and branded office papers, printing papers, and converting papers," the company said in a letter to customers sent on Feb. 29. *>>> continued on page 10*

In this issue:

Prices: Market pulp, RBP	3-4
Boxes: Saica plant moving ahead	2
Newsprint: Prices decline by \$25	2
Thermal: Concerns cited about bans	5
SBS: Growth in focus for CLW	7



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Containerboard/boxes

Saica expects 2H work start on new US plant; liner price hikes planned for Mar./Apr. in Europe

Along with its Hamilton, OH, corrugated box plant, Saica said development will soon start on developing a second US box plant in Indiana. In a report from the company this week, *Fastmarkets' PPI Pulp & Paper Week* learned that the new plant project in Anderson, IN, will cost more than \$100 million.

Construction is to start in second half 2024 and is expected to be finished in fourth-quarter 2025 so that the plant would start up in the beginning of 2026.

"With this new project, Saica Group will create 118 new jobs in the state of Indiana," the company said this week.

"As part of this investment, Saica Group plans to build a 340,000-square-foot facility that will house 56 new employees at the very beginning and is expected to employ 118 people at the very end," the company said this week. "The site will include manufacturing, converting and production areas, along with a warehouse and office space. The plant will have a railway connection to facilitate the containerboard rolls delivery. This site will also serve as a backup plant for clients already being served at Saica Pack Hamilton" in Ohio.

The company added that "this investment follows a previous' announcement on Saica's growth plans, where the company is planning to invest around

\$800 million in the US market over the next few years."

>>> continued on page 7

Newsprint

NA exports overseas surpass shipments to US; prices fall by \$25 to early 2022 levels in US

US newsprint prices declined \$25/tonne in February and are now about 13.5% or \$125/tonne lower than February 2022 levels, according to the latest pricing survey conducted by *Fastmarkets' PPI Pulp & Paper Week* with North American newsprint sellers and buyers.

"Certainly, there's downward movement in February ... anything from \$15 to \$25/tonne. Everybody is looking for volume," an industry contact said.

"We did decline prices in February ... due to competition. Some mills are playing fair ... and others are being more aggressive. But lowering the price doesn't get you any more tons," a contact with a newsprint producer told *P&PW* last week.

Prices for 27.7-lb (45 g/m²) newsprint are down to \$795/tonne in February in the US East and to \$805/tonne on the West Coast, and they are back to the prices reported in January and February of 2022, according to the *P&PW* pricing survey.

US newsprint prices increased \$125 during 2022 due to pandemic-panic-buying, and declined by \$100 during 2023 as the market became overstocked. This year, demand remains slow in

North America and prices remain under downward pressure due to supply being higher than demand, according to industry contacts.

"We had a slow January for the demand side, and now we see continued price pressure for February and March," a contact with a newsprint producer reported to *P&PW* last week.

"I expect March and April to be better in demand, but right now our order books are not strong ... people can put (in) orders and get paper pretty fast. Certainly, there's (paper) oversupply," the contact added.

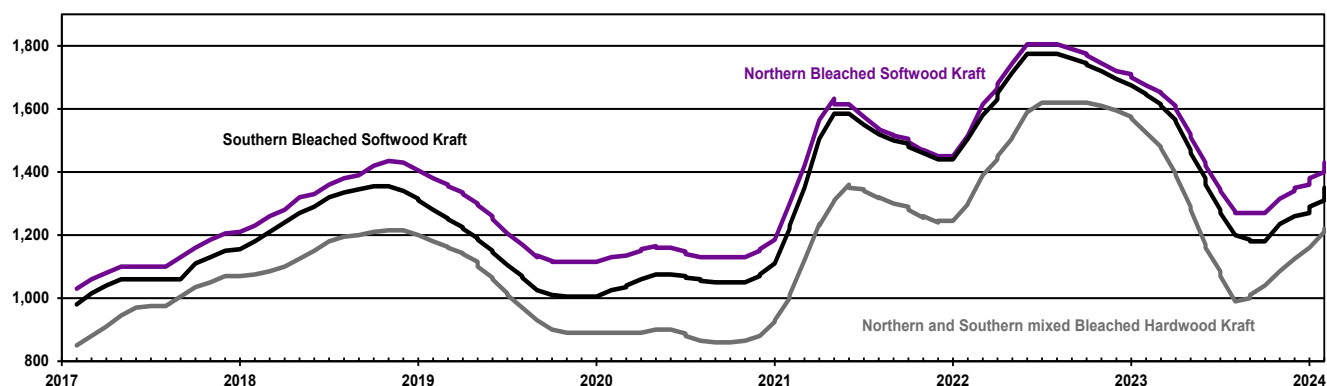
"We aren't seeing any real dramatic decline domestically in demand, but we have seen some newspaper publishing customers throw in the towel and close shop just after the first of the year," another paper supplier stated.

The contact said export prices have "actually hit bottom and made the turn in terms of pricing, and in some key markets (particularly Asia), pricing is headed up" and should be \$75/tonne higher by the end of the first quarter.

>>> continued on page 11

CORRECTION: International Paper permanently shut line No. 20 at its Riegelwood, NC, pulp mill at about the end of 2023. That means the full capacity of the mill today is at about 365,000 tonnes/yr of fluff pulp on line No. 18, not 730,000 tonnes/yr of fluff and southern bleached softwood kraft pulp capacity (*P&PW*, Feb. 23, p. 16).

PRICE WATCH: Market Pulp



Effective list price before regular volume and customer discounts. US\$/metric tonne unless otherwise noted.

