

## **Tree-Free Kenaf Papers**

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Agriculture has been solving natural resource problems for millennia. For example, when populations increase, nearly every culture worldwide has turned to agriculture to satisfy their hunger because it is more efficient, productive, and reliable than natural systems. Paper is undergoing a similar transition. Now, there is a sustainably grown farm fiber that has very real viability in the paper industry. This plant is called kenaf. A relative of cotton and okra, kenaf produces fibers that are nearly identical to wood fibers so paper made from it prints and recycles the same as paper made from trees.

In the 1950's, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) conducted an extensive study evaluating 500 different fibers that can be used to make paper including hemp, sugarcane, straw, corn stalks, etc. They determined that the hibiscus plant called kenaf is "the most viable replacement for trees for commercial pulp and papermaking in the U.S." Their findings showed that the fiber that has the technical and economic characteristics best suited for manufacturing printing papers is kenaf. This fiber has true potential at creating a paradigm shift in the papermaking industry, away from one that relies on forests and chemically intensive pulping practices, toward a sustainable solution.

A new raw material for paper is past due. The old model is based on clearcutting delicate forest ecosystems to extract its fiber. All the while, countless farmers are yearning for new crops to rotate with their existing ones. Every year, federal funds subsidize farmers to grow crops for which there is no market. Often they are chemically intensive. As demand for kenaf paper increases, it will provide a low input, rotational crop for farmers that will have real market potential. Kenaf produces 3-5 times more fiber per acre per year than trees.

Vision Paper, based in Albuquerque, New Mexico has been manufacturing papers from kenaf for over a decade. All of their kenaf pulp is Totally Chlorine Free (TCF). They carry uncoated and coated kenaf papers in a variety of basis weights including C1S board. Their products are readily stocked and there are no minimums. With volume, Vision provides the option to manufacture to match nearly any basis weight, size, color or finish.

The Company has completed Phase 1 of the engineering plan for the world's first kenaf pulp mill. Many efficiencies from pulping kenaf instead of wood are being recognized. For example, it will take less chemicals, heat, and energy to process kenaf pulp and the waste stream is far more manageable. No sulfur compounds are needed so it will be free

of the rotten egg smell normally associated a pulp mills. The studies are showing that the kenaf pulp product will be competitive with wood based pulp. As subsequent kenaf mills are produced, kenaf pulp will eventually have a significant cost advantage over wood pulp, moving kenaf into a mainstream position.

The demand for paper is increasing. Industrial forestry for the purpose of papermaking is an unnecessary component of society while agricultural systems provide the foundation of our survival. Kenaf provides support to an essential activity while giving pulping, papermaking and agricultural industries a much more sustainable option.

Feel free to contact Vision Paper for information or samples at 505-294-0293 or visit [www.visionpaper.com](http://www.visionpaper.com)