

There's no shortage of toilet paper in SA - Pamsa

The Paper Manufacturers Association of South Africa (Pamsa) has confirmed that the pulp, paper, packaging, recycling and tissue value chains will continue to operate as a "critical business continuity service" supporting the manufacturing, processing and distribution of essential goods and services during the lockdown.



The sector provides wood and recycled paper fibre for the production of essential goods such as tissue, toilet paper, paper packaging, hospital gowns and masks, and personal hygiene products.

The outbreak of Covid-19 has caused a global phenomenon in recent weeks: the stockpiling and panic buying of items such as toilet paper. "Never before has toilet paper enjoyed such publicity," says Jane Molony, Pamsa executive director. "Any perceived shortage of toilet paper in the shops is more a consumer behavioural issue than it is a production issue."

Molony explains that South African tissue mills produce toilet paper continuously and the risk of shortage is minimal. "There is availability of product further up the supply chain – the challenge is getting it to the consumer amid tissue manufacturers also trying to limit Covid-19 exposure for their own workers.

"Buying more than you need only fuels the panic buying cycle and disrupts supply chains, she adds.



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Production of tissue products ramped up

South African tissue manufacturers make almost all of the toilet tissue consumed in the country and they have ramped up production to meet increased demand with many operating at full capacity. Tissue produced locally contains approximately 76% recycled fibre content, with the balance comprising virgin wood pulp from sustainably grown trees and to a smaller degree, bagasse (sugar cane waste).

Smaller tissue mills that rely on recovered office paper – a common ingredient in tissue products – may be faced with a shortage as offices and businesses shut down. Molony urges consumers to continue separating paper and cardboard at source during the lockdown.

According to preliminary figures that Pamsa collects on an annual basis, 248,153 tonnes of tissue were produced locally during 2019. This went into the production and conversion of toilet tissue, facial tissue, industrial towelling and kitchen towelling.



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Paper packaging vital for supply chain efficiency

Most packaging plants in South Africa are working at full capacity in order to ensure paper-based packaging gets to their customers in essential sectors. “Packaging is a vital element in the supply chain, especially for the uninterrupted distribution of food, medical and health supplies,” says Molony who adds that the 1.4 million tonnes of packaging papers made in South Africa comprise 56.4% recycled content.

“Our sector is falling in line with Government’s regulations, while also adapting its operations according to the local and global recommendations to minimise risk for suppliers, employees and customers,” notes Molony.

Pamsa says it will continue working remotely and supporting the sector. “We would like to thank the people in our industry for their dedication and commitment during these extraordinary times.”

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