

Arauco suspends pulp production in Nueva Aldea because of forest fires in Chile

Chilean company Celulosa Arauco y Constitución S.A. (Arauco) suspended pulp production indefinitely in Nueva Aldea in Chile's Bío Bío region on 2 February. This measure was taken because of several forest fires that have spread since 1 February between Maule and Los Ríos, the company explained in response to a query. One fire had also broken out in the wood depot of Arauco's pulp mill in Nueva Aldea but is reportedly under control and largely extinguished. The wood converting equipment and the mill itself have suffered no damage. Chemical and fibre supply to the mill is unaffected.

The two pulp lines at Nueva Aldea have a combined capacity of 1.03 million tpy of softwood and hardwood pulp.

Mill employees were evacuated for safety after the company declared black alert, in accordance with an internal measure. The company decided that "all non-essential personnel" of the production facility shall stay away until normal working conditions are restored, Arauco informs. "We expect that the Nueva Aldea mill will resume production in the next few days," Arauco told EUWID.

"We have deployed all available resources to combat the fire and are working closely with the authorities, other forestry companies and the general public to address the emergency," Arauco added. According to media reports, 740 ha of forests are already affected by fires. A forest fire in the same region consumed Arauco's plywood mill at the end of 2011. □

Forest fires force CMPC to intermittently halt pulp production at all its three sites in Chile

Chilean pulp, paper and board producer Empresas CMPC has been forced to halt pulp production at its three Chilean mills due to forest fires over the last few days and weeks. The company informs that machinery and equipment at its sites in the Chilean regions of Ñuble, Bío Bío and Araucanía were not directly affected by the fires but production was intermittently stopped to ensure safety of employees and surrounding settlements. Production was resumed only after ensuring that there was no more danger from the fires, CMPC added.

The pulp lines at the Santa Fe mill in Nacimiento (1.5 million tpy of bleached eucalyptus pulp), the Pacifico mill in Angol (525,000 tpy of bleached softwood kraft pulp) and the Laja mill (290,000 tpy of bleached and unbleached pulp, 70,000 tpy

of sack kraft paper) have a combined capacity of around 2.3 million tpy of pulp.

Several forest fires have been raging in various regions of Chile since December 2022. More than 1,200 firefighters and 22 aircraft owned by CMPC are reportedly involved in fighting the fires on CMPC's own forests as well as adjacent areas. The large number of concurrent fires, their spread and rapid advance in conjunction with unfavourable weather conditions are major obstacles to contain and extinguish the fires, the company adds.

Information available to the company to date indicate that more than 10,000 ha of its plantations are affected although it is not possible at this time to state a precise figure. It was also premature to estimate the damage caused by the fire, the company added. □

Cariboo pulp mill to reduce output

Canada's Cariboo Pulp & Paper (CPP), a 50/50 joint venture by West Fraser Timber Co and Mercer International, will curtail pulp production at the Quesnel mill, British Columbia, on two occasions in 2023 due to limited fibre availability. CPP is geared for a production of 366,000 tpy of NBSK pulp. The first downtime is planned for mid-April and will last for a month. Production will be then idled for another month in the third quarter.

West Fraser and Mercer blame the decision on the decline in availability of sawmill residues. "The fibre supply challenge in British Columbia is well documented. Infestation, fire, and government policy decisions have all impacted the

amount of available fibre in the province," they announced.

Pulp companies in British Columbia have been facing serious problems for several months now due to lack of residual fibre and already curbed pulp output on several occasions in 2022. The difficult situation is persisting in 2023 and pulp companies are reacting by taking more downtime.

In mid-January 2023 Mercer already announced that it would take a three-week downtime at the 500,000 tpy Celgar mill in March.

Canfor Pulp had curtailed production at the 330,000 tpy Intercontinental NBSK pulp mill for

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four weeks between mid-December and mid-January. In mid-January the company also announced the permanent closure of pulp operations at the Prince George pulp and paper mill. Canfor Pulp explained that the "right-sizing of operating footprint" was necessary due to reduced access to economic residual fibre. □