

PULP AND PAPER

What To Do About The Paper Shortage

We have long become accustomed to the fact that there is a chronic shortage of paper in the USSR. Books, promotional materials and booklets, napkins.... are all in short supply. It is worth consulting the table published by the "US News of the World" illustrating paper consumption per capita in various countries, in this regard. It turns out that the Soviet Union is almost nine times behind the USA, the world leader. We are even behind sparsely forested Japan.

Even though the newspaper mentions that the USSR figures are estimates only, the data from the Central Statistical Administration confirm our poor position. The "USSR National Economy" handbook has no information on paper demand but gives an indication of the scale of production. In 1986, for example, paper production amounted to 21.9 kilogrammes per person, or 48.3 pounds, which is close enough to the consumption figure quoted in the American article.

The Soviet Union produces just 4.7% of the world's paper. In 1986 we produced 6.2 million tonnes, while the USA, Japan and West Germany produced 31, 12 and 7.6 million tonnes, respectively.

What is the problem? Perhaps we need to log more timber? According to the Central Statistical Administration's data, however, we are just slightly behind the USA in the volume of timber extracted per capita, and we are several times ahead of West Germany and, of course, Japan.