	Feb. 2024	Current months			Year-to-year	
	Final ¹	Jan. 2024	Dec. 2023	Q4 2023	Feb. 2023	% chg.
US (DELIVERED IN EAST)						
Bleached softwood kraft						
Northern (Canadian)	1,430	1,380	1,350	1,312	1,675	-14.6
Southern (US)	1,350	1,290	1,260	1,225	1,645	-17.9
Bleached hardwood kraft						
Northern and southern mixed (Canadian/US) ²	1,220	1,160	1,125	1,083	1,525	-20.0
Eucalyptus	1,235	1,175	1,135	1,093	1,535	-19.5
Specialty grades						
Unbleached softwood kraft (Canadian/US)	1,350	1,310	1,280	1,242	1,605	-15.9
Fluff (US southern kraft, untreated softwood rolls)	1,840	1,820	1,790	1,755	2,140	-14.0
Spot Markets³						
Northern Bleached Softwood Kraft	770 - 810	730 - 770	700 - 720	702	860	-8.1
Southern Bleached Softwood Kraft	730 - 760	690 - 730	670 - 690	665	840	-11.3
Northern and Southern Bleached Hardwood Kraft	650 - 690	620 - 660	590 - 620	588	820	-18.3
EUROPE (CIF)						
Bleached softwood kraft						
Northern (Canadian/Nordic)	1,350	1,350	1,300	1,245	1,380	-2.2
Southern (US)	1,310	1,310	1,260	1,205	1,340	-2.2
Bleached hardwood kraft						
Northern mixed (Canadian/US)	1,100	1,100	1,020	940	1,240	-11.3
Southern mixed (US)	1,090	1,090	1,010	930	1,230	-11.4
Specialty Grades						
Fluff (US southern kraft, untreated softwood rolls)	1,840	1,820	1,790	1,755	2,140	-14.0
ASIA (CIF)						
JAPAN⁵						
Bleached softwood kraft						
Northern (Canadian)	840	850 - 855	870	860	1,020	-17.6
KOREA						
Northern bleached softwood kraft	915	935	960	942	1,100	-16.8
CHINA						
Northern bleached softwood kraft - net ⁴	725	730	730	748	913	-20.6
Fluff (US southern kraft, untreated softwood rolls) ⁵	880 - 920	890 - 930	890 - 930	897	1,150	-21.7

SPECIFICATIONS

All prices are best estimates of list prices before regular volume and contract discounts and are composite prices as opposed to median or average prices. Discounts outside the published ranges may be in effect. Actual transaction prices may vary. US prices include normal freight allowance for delivery to consuming paper mills. Export prices are CIF main European ports. Normal terms include a 1.5% discount for cash payment or 60 days. Prices may not reflect some existing contract discounts off list prices still in effect: in North America, typically 44-48%; in Europe 39-45%; in Japan, 2-8%; in Korea, 13-16%; in China, 0% (from Canadian and European producers). BHK pricing varies according to species used for the pulp.

DISCLAIMER

While the information contained in this index has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable, Fastmarkets RISI does not warrant or guarantee the accuracy and completeness of the information.

NOTES

1. Preliminary and final prices: US - Mid-month PPW effective list prices shown are preliminary prices. End-of-month final prices published in PPW and World Pulp Monthly supersede these preliminary prices. Full details at: www.risi.com/PulpPriceChanges. Europe - Originally published in PPI Europe. Pending indicates prices are not available at the time of publication. Final prices are published in the next Price Watch issue. The exception is European fluff price assessments, which follow the same publishing schedule as US pulp, and are formally tied to US fluff price assessments. Asia - Final prices are reported at the end of the month. 2. Effective January 2016, NBHK and SBHK were merged into a single assessment. See www.risi.com/PulpPriceChanges for details. 3. Spot prices are mid-point weighted averages for biweekly orders up to the publication date. Prices are net delivered with 0% discounts. 4. As of January 2020, NBSK net China reflects the last price assessment for NBSK from North America/Scandinavia CIF China (imports) as published in PPI Asia. As of end-February 2024, Canadian NBSK was going for \$700-760/tonne and Nordic NBSK has been assessed at 700-750/tonne. 5. Fluff CIF China assessments were introduced in September 2020.

US brown pulp rises by \$10

>>> *continued from page 1*

\$300/tonne for three months since June 2023. From November 2023 until January 2024, US RBP pricing remained steady at the \$300/tonne as buyers and sellers told of “weak” demand for tons in China against a sluggish economy.

In February, contacts described a demand pickup, and prices moved up with increased orders. Major mill groups in China, including Nine Dragons Paper, Lee & Man, and Shanying International, took downtime during China’s Lunar New Year holiday.

“The market is moving up after CNY (China’s New Year), and the Chinese are interested in replenishing, even though they had extended their downtime,” a seller contact said this week of RBP demand and pricing.

Exports, pricing down in one year. The rise in demand this month follows declining orders in all of 2023, and pricing remains below year-ago trades. In February 2023, US RBP pricing traded \$30/tonne higher, at \$340/tonne net CIF to China a year ago. In one year, pricing for US RBP fell 8.8%.

Exports also decreased last year. US RBP exports fell nearly 60% in 2023 compared with 2022. The 220,000 tons of US RBP exported in 2023 declined year-over-year by 58.5% from the 531,000 tons shipped

US recycled brown pulp (RBP)

US\$/metric tonne*

	Feb. 2024	Jan. 2024	Dec. 2023	Feb. 2023	Year-to-Year % change
US RBP, CIF China	310	300	300	340	-8.8%

Note: Pricing for RBP from Southeast Asia to China, CIF, was \$300/tonne, as of Feb. 28, according to Fastmarkets RISI’s pricing survey.

from the US in 2022, according to quarterly data recently published by the American & Forest Paper Association. This downfall in RBP exports occurred at the same time as ND Paper, an affiliate of China’s Nine Dragons Paper with US plants, shuttered its RBP-producing paper machine in Fairmont, WV, citing weak market conditions.

February’s pricing increase comes in the face of potential mill pushback on higher prices, contacts said.

Prices nearing ‘cost ceiling.’

Prices for US old corrugated containers (OCC), new double-lined kraft corrugated cuttings (DLK), and mixed paper held firm at unchanged prices at the start of February out of the New York/New Jersey ports and decreased by \$5/ton out of the Los Angeles/Long Beach ports. By mid-month, demand and pricing for raw materials improved, according to contacts. The February moves follow increased prices for US bulk grades at the start of January, by a range of \$5-15/ton FAS for exports to Asia.

US export prices from the New York/New Jersey ports for No. 11 OCC and No. 12 DSOCC were at \$157-160/ton FAS, and \$167-170/ton FAS, respectively, as of Feb. 5. For DLK, pricing was firm at \$177-180/ton FAS out of the New York/New Jersey ports, as was mixed paper pricing at \$92-95/ton FAS.

Out of the Los Angeles/Long Beach ports, pricing for No.

11 OCC and No. 12 DSOCC stood at \$162-165/ton FAS, and \$172-175/ton FAS, respectively. Pricing for DLK fell to \$182-185/ton FAS, and mixed paper decreased to \$92-95/ton FAS.

US RBP is made with primarily OCC as well as DLK and even mixed paper. Contacts said this has put upward pressure on prices, while others claimed the elevated US OCC, DLK, and mixed paper prices in the first two months of this year were disconnected from RBP prices. As one contact said, “Recycled pulp pricing are stuck (at \$300/tonne), and (a) higher US OCC price has not led to (a) higher recycled pulp price.”

