

Paper, paperboard imports up 34pc in FY24 on higher supplies from ASEAN bloc: IPMA

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Synopsis

Imports of paper and paperboard in the country rose by 34 per cent to 19.3 lakh tonnes in 2023-24, driven by higher shipments from ASEAN countries, an industry association said on Wednesday. The Indian Paper Manufacturers Association (IPMA) in a statement said that the increasing imports of these products are hurting the domestic industry.

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Paper and paperboard imports, as per the commerce ministry data, were 14.3 lakh tonnes in the financial year ended on March 31, 2023, the IPMA said.

"ASEAN has come to account for the largest chunk in the paper import pie in the country accounting for 27 per cent share. Paper imports from ASEAN, which enter the country at zero import duty under the ASEAN-India free trade agreement, doubled to 5.1 Lakh tonnes during the year from 2.7 lakh tonnes in FY23," the association said citing commerce ministry data.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a 10-member bloc. The members include Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.

In value terms, paper imports doubled to Rs 13,248 crore in FY24 from Rs 6,140 crore in FY21, the body said.

"The unprecedented imports of paper and paperboard pose a significant threat to India's Make-in-India initiative Aatmanirbhar Bharat," IPMA said.

The major paper grades which are coming from these nations include printing paper, coated paper, and paperboard.



Representative image.

IPMA said that this surge comes despite substantial investments by the domestic industry in recent years to upgrade technology, improve product quality, and enhance agro / farm forestry practices.

"These investments are now at risk due to the influx of duty-free imports," it claimed.

IPMA has urged the government to increase the basic customs duty (BCD) on the import of paper and paperboard from 10 percent to 25 per cent.