Recovery, Reuse and Recycling by the United States Wood Packaging Industry: 1993 to 2006

ABSTRACT:
The packaging industry is an important market for wood materials, especially low grade hardwoods. Approximately one-third of U.S. hardwood lumber production is utilized in the production of pallets and containers. The industry recovers significant volumes of pallets and containers from the waste stream for re-use, repair, and recycling. Industry by-products (both wood and non-wood) are recycled for a variety of uses. The result of these activities is conservation of natural resources and reductions of materials in the waste stream. This presentation provides the results of a series of studies of the industry which began in 1992 and continue today. Among other findings, the studies have determined that the recycling/reuse rates of wood materials used by the industry are equal to or greater than those for many metals and plastics. In 1999, we estimated that 4 out of every 10 pallets purchased for use was a recovered, repaired or rebuilt pallet. This translated into the volume of wood from approximate 30 million 12 inch diameter trees.
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