A seller contact said this week that US RBP prices are nearing “their cost ceiling,” and mills might defer demand to combat higher prices.

“Therefore, they might have to consider taking downtime or switch to use more European OCC,” a seller contact said of mills in China.

Another seller said OCC buyers in Thailand and Malaysia struggled to “make these numbers work with US OCC prices so high.”

“DSOCC has been trading at around \$230/ton in Southeast Asia and \$240/ton in Indonesia,” the seller said on Feb. 27.

Nine Dragons to start up 4 million tonnes by 2025. In China, Nine Dragons Paper plans to start up a total of 4.12 million tonnes/yr of pulp and paper capacity in China and Malaysia by 2025, *PPI Asia* reported on Feb. 28.

The new capacity includes a 210,000 tonnes/yr wood fiber line that is to start up in Malaysia by the end of March, as well as adding 600,000 tonnes/yr of uncoated fine paper capacity to its mill in Jingzhou city, Hubei province, in south-central China, set to be complete in the second quarter of 2025. This change replaces a planned 600,000 tonnes/yr of kraft linerboard, and 600,000 tonnes/yr of corrugating medium capacity originally planned at the site, *PPI Asia* reported.

Before the switch-up for the Jingzhou mill, Nine Dragons also halted several recycled pulp and containerboard projects in 2023, including a 600,000 tonnes/yr recycled pulp project in Malaysia.

Citing the company's latest financial report for the half year ended Dec. 31, 2023, *PPI Asia* highlighted how Nine Dragons stated that China's economic recovery was weaker than expected during the period, and consumer confidence and overall demand were insufficient, "which subdued the packaging paper and board market and failed to adequately support prices."

At the same time, the Red Sea shipping problems have pushed up prices for raw material and freight rates.

Fastmarkets' VP of Asian Paper & Packaging Beth Lis reported in a Fastmarkets RISI Viewpoint: "Potential impacts of Red Sea crisis on Asian paper packaging trade flows?" this week that the Red Sea crisis effects will slow trade flows for some time.

"Overall, there are definite vulnerabilities to packaging paper

trade flows, more so involving boxboard than containerboard," Lis reported. "The impact, naturally, will be higher costs, which in some cases could lead to higher prices. But the ability to pass on these higher costs to customers will vary, depending of course on price differentials and the availability of volumes from alternative sources with similar quality. Given the excess boxboard supply in Asia, reduced opportunities for export could reduce producers' ability to push through price increases."

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Specialty paper

Feb. prices flat for thermal POS; US phenol-free paper demand expected to increase

February prices for thermal point-of-sale (POS) paper in North America remained unchanged compared with January's price level, and pricing for the POS paper has remained stable since last September, according to buyers and sellers who reported to Fastmarkets's *PPI Pulp & Paper Week* in the last month.

The list price for 48 g/m² thermal POS non-top coated is 8.8% lower than its February 2023 level after declining several times last year, according to *P&PW*'s price survey. Before that, during the COVID pandemic years, US thermal POS prices increased a lot, moving up 56% in 2021 and increasing by a further 18.5% in 2022. Today's *P&PW* price is around 68% higher than pre-pandemic price levels for the for 48 g/m² thermal POS grade.

Contacts said that despite global price increases on thermal POS paper by major global suppliers in the end of 2023 and in the beginning of 2024, prices in the US markets have not increased due to continued soft and slow demand, as well as competition. Thermal POS paper is used for print receipts, and demand has been in a secular decline due to digitalization of the receipts by retailers and other businesses.

"Prices are mostly stable this month. There's no significant price drop in the market, but the price follows demand... and both are a little bit lower. The Europeans are being more aggressive in pricing, and we see little actions in the North American market," a contact with a thermal POS supplier stated.

"Foreign producers are complaining about increased input costs, but they're holding prices in the US for now," a buyer reported.

Contacts mentioned that ocean freight rates increased in December-January, due to the crisis in the Red Sea/Suez Canal and the drought in the Panama Canal, but those surcharges seem to have now stabilized.

"We had some issues with shipping conditions ... some delays ... but we have paper inventories in North America ... so we're good," an overseas supplier told *P&PW* in February.

The North American thermal POS market is largely supplied by Asian and European producers, including Koehler, Hansol, and Oji's US subsidiary Kanzaki Specialty Paper. Domtar is the largest US supplier of thermal paper.

A contact with a paper seller said that thermal POS demand remained slow in February “but nothing dramatic or out of normal compared to other months.” The contact expects demand for thermal POS to continue to be weak this year.

Phenol-free demand on the rise. Industry contacts told *P&PW* that demand for thermal phenol-free paper – both for POS receipts as well as for packaging labels – is becoming more prevalent in the US due to new regulations that ban paper containing BPA-bisphenol A and BPS-bisphenol S chemicals.

“New regulation against BPS in California and Washington state ... is increasing demand for thermal label a little bit. It’s more serious than in POS. Paper producers need to develop new labels, which cost more,” a contact cited.

Industry contacts estimate that producing phenol-free thermal paper costs 20% more than the regular products, due to higher chemicals costs.

In Washington state, to regulate hazardous chemicals in consumer products, WAC 173-337-010 legislation was announced at the end of May 2023. The legislation bans thermal paper that contains “intentionally added bisphenols” with concentrations above 200 ppm, produced from Jan. 1, 2026.

“No person may manufacture, sell, or distribute a priority consumer product ... that contains intentionally added bisphenols. This does not apply to a priority consumer product ... manufactured before January 1, 2026,” according to the legislation.

A market player estimates that by the end of 2026, 60-70% of the 48 g/m² thermal POS paper produced in the US will be phenol-free. Today, it accounts for about 10%, according to industry estimates.

In California, the state government on Jan. 23 added BPS to the Proposition 65 list as a reproductive toxicant.

“The warning requirement for significant exposures to BPS will take effect on December 29, 2024,” the notice said.

“You can still sell BPS in California, but it has to be labeled advising users that it can be bad to your health,” an industry contact noted to *P&PW*.

Another contact cited that “the states of New York and New Jersey are currently in the process of putting on their own BPS and BPA legislations.”

The Paper Receipts Converting Assn (PRCA) recently stated that “the US paper industry has already shifted away from BPA receipts, as much as a decade ago,” but other countries especially in Asia still make paper containing BPA.

“BPA has been widely studied as a chemical and is subject to strict regulations, such as Proposition 65 in California, banning its use in receipts,” according to the PRCA.

