

Wheat straw being used for paper instead of trees

By Nick Leiber, Bloomberg

Actor Woody Harrelson is known for his roles in such films as “White Men Can’t Jump,” “Natural Born Killers” and “The People vs. Larry Flynt.” He’s also an environmentalist who in 1998 co-founded Prairie Paper Ventures to make paper from crop waste instead of trees. The idea is to save forests as demand for paper increases despite lofty claims about the coming paperless era. “Just know that two boxes of this paper saves one tree, so you can make a very real difference,” Harrelson says in a video on the company’s site promoting its “new paper paradigm.”

It took around 14 years for the Winnipeg business to develop a way to turn wheat straw left over from harvesting into paper. The result is just as high-quality and affordable as the conventional stuff made from wood, says Jeff Golfman, who co-founded Prairie Paper with Harrelson and Clayton Manness, a former Manitoba finance minister. Manufactured in two mills in northern India, the line, called Step Forward, acts like regular paper and works in standard printers. “We like to say the most remarkable thing about our paper is how unremarkable it actually is,” says Golfman. “Where our process is unique is in the formulas [and] recipes we’re using.”

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