Packaging & industrial paper imports on the rise

GEELONG, AUSTRALIA: Faced by continuing change in packaging and industrial paper markets, the latest data and analysis for Australia reveals some intriguing trends and shifts.

This update focuses on the performance of various packaging grades, including corrugated boxes, cartonboard, sacks and bags, and other industrial papers.

IndustryEdge is confident that when final analysis is completed, Australia's large packaging and industrial paper market will have consumed a record volume of paper and paperboard, around or just above 2.0 million tonnes, in 2024-25. Confirmation will be available in the 2025 Pulp & Paper Strategic Reviews.

Packaging grade imports surge

A highlight of the last year has been the sharp increase in Australian packaging grade imports, which rose by 17.2% year-ended May 2025. Imports totalled 278.9 kt, more than 40,000 tonnes higher than for the previous year.

This surge in imports contrasts with a 5.8% decline in exports over the same period. Importantly, Australia is still – by a long margin – a net exporter of packaging and industrial paper grades.

The weighted average prices for imported packaging and industrial paper grades also saw a decline of 3.3% in Australian dollars, measured on a free-on-board basis.

Record-breaking imports of converted packaging products

The trend of increasing imports extends to converted packaging products, including sacks and bags and every possible version of corrugated boxes, right down to humble pizza boxes. These imports continue to set new records, with a total of 214 kt imported year-ended May, valued at more than AUD679 million, marking a 4.8% increase for the year. These may be something of a canary in the mine. Despite the sovereign capacity in packaging, it is easy to observe imports gaining a progressively larger toehold, gradually crowding out local manufacturing, at the margin.

Detailed trade data and analysis

IndustryEdge's latest reporting, provided as part of the Pulp & Paper Edge Data and Information Service, provides a comprehensive overview of the Australian packaging paper industry and trade, highlighting the key trends. For instance, Australia's net exports of packaging and industrial paper grades totaled 493 kt year-ended May, down 15.3% from the prior year.

Imports of Kraftliner – the strong outer liner for corrugated packaging – and corrugating medium, saw notable increases, with the latter rising by 40.7% to 63.7 kt over the last year.

Price movements and indexes

The July monthly update also delves into price movements of various packaging grades. Import prices for packaging and industrial paper grades declined by 3.3% year-ended May 2025.

The IndustryEdge *Australian Packaging Paper Trade Price Indexes* provide valuable insights into these price trends, showing the weighted average price movements for selected major grades. It is updated each month and exclusively available to subscribers.

3 MMA Indexes AUSTRALIAN DOLLARS	**Apr '25**	**May '25**	**Comparison with Prior**		
			Month	**Quarter**	**Year**
Containerboard	**139.9**	**137.3**	**-1.8%**	**0.4%**	**2.5%**
Kraftliner	123.0	111.6	-9.2%	1.6%	1.9%
Corrugating Medium	201.4	198.1	-1.6%	0.2%	3.1%
Testliner/Multiply	96.1	94.7	-1.5%	-9.0%	-1.6%
Cartonboard	**122.6**	**123.3**	**0.6%**	**0.5%**	**-5.2%**
Coated Kraftback	134.8	129.2	-4.1%	-12.1%	-12.1%
General Bleached Cartonboard	122.1	122.9	0.7%	1.1%	-1.9%
Sack Kraft	**113.8**	**110.9**	**-2.6%**	**-3.0%**	**-14.6%**
All Packaging	**129.8**	**127.9**	**-1.5%**	**-0.1%**	**-3.3%**

Source: ABS derived, and IndustryEdge

Converted packaging products and moulded fibre imports

Converted packaging products continue to trend upwards, with annual imports increasing for the twenty-seventh consecutive month. Year-ended May 2025, total imports rose by 8.1% to 213.9 kt.

Moulded fibre product imports also saw a significant increase, totaling AUD93.9 million, up 22.9% year-ended May 2025.

Sector changing

The packaging and industrial paper sector in Australia and New Zealand continues to experience change, with increases in imports and notable shifts in price trends. These developments underscore the importance of staying informed and adapting to the evolving market landscape.

For more detailed data and analysis, subscribers can access IndustryEdge's online Pulp & Paper Industry Data & Information Service at any time and can download a range of data and analytical products, all updated monthly.

To discuss your specific needs and how IndustryEdge can support you to meet them, contact us here.