The PRCA said that “most of the thermal paper in the United States contains BPS,” which is “considered a safer alternative to BPA,” and “despite the absence of such restrictions or reliable science (regarding BPS), PRCA member companies are already offering phenol-free

alternatives (containing neither BPA nor BPS) that are readily available for receipt usage.”

• **Appvion** early in February launched its new Résiste 165 PF, a **phenol-free** top-coated direct thermal label facestock designed for package delivery and logistics label production. “We are thrilled to introduce Résiste 165 PF to the market, offering businesses in the package delivery and logistics industry a cutting-edge sustainable solution. Our team continually develops products that deliver superior performance and better value, and I believe the industry hasn’t seen anything like it before,” Appvion Product Mgr Jon Summersett said in a release. “Appvion’s unwavering commitment to innovation and environmental responsibility is at the core of this product.” Appvion’s patent-pending phenol-free direct thermal chemistry is an eco-conscious choice for businesses aiming to reduce their environmental footprint without compromising performance, the company noted in the release. “The chemistry is also aquatic-friendly, preserving aquatic life from acute and chronic water toxicity.” Appvion added that “Résiste 165 PF offers improved resistance to heat, water, and alcohol, ensuring longevity and durability,” and “its resistance to fading guarantees that crucial information remains clear and legible throughout the entire lifecycle of the label.”

• In Europe, **Lecta** early in February launched two new **phenol-free** grades of top-coated thermal paper, Termax TC20X and Termax TC20XB, for a wide variety of self-adhesive labels. The two new grades are made to be used as adhesive facestock for food

and industrial label applications in which there may be adverse conditions such as moisture, grease or solvents, Lecta said in a release. The company noted that Termax TC20X and TC20XB papers “provide high image resolution, good temperature resistance, high sensitivity, and both are phenol-free.” The TC20XB also has a protective layer on the back to protect the label when used with more demanding adhesives.

- **Sappi** continues to invest in the expansion of its Gratkorn, Austria, mill. “The first batches of the new wet-strength and alkali-resistant Parade Label WS paper have been produced and delivered to selected customers as part of a long-term validation programme,” Sappi said in a Feb. 29 release. The new Parade Label WS is double-coated and features a functional coating on its reverse side. The product is available in basis weights ranging from 65 to 80 g/m² – in embossed and non-embossed versions. “It can be converted using all standard printing processes and is suitable for creating high-quality labels, e.g. for returnable containers in the food and beverage sector,” Sappi said.

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Liner price hike for Europe

>>> *continued from page 2*

- Reports from Europe told of Mar. 1 linerboard price increases from most of the companies for only brown recycled grades. **Smurfit Kappa** announced a Euro 70/tonne increase for brown recycled linerboard, effective Mar. 4, and the highest brown recycled

increase that was announced was from **Heinzel** at Euro 85/tonne. For Apr. 1, brown kraft linerboard increases were announced, including Euro 80 from **Mondi** and **SCA**, a 10% increase from **Billerud**, and Euro 70 from Smurfit Kappa, *PPI Europe* reported. In the US, major producers announced \$70/ton for linerboard and \$100-110/ton for corrugating medium price increases, effective Jan. 1. The company also announced corrugated box and sheet price hikes for January. Based on Fastmarkets’ *PPI Pulp & Paper Week* price survey, linerboard prices in North America’s open market did not increase in January and increased in February by \$40/ton for linerboard and \$60/ton for medium. *P&PW* next reports containerboard domestic and export prices on Mar. 15.

- **Jamestown Container Companies** announced an agreement to acquire Midwest Box Company’s packaging business in Cleveland, OH, effective Feb. 19. Terms of the agreement were not disclosed and Jamestown is to operate the Midwest manufacturing plant.

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Boxboard

Sustainability growth expected for SBS: Kitch sees ‘relatively stable’ supply, Augusta coming

Clearwater CEO Arsen Kitch said he believes in coming demand growth for solid bleached sulfate (SBS) paperboard in the US during a session this week at BofA’s 2024 Global Agriculture and Materials Conference in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

Clearwater signed an agreement last week to acquire Graphic Packaging’s Augusta, GA, SBS mill for about \$700 million.

At the BofA event, Kitch told of a “relatively stable” SBS supply condition in North America and noted a reduction in SBS capacity last year from Pactiv Evergreen’s permanent closure of its Canton, NC, mill, where Pactiv made SBS and uncoated freesheet paper (see related story on Pactiv Evergreen earnings on p. 8). He also noted an anticipated increase in SBS capacity next year from Sappi North America’s planned startup of the converted No. 2 coated printing and writing paper machine at its Skowhegan, ME, mill.

SBS operating rates in the fourth quarter were sitting at 79.3%, down from the 80.3% reported in the third quarter and significantly lower than a year earlier when it was at 89.9%, according to American Forest & Paper Association statistics.

SBS folding carton domestic production in the fourth quarter was down by 6% from a year prior. Unmade orders were up 4% from the third quarter but down 39% from a year earlier.

Kitch also expects SBS demand growth for bleached paperboard from sustainability-related packaging where bleached board would be used instead of plastic packaging.

Fastmarkets’ Sr Economist for North American Paper Packaging Steve Honeyman was on the panel with Kitch and added that his forecast calls for another SBS capacity shutdown in the US, of roughly 300,000 tons.

Clearwater is expected to become the owner of the Augusta mill in the second quarter.

In another presentation at the conference, Graphic Packaging CEO Michael Doss said that his company would “go as fast as we can at Waco” in terms of the company’s capital project for a new coated recycled boxboard (CRB) machine. He said the Waco mill will pulp about 15 million paper cups per day, to help with the furnish for the new CRB unit, which is to start running in 2026.

Pactiv 4Q revenue falls 8% sequentially, down 13% YOY; foodservice margin at 18%

Pactiv Evergreen reported an adjusted EBITDA of \$207 million

in the fourth quarter, which was down by 9% compared with the profit in third-quarter 2023.

The decrease was mainly because of lower sales volume, which was partially offset by lower material costs, net of costs passed through, the packaging company reported.

Total net revenue in the fourth quarter was \$1.18 billion, down 7.8% compared with \$1.28 billion in the third quarter of last year and down 13.2% compared with the \$1.36 billion in revenue a year earlier in fourth-quarter 2022.

Foodservice net revenue was at \$626 million, compared with \$633 million a year earlier while food and beverage merchandising net revenue was \$653 million, down

25% from \$872 million during the same time period in 2022.

The decrease in net revenues was driven by the closure of the Canton, NC, solid bleached sulfate (SBS) paperboard and uncoated freesheet paper mill, lower sales volume, which the company claimed was mostly due to a focus on value over volume, and unfavorable mix, the company reported.

