In Svetogorsk, the northernmost town of the Leningrad Region, located near the Russian-Finnish border, today is a holiday. Today the town is celebrating the Day of Forestry Industry Professionals, which takes place every year on the third Sunday of September. However, this day is particularly important in Svetogorsk: it marks 130 years since the pulp and paper mill which effectively founded the town was established. The pipes of the International Paper mill, a global leader in the packaging, pulp and paper industry, are visible from every point in the town.

International Paper has been operating in Russia since 1998. Over this time, it has successfully implemented its vision to be among the most successful, sustainable and responsible companies in the world.

At present, every tenth inhabitant of Svetogorsk works at the company's mill, and the entire population of the town depends on it for heat and hot water. The town’s name has changed over the years - originally it was called Enso (Finnish for "firstborn"). The name of the company also changed several times, but its essence has remained unchanged: this is the production site of paper, cardboard and cellulose.

**SVETOGORSK PAPER**

Paper is used by everyone. But how many people actually know how this common product is made? As with other seemingly simple and familiar processes, manufacturing good-quality paper is in fact rather difficult. It requires large and small machinery, hundreds of workers, large amounts of water and electricity, tons of chemicals, access routes, transport. But it all starts with the wood.

**Oleg Rybnikov, the Operations Director, Strategy & Efficiency at the Svetogorsk Mill,** explains: “Not all wood is suitable for the production of pulp and paper. We carry out strict quality control for incoming materials because their type, size, humidity and freshness greatly influence the quality and cost of our final product. In addition, we only purchase raw materials from certified suppliers who have confirmed the sources of their wood in accordance with federal and regional legislation and relevant Forest Stewardship Council standards.

We produce two types of bleached pulp, hardwood and softwood, for which the main raw material sources are hardwood and softwood trees - birch, pine, and spruce. Besides this, we use chemi-thermo-mechanical pulp to obtain a high yield of a unique fibrous semi-finished product from 100% aspen. This enables us to utilize wood that would otherwise either remain unused, adversely affecting the health of the forests or, at best, be used as fuel.

We receive about half of our timber via rail; the rest is delivered by timber trucks. In Tikhvin, we have a special unit which prepares the raw material and sends it to Svetogorsk - Tikhvin Forestry Complex. This enterprise became part of International Paper in 2011. It is in Tikhvin that the company’s forest operations take place.

Oleg Rybnikov is one of the most experienced out of the many specialists working for the company. He has worked for International Paper for 25 years. He spent part of this time in Brazil, where one of International Paper’s 24 branches is located. In
Brazil, office paper is manufactured from eucalyptus wood, which is grown exclusively on plantations. Rybnikov can determine what wood the paper is made of by looking at it against the light. He says that one type of paper will look silkier, whereas another will feel harder; one will seem more cloudy and heterogeneous, while another will have a more even structure.

International Paper is one of the world's leading producers of fiber-based packaging, pulp and paper. The company transforms renewable resources into products people depend on every day. The company operates according to "The IP Way Forward", focusing on five key areas: Sustaining Forests, Investing in People, Improving the Planet, Innovative Products and Inspired Performance.

Speaking of “Innovative Products” area, it should be noted that each pulp and paper mill has its own specialization: one manufactures paper napkins, another produces paperboard packaging and tetra-packs, and a third - writing paper and notebooks. The Svetogorsk mill equipment is most suited to the production of coated board for liquid food packaging (e.g. for milk, juice, etc.), high-end office paper, as well as technical pulp used in various industries. The Svetogorsk-produced brand of office paper SvetoCopy has been around for more than 20 years, and almost half of the paper packs in Russia are produced here.

The production process of a sheet of paper can be surprising to the unschooled eye. The first thing to catch one’s attention is the paper-making machine. When they hear the word "machine", most people imagine something actively puffing, but not particularly big. But the Finnish-produced Valmet paper machine is a monster the size of a large building. When it was being assembled, the process resembled building a house... only even more difficult.

