AF&PA Sustainability Awards Recognize Member Achievements

By Donna Harman, AF&PA President & CEO

AF&PA recently honored five member companies for their commitment to sustainability in presenting our 2014 AF&PA Sustainability Awards. The awards support our Better Practices, Better Planet 2020 initiative and are designed to recognize exemplary sustainability successes in the paper and wood products manufacturing industry.

AF&PA sustainability award applicants are considered in two primary categories. Projects that support the sustainability goals within Better Practices, Better Planet 2020 qualify for recognition in the “Leadership in Sustainability” category, which has five subcategories that correspond to the goals: Paper Recovery for Recycling, Energy Efficiency/Greenhouse Gas Reduction, Sustainable Forest Management, Safety, and Water. The “Innovation in Sustainability” award is reserved for projects that merit recognition for their contribution to sustainable business practices, not one of the goals specifically.

RockTenn received a Leadership in Sustainability Award for Sustainable Forest Management for its Internal Fiber Supply Chain Certification program. They achieved their sustainability goal to achieve fiber chain-of-custody certification to credible third-party forestry certifications at all their North American wholly owned manufacturing facilities by 2020 early, in 2013. The company initiated a dual purpose effort to bring all their non-certified facilities to the same certifications and to combine all their existing certifications into one enterprise-wide multisite certificate.

Evergreen Packaging was also awarded a Leadership in Sustainability Award for Sustainable Forest Management for their Certified Success — Evergreen Forest Certification program. The company developed Evergreen Forest Certification, a group certification program that meets the standards of the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC®), and allows multiple landowners to be certified under a single group certificate — a cost-effective way for landowners to have their forests certified to internationally recognized standards. In its first year (2013), the program grew to include nearly 60 landowners comprising approximately 40,000 acres in North and South Carolina.

Expera Specialty Solutions was recognized with the Leadership in Sustainability Award for Safety for their BioChoice Lignin — a glowing example of our industry’s potential to produce new value streams out of existing resources. Domtar leveraged their Plymouth, N.C. mill’s existing infrastructure to start a lignin separation plant — the first of its kind in North America in over 25 years. Lignin is the natural glue that holds wood fibers together. While it is most commonly used as a carbon-neutral source of fuel, modern technology allows it to be made into a wide range of sustainable products, including coating, natural binders, plastics and resins.

These winning programs showcase the proactive approaches our members are taking to improve upon their business practices and contribute to achieving the Better Practices, Better Planet 2020 sustainability goals by 2020. AF&PA’s 2014 Sustainability Report showed that the industry has already made significant, measurable progress toward achieving the goals.

For more information about AF&PA’s Sustainability Awards program and Better Practices, Better Planet 2020 initiative, visit www.afandpa.org/sustainability.