The foodservice margins were at 18% in the fourth quarter compared with 17% in the third quarter. Foodservice adjusted EBITDA for the fourth quarter was \$112 million, decreasing from the \$117 million in the prior quarter.

Pactiv Evergreen pres/CEO Michael King said Pactiv “is

ONLINE AUCTION • MARCH 7th

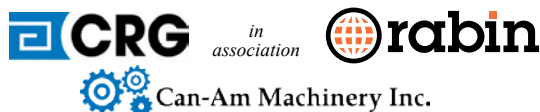
300 TPD COATED BOXBOARD PAPER MILL



Kalamazoo, Michigan Facility...

- 118” Paper Machine with Valmet Winder
- Beloit DD-4000 & 4500 Refiners
- Voith Multimizer & Sulzer Rejectsorters
- Rebuilt Nash & Goulds Pumps
- Spare Motor Inventory
- High-Capacity RO System
- Maintenance Tools & Accessories
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providing 2024 adjusted EBITDA guidance in the range of \$850 million to \$870 million, with between \$160 million and \$170 million for the first quarter.

“Looking ahead to 2024, the company plans to initiate the next phase of its strategic transformation through a footprint optimization plan, which will include the rationalization of a portion of the company’s production activity,” King said. “We expect these actions to generate significant annual cost savings, and better align resources and capabilities with customers’ needs as the company targets sustainable growth opportunities.”

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Paper plates

US dumping case started against imports from China, Thailand, and Vietnam

US paper plate producers filed antidumping and countervailing duty petitions against paper plate imports from China, Thailand, and Vietnam that are allegedly sold into the US at less than fair value and are also subsidized by local governments in the two of three Asian countries. The antidumping case is against China, Thailand, and Vietnam, and the countervailing duty petitions are against imports from China and Vietnam.

The US Dept of Commerce (DOC) initiated the investigation prompted by the petition filed on Jan. 25 by the American Paper Plate Coalition (APPC).

The case was first filed in late January this year.

The US investigation will determine “whether there is a reasonable indication” that US companies were “materially injured or threatened with material injury” by the imports from the three companies, based on the pricing for the imports.

“Imports from these countries have used dumped prices and subsidies to continue to grow in the US market at the expense of American producers and workers,” said Aspen Products pres and co-owner Bill Biggins, who is a member of the AAPC, according to a local media report. “Over the past three years, unfairly priced and subsidized imports have harmed American producers and taken jobs away from hard-working Americans.”

The DOC has estimated alleged dumping margins for imported paper plates from China at 154.57-178.80%, from Thailand at 61.03-73.17% and for Vietnam at 153.09-165.27%.

“American producers can compete with anyone in the world, as long as we’re all playing by the same rules,” said AJM Packaging pres/ CEO Robert Epstein, in a report. “Fortunately, our country’s trade laws are set up to support fair trade. On behalf of our employees, customers, and colleagues, we look forward to seeing those laws enforced and those who violate our laws held accountable.”

The paper plates under investigation may be cut from rolls, sheet, or other paper and/ or paper board, with a depth of up to two inches if measured vertically from the base to

the top of the lip, or to the edge if the plate has no lip.

However, paper plates molded or pressed directly from pulp, as well as paper bowls, buckets, and food containers with closable lids, are excluded.

Paper plate imports into the US have increased since 2021 when imports totaled 40.243 million kg from all three countries. Volumes increased by 90.7% to 76.748 million kg in 2022 and volumes fell back slightly in 2023. They were more than 50% higher than the 2021 amount at 65.883 million kg.

China accounted for 91-96% of the total imports to the US from China, Thailand, and Vietnam combined over the three-year period, the DOC reported.

ITC ruling this month.

The US International Trade Commission is expected to make preliminary determination on the investigations by Mar. 11.

The APPC is comprised of AJM Packaging Corporation, Bloomfield Hills, MI; Aspen Products, Inc., Kansas City, Missouri; Dart Container Corporation; Mason, Hoffmaster Group, Inc., Oshkosh, Wisconsin; Huhtamaki Americas Inc., De Soto, Kansas; the Unique Industries, Inc., Philadelphia.

- Brazilian boxboard producer **Ibema** opened an office in Miami to establish connections to potential partners in the region. “The region was chosen because it is a logistical hub that also serves Canada, Mexico, Central America and Caribbean countries,” Ibema said. “Additionally, the region attracts a significant number of paperboard traders.” The

company will have an executive dedicated to the North American market who will serve distributors, direct clients, and brand owners.

- The French dairy brand **Yoplait** launched Yoplait en Brique, its first range of pourable and spoonable yogurts in fiber-based Pure-Pak Sense cartons with tethered caps. The container is made from 78% renewable materials and holds 750 grams of product — the equivalent of six yogurt cups, resulting in a 50% reduction in packaging.

-by nola.valente@fastmarkets.com

PCA sets UFS price increase

>>> *continued from page 1*

Industry contacts reported to Fastmarkets' *PPI Pulp & Paper Week* that the North American UFS paper market had firmer supply and demand in February than in the fourth quarter and in January, due to capacity that has been and is expected to be temporarily or indefinitely reduced.

The No. 1 domestic producer by capacity, Domtar, decided to indefinitely curtail paper operations at its Ashdown, AR, mill by the end of June, reducing Domtar's annual UFS capacity by 216,000 tons. Domtar also scheduled major maintenance downtime at its Windsor, QC, UFS mill for April, which will temporarily reduce the mill's UFS capacity by an estimated 40,000 tons.

Other domestic producers including Sylvamo and

International Paper are expected to take extended downtime at their UFS mills in North America during the spring, contacts reported to *P&PW*.

Navigator's increase. Earlier this week, Portugal-based The Navigator Company announced that it will increase its UFS paper prices in overseas markets by up to 5%, effective with March production. "The overseas markets price increase includes the USA," a Navigator spokesperson told *P&PW*.

Navigator is one of the main overseas UFS suppliers to the US, along with Brazil-based Suzano, and Indonesia-based Asia Pacific Resources International (APRIL).

"Navigator has been facing significantly higher costs for most inputs essential for paper manufacturing, leading to unsustainable price levels," the company said in a Feb. 26 release.

Navigator also announced a 5% price hike on its UFS papers in Europe, effective Mar. 25. The company said that "visible recovery in demand in global markets also contributes to this price adjustment."

Navigator in November increased UFS prices by 5-7% in overseas markets, but that increase did not include North America, according to a company official that spoke with *P&PW* at that time.

