

Report Shows Fewer Pallets Entering Landfills

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Information from a series of Virginia Tech studies reveals current trends in core utilization by the pallet industry. The most recent report released this year studied trends from 2006. Virginia Tech researchers compared these results to five previous studies going all the way back to 1992.

When firms were asked to indicate how the cores they received in 2006 were utilized, researchers found that less than one-quarter of 1% of the cores received were landfilled. Over 93% of the firms that received cores were involved in pallet repair/remanufacturing. The remaining firms likely are reselling cores to firms that repair/remanufacture pallets or to pallet users.

Following the use of cores further, the study found that colored landscape mulch is the most common use of ground material at the equivalent of 39% of ground/chipped cores. Almost half (47%) of the firms that grind or chip cores used material for colored mulch. The equivalent of 29% of the ground/chipped cores was used for fuel and 23% were used for other (uncolored) landscape mulch. The smaller but potentially profitable animal bedding market accounted for the equivalent of 4.4% of the ground/chipped cores.

Comparing results from five studies conducted since 1992 found that the proportion of multiple-use grocery type cores received by firms in the industry grew from 61% in 1992 to 72% in 2006.

When combining information regarding the use of new wood and the use of recovered cores, two trends become evident. First, the total amount of wood material utilized by the industry increased steadily between 1992 and 2006. Second, the the large increase in overall wood use (4.43 billion board feet) primarily is the result of increased use of recovered wood. However, there is an indication that large increases in the use of recovered materials may be leveling-off.