February prices for UFS commodity 50-lb offset rolls in US markets were at \$1,250-1,320/ton, and for commodity 20-lb office/copy paper at \$1,385-1,425/ton. Those levels are respectively 7.6% (or \$130/ton) and 6% (or \$90/ton) lower

than a year ago, according to the *P&PW* pricing survey.

Imports. In 2023, Portugal, Brazil, and Indonesia combined accounted for 35% of North America's total UFS imports, according to data from the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA).

North America imported a total of 478,400 tons of UFS in 2023, a volume that was 348,100 tons or 42.1% lower than in 2022. The large decline was due to low demand caused mainly by high inventory levels at distributors and printers.

North American UFS imports from Portugal totaled 44,600 tons in 2023, which was 73.7% less than the 169,600 tons that Portugal shipped to the US in 2022. Imports from Brazil declined 35.9% to 77,500 tons in 2023 vs 2022, while the volume from Indonesia dropped 43.3% to 45,300 tons year-over-year.

Finland, Germany, and other European mills as well as South Americans and Asians also export UFS to North America. Sources said that Argentinean Ledesma and Celulosa Argentina as well as Colombian Carvajal are looking to increase their UFS exports to the US.

Imports accounted for 9% of North American total UFS consumption in 2023 of 5.45 million tons. Industry contacts mentioned that the US is likely to import more UFS paper this year, compared with last year, as domestic supply/demand is likely to be firmer.

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Newsprint prices drop \$25

>>> continued from page 2

The contact noted that “additional costs in freight are eating a fair bit of those increases, so I expect that trend to continue.”

A contact with a producer mentioned that “the pricing pressure (in the domestic markets) is likely to slow down, and that his order books right now are “pretty strong ... mainly driven by exports.”

Exports. Exporting more newsprint was another strategy for several North American producers to offset the weak domestic sales. In 2023, overseas export shipments rose 22.1% compared with their 2022 exports, to 913,000 tonnes, according to data from the Pulp and Paper Products Council (PPPC).

The main export destinations for North American newsprint in 2023 were India and the UK, followed by China, Mexico, and the Netherlands. Exports accounted for about 45% of North American newsprint shipments in 2023.

Exports higher than US shipments. In January of this year, North American newsprint mills exported 78,000 tonnes overseas, or 18.7% more than their January 2023 exports, according to the PPPC statistics. The 78,000 tonnes for export were higher than the North American shipments to the US in January, which accounted for 68,000 tonnes and were 23.4% less than a year ago. Newsprint shipments to Canada were at 14,000 tonnes in January 2024, or 17.7% lower year-over-year.

“North American total newsprint shipments were not that bad in

January ... thanks to overseas exports,” an industry contact cited.

Total newsprint shipments declined by 6.6% to 160,000 tonnes in January year-over-year, the PPPC reported.

North American newsprint consumption has been declining over the last two decades due to digitalization of newspapers and new reading habits. In 2005, the US apparent demand was about 10 times higher than what it is today. It moved from 9.3 million tonnes in 2005 to less than 1 million tonnes (892,000 tonnes) in 2023, according to Fastmarkets data. Canadian newsprint consumption dropped from 1.1 million tonnes to 253,000 tonnes in the same period.

Overseas exports also fell in that period, due to global demand decline, but much less than the domestic consumption. North American newsprint exports were about 2.5 times higher 20 years ago - they moved from 2.4 million tonnes in 2005 to 900,000 tonnes in 2023, according to Fastmarkets estimates.

Op rates still low. Contacts reported that North American

newsprint mills continued to operate at low capacity this year due to lack of demand. They operated at 73% of their capacity in January, compared with 78% a year ago.

The mill inventory level in January was at 127,000 tonnes, compared with 119,000 tonnes in December and to 122,000 tonnes in January 2023, according to the PPPC report.

- **PPI Europe** reported that newsprint prices for deliveries in the first quarter dropped by £25-30/tonne in the UK, where cheaper offers from North American producers were said to force European suppliers to adjust their prices to maintain volumes.

- **The Indian Paper Manufacturers Assn (IPMA)** proposed in a pre-budget memorandum to the country’s government on Jan. 22 that the government should raise the basic customs duty on imports of paper and board (P&B) to 25%. The duty on imports of P&B is now at 10% but, under free-trade agreements (FTAs), such material is duty-free if it comes from member-states of the Assn of South East Asian Nations, Japan, or South Korea. The IPMA also

Newsprint statistics – December 2023

(000 tonnes)

North America	Current month		Year-to-date	
	2023	% chg. 2023/22	2023	% chg. 2023/22
Production	167	-9.2%	2,057	-5.1%
Operating rate, % (adj. for idled)	69%	80 ¹	81%	89 ¹
Shipments to North America	85	-22.7%	1,127	-20.1%
Shipments to USA	70	-21.3%	883	-21.4%
Shipments to Canada	16	-23.8%	243	-15.0%
Overseas exports	76	2.7%	913	22.2%
Imports	0	0.0%	1	0.0%
Total demand	85	-22.7%	1,127	-20.1%
Mill inventories	122	17.3%	-	-

Notes: 1. Operating rate, not year-over-year percentage change. n.m.=not meaningful.
Source: Pulp and Paper Products Council.

suggested that the government ministry review current FTAs, including any that are in preparation, and should eliminate P&B from these in the interest of the Indian paper industry, which might reduce imports. IPMA pres Pawan Agarwal said that proper safeguards, antidumping measures, and countervailing duties should be imposed on various grades of paper, after a recommendation by the Directorate General of Trade Remedies, because only an increase in import duties would have any effect on duty-free FTAs.

• **Gannett** reported total revenue in the fourth quarter of 2023 of \$669.4 million, or 8.4% lower than in the same period of 2022; its full-year total revenue declined 9.6% to \$2.66 billion. Gannett CFO Doug Horne said in a call with analysts on Feb. 22 that the company “remains focused on cultivating sustainable revenue growth, growing our digital audience and customer base, increasing our monetization of this base, and continuing to stabilize our print business.” In the fourth quarter, Gannett’s other revenues category, which includes commercial printing and delivery as well as other digital syndication and affiliate revenues, benefited from growth in partnership revenue, “but we did experience an overall 8.5% decrease on a same store basis due to the secular declines associated with commercial print volumes,” Horne noted. He also said that Gannett’s “most volatile and unpredictable revenue line is print advertising,” and “less than 20% of our total revenue now comes from print advertising ... and that percentage will continue to decline significantly.”

-by rmercante@fastmarkets.com

New Mar. pulp hikes emerge

»» continued from page 1

Benchmark northern bleached softwood kraft (NBSK), whose supply-demand fundamentals tightened through the first two months of 2024 on unplanned downtime, production slowbacks, and a key mill’s closure, saw final US February effective list prices increase \$50/tonne to \$1,430/tonne, according to the Fastmarkets’ *PPI Pulp & Paper Week* surveying.

“In North America we are seeing quite an uptick in pricing as demand seems to have improved a bit and supply is very tight,” said an NBSK producer contact whose view was typical. “NBSK is causing us some issues. I’ve also heard that other suppliers seem to be struggling with production as well, causing this supply shortage.”

Market participants say that incremental volumes of NBSK have slumped since AV Terrace Bay closed its 320,000 tonnes/yr mill on Jan. 2. A recent cold front across North America disrupted some mill operating rates that led to lower output. In addition, rumors continue to churn across the North American industry that a second market NBSK mill could indefinitely close or take extended downtime due to chip supply issues. That’s shifted market sentiment into a sense of tightness, buoying February and March price increase announcements, sources said.

In the US South, sources pointed to a major mill that’s hoarding supply as it prepares to soon take a longer than typical maintenance shutdown. The producer, which makes fluff and southern bleached softwood kraft (SBSK),

recently cut off some customers in China and slimmed back its available tonnage in US spot markets, according to market participants in both countries.

US SBSK final February effective list prices increased to \$1,350, up a bigger \$60/tonne as producers focused on making more expensive fluff pulp, and rising spot prices in the US and offshore helped narrow a wide delta between the two key grades of bleached softwood kraft (BSK).

US buyers this year have tried to supplement contracts on the high end of their monthly allotments during a time when domestic spot market prices surged. The pivot to bigger contract volumes left buyers without leverage to fight off the belated list price hikes, according to producer and agent sources.

Looking forward to March business, with PE and its wholly-owned subsidiaries Domtar and Resolute Forest Products set to push \$80/tonne hikes on NBSK and SBSK, seller contacts believe momentum will continue as the industry shifts from a seasonally weaker winter into spring. However, global fluff market momentum has started to wane, which buyer contacts believe will prompt producers to switch back into baled SBSK production.

US fluff up, China down. US and European fluff effective list prices increased \$20/tonne in February to \$1,840/tonne, marking full implementation of PE’s announced price increase. However, the firm did not announce a fluff price during its NBSK and SBSK increase announcements, and International Paper (IP), which announced several fluff hikes in late 2023 through January, also hasn’t announced fluff prices recently.

The pause comes during a time when China’s fluff demand and prices have downshifted. International fluff prices to China dipped to \$880-920/tonne net CIF, closing February down \$10, according to P&PW’s monthly survey.

Fluff prices to China this week entered a time of widening spreads as some suppliers drop prices to buoy demand and others try to hold flat, leading market sources to believe March prices could topple. Some of the latest transactions this week came with sharply lower prices, and most sources said those deals were for March allocations amid preordering.

“Prices are under a little pressure. Leading players are offering prices unchanged (but declines are available) given soft demand and too much ‘fluff grade’ competition

in China in the short term. That’s why some players start to lower price to get orders,” said a Chinese fluff market participant this week.

\$80 BHK Mar. 1 hikes. In global BHK markets, several Brazilian producers of bleached eucalyptus kraft (BEK) announced \$30-80/tonne increases in North America, Europe, and Asia this week. Suzano on Feb. 26 announced an \$80 list price increase to North American and European customers, and a \$30 hike in Asia, effective with March sales.

Suzano announced a March BEK list price of \$1,490 in North America and a \$1,300 list in Europe. Other producers, including Eldorado and Klabin, have since announced similar price increases globally.

Meantime, North America’s biggest BHK producer Al-Pac announced

its own \$80 hike on aspen grade northern bleached hardwood kraft (NBHK), effective Mar. 1, sources told P&PW. Al-Pac did not state a new US list or net price on Al-Pac Aspen. As previously reported, Thunder Bay Pulp and Paper made the first pricing announcement worldwide on March business when it slated a \$50/tonne increase on its NBHK as well as \$80/tonne on NBSK (Feb. 2, p. 1).

US BHK up \$60. US BEK and BHK final February effective list prices increased \$60/tonne, according to P&PW surveys. That brought US BEK effective list prices to \$1,235 and two North American-produced BHK grades’ list to \$1,220.

The North American-announced March BEK list of \$1,490 is just \$40 below PE’s announced NBSK list of \$1,530/tonne, an exceptionally narrow delta between benchmark BHK and BSK grades that hasn’t occurred in any global market in memory, if ever.

The disconnect between official list prices and effective list prices came after six straight months in which Brazilian BEK producers announced three consecutive \$80/tonne monthly hikes, which came after three monthly \$50 increases starting last September.

While the announced increases were “fully implemented” in Europe, upwards movement hasn’t been as sharp in North America, according to P&PW survey results. Nonetheless, US BEK effective list prices are up a combined \$245/tonne since levels bottomed at \$990/tonne in August 2023, and demand remains strong going into March, according to market participants.

World market pulp producer inventories – January 2024

(000 tonnes)



Note: Statistics represent 80% of capacity, and exclude China, Russia, and Indonesia. *Month-end stocks divided by average daily shipments in the last three months.

Source: Pulp and Paper Products Council days-of-supply, Pulp & Paper Week raw tonnage estimate.

Pulp inventories of consumers and ports – January 2024

(000 tonnes)

	January 2024	December 2023	November 2023	% chg 2024/23
European consumers*	690	747	741	8.2%
European ports	1,280	1,184	1,204	-15.5%

Source: UTIPULP (European consumer inventories for 11 countries), Europulp (inventories at ports for eight countries). * Includes softwood and hardwood inventories, effective April 2020. European consumers’ hardwood data was previously unavailable since August 2015, leaving only softwood. Figures are rounded. na = not available.

China to test global momentum.

A test of global pricing momentum will come in China this month - where producers of BHK and BSK have repeatedly tried to lift prices with mixed success. An earlier \$10 move in BEK fell flat, while bigger attempts from NBSK producers also stalled out - until this week.

China's midpoint price for NBSK edged up \$5/tonne to \$730/tonne net CIF late this week, while South American BEK ticked up by \$10/tonne at the low end of the range to \$650-660/tonne net CIF, according to Fastmarkets surveying. A Chinese market participant told *P&PW* this week that a seasonally stronger spring could help going forward, but buyers remained cautious.

"Most Chinese paper mills have restarted from this week. Chinese customers did not accept the new price ... however spring season is always good timing for the paper industry, and everyone has dreams here even if they failed last spring," said the Chinese contact, referring to 2023 when prices and demand toppled after Shanghai Pulp Week.

In addition to global BEK producers setting \$30/tonne increases in China, local producers are also on the move. Asia Pacific Resources International (APRIL) and its Brazil-based affiliate, Bracell, will increase prices for BHK \$30/tonne in Asia for March business, APRIL announced on Feb. 27.

"This planned hike is prompted by lower pulp inventories globally, continued strong demand in Europe and the US, and better than expected post-Lunar New Year pulp and paper activity in China," APRIL said in a statement.

Producer inventories rise 362,000 tonnes. The latest the Pulp and

Paper Products Council (PPPC) report did not suggest lower pulp inventories globally, however. Worldwide chemical market pulp producer inventories increased to 44 days-of-supply in January, up two days-of-supply, while shipments increased 7.6% year-over-year, the PPPC reported on Feb. 27.

The two-day rise in overall producer stocks corresponded to a 362,000-tonne increase in January, according to a *P&PW* poll of industry analysts. That brought January's close to an estimated 6.772 million tonnes, a five-month high. January stocks were the highest since August when producer stocks totaled 7.1 million tonnes, according to *P&PW* monthly analyst polls.

As producer inventories closed January at the 44 days-of-supply mark, inventories at bleached softwood kraft (BSK) market pulp producers increased to 41 days, up one day-of-supply, according to PPPC data. Bleached hardwood kraft (BHK) producer stocks increased four days to 47 days-of-supply.

Global market pulp shipments surged vs the same time last year, with January deliveries totaling 4.339 million tonnes. That represented the 7.6% gain vs year-ago results of 4.032 million tonnes. Year-ago results provided an easy comparison since it was a time of destocking and price declines. On a month-over-month basis, January worldwide shipments posted a hefty 13.3% drop vs December deliveries of 5.002 million tonnes.

• **Suzano** is reshuffling its leadership deck. The Sao Paulo-headquartered firm will replace CEO Walter Schalka with João Alberto Fernandez de Abreu, the former top executive of

Brazilian logistics company **Rumo**. During his 11 years at Suzano, Schalka led the firm through its merger with **Fibria** to become the world's biggest BEK producer, oversaw its entry into global fluff markets with its signature product Eucafluff that is made of eucalyptus fiber, and saw through this year's 2.4 million tonnes/yr expansion with a greenfield BEK mill in Três Lagoas state that's expected to start up during the summer. An eight-time winner of Fastmarkets' Latin American CEO of the Year Award, Schalka will exit the role and join Suzano's board of directors, effective July 1.

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News briefs

The **US business manufacturing PMI** was 47.8% in February, down 1.3 percentage points from the 49.1% recorded in January, according to US supply executives in the latest **Manufacturing ISM Report On Business** that was published on Mar. 1. A Manufacturing PMI above 42.5%, over a period of time, generally indicates an expansion of the overall economy, according to the report. Supply chain officials said the US's New Orders Index on a sequential basis contracted at 49.2%, 3.3 percentage points lower than the 52.5% in January. The Backlog of Orders Index was 46.3%, 1.6 percentage points higher than the 44.7% in January. Supply Management (ISM) Manufacturing Business Survey Committee chair Tim Fiore said that the "US manufacturing sector continued to contract (and at a faster rate compared to January), with demand slowing, output easing and inputs remaining

accommodative. Demand moderated, with the ... New Orders Index back in contraction as seasonal headwinds were too strong to overcome.” The eight manufacturing industries reporting growth in February were Apparel, Leather & Allied Products; Nonmetallic Mineral Products; Primary Metals; Plastics & Rubber Products; Fabricated Metal Products; Chemical Products; Miscellaneous Manufacturing; and Transportation Equipment. The seven industries reporting contraction in February were Furniture & Related Products; Machinery; Wood Products; Computer & Electronic Products; Food, Beverage & Tobacco Products; Paper Products; and Electrical Equipment, Appliances & Components... **US real gross domestic product** (GDP) increased at an annual rate of 3.2% in fourth-quarter 2023, according to the “second” estimate from the US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). US real GDP in the third quarter increased 4.9%. “The increase in the fourth quarter primarily reflected increases in consumer spending, exports, as well as state and local government spending,” the BEA reported. “Imports, which are a subtraction in the calculation of GDP, increased.”... **US diesel fuel prices** declined by 2.5 cents in the last week to a national average of \$4.065 per gallon on Mar. 1, AAA reported. The \$4.065 per gallon national average was 7.6% more than the Mar. 1, 2023, national average of \$4.400 per gallon for diesel fuel... **CTI Paper** announce the development of a “New & Improved” version of KROMEKOTE C1S for all board weight items, the company said last week. The new version began shipping toward the end of February, the company said. “This

new product will have a reverse side ‘Matte Coating’ surface enhancement, improving print performance to now include 4+ color printing and provide greater lay flat characteristics,” CTI said in a its release. “This new version of KROMEKOTE will be managed as a running transition. As current items are depleted from inventory, they will be replenished with this new improved version of KROMEKOTE. Each carton of the ‘New & Improved’ KROMEKOTE product will be clearly marked with a label denoting the new ‘Matte Coated’ reverse feature.”... **Loparex** will suspend production at its Eden, NC, plant over the next six months, meaning 91 people will lose their jobs by Sept. 1, according to local news reports. The 98-year-old company, originally a Finnish pulp operation, seemed focused on North Carolina in 2009 when it moved its national headquarters from a Chicago suburb to Cary. That year, Loparex further announced a \$16.9 million expansion in Rockingham County, NC. Existing Loparex manufacturing sites in

Hammond, WI, and Iowa City, IA, will remain in operation, according to news reports.... Folding cartons and adhesive label company **Faller Packaging** launched a tamper-evident label that is recyclable and meets the mandatory EU standard, the company said. The product also aligns with Faller’s commitment to sustainable packaging solutions for the pharmaceutical industry, the company said. The mono-material label is made from a fiber-based, unmixed material. It also provides counterfeit protection with its first-opening indication feature that leaves residue if removed, the company said. Faller designed the label to be placed over the tuck-in flap of folding cartons to make any tampering immediately visible... **US commercial printing** shipments totaled \$6.98 billion in December, down from \$7.24 billion, according to a WhatTheyThink report. Total shipments for 2023 were at \$87.37 billion, which was 4% lower compared with 2022’s \$90.88 billion.

PPI Pulp & Paper Week

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