Even though all production processes are automated, the paper-making machine’s activity is constantly monitored across several screens by experienced employees who sit in the control room. To a person unfamiliar with such places, being in the control room will feel much like being on the car deck of a huge ferry wading through the wild sea, with the air full of strong smells as the machine lightly hums and shakes. Once a year, the paper-making machine goes quiet – this happens when the whole mill’s activity stops for the annual checks and repair works. In June this year, another planned outage took place (in fact, the outage took place simultaneously in all locations of the company all over the world) and, according to Minas Souris, the Executive Director of the Svetogorsk mill, it went smoothly, thereby confirming the success of month-long preparation to ensure the quick and efficient implementation of all tasks to be fulfilled within the limited time frame of the outage. This underpins the progress on one of the company's main priorities: "Inspired Performance."

The large paper-making machine has been upgraded many times since it was first installed, which inevitably raises the question: what part of it has remained constant? The technicians laugh; the machine is already like a manually-assembled Rolls-Royce; they have replaced nearly everything. And from one important piece, they have made a monument. A huge rampart from a single piece of granite - almost like the Alexander Column on Palace Square in St Petersburg – lies on a pedestal, with a plate which reads:

“Let it be a symbol of cardboard craft,  
Showing off with mighty force,  
A heavy-weighted granite shaft  
That used to be a rock so coarse!”
To obtain such a column without a single crack is very rare. They are made in Finland, and when the Finns manufactured, delivered and assembled the machine in 1983, they also brought with them a column and a shaft. Transporting it along the highway through the border was said to be extremely burdensome, but thanks to the Leningrad authorities at that time, they managed the task brilliantly.

LOOK AFTER THE ENVIRONMENT – PLANT A TREE

The celebrations of Forest Day at the mill are not just a thing of tradition. Minas Souris maintains that people here feel a strong connection to the forest:

“Our entire business depends upon the sustainability of forests. Without the forest, we wouldn’t have our paper, our mill or our company. Because of this, we strictly observe forest reforestation programs, whether it is the Year of Ecology or any other year.”

One of the principles we are guided by is “Sustaining Forests”. This means the company looks after the forests in order to maintain their health for future generations. Every year the company plants around 3 million seedlings in Russia.

Many Forest Day attendees received an unusual present; a pine seedling, ready to be planted. And it doesn’t matter where they decide to plant it – by their house in the town, at their country cottage or in a forest clearing, the main point is that another tree has been planted in our country. The correspondent from Vesti fulfilled this legacy from International Paper the very next day; the sapling was planted in a place, where it will hopefully take root and in time will become a beautiful, tall pine tree.

One of the priorities on the company’s development plan is “Improving our Planet”. This means that, in the interest of Svetogorsk citizens, the mill works to minimize its impact on the environment. Just a couple of weeks ago, International Paper held its second ecological forum – an event which is likely to become a tradition. At the forum, a report was given on the environmental work carried out by the company. Many topical issues were discussed – for example, the elected officials of Svetogorsk were interested in the possibility of completely removing the flow of industrial waste waters into the river at the production site and using water which has been re-purified at the biological treatment station for the needs of the plant. As it turned out, there are facilities on the mill which do use such water, but it is too early to say whether the entire enterprise would be able to move over to using purified water, as this would require changes to the technical processes and creating new networks at huge costs.

Elena Konstantinova, a teacher of Biology and Chemistry at the Svetogorsk secondary school, is convinced that such forums help teachers carry back information to their students about how ecological problems in the town are being tackled. It was noted that at the plant, employees learn about the ways to minimize resource consumption and recycling, habits which they take home to their families. By the way, participants in the forum also received lime trees to plant.

NOT A SINGLE ACCIDENT

Safety is a key value for International Paper. The company began actively tackling the problem of accidents in the workplace in 2010. Across the huge territory of the plant spanning across 200 hectares, one can come across transport cars, chemicals, hot steam, rails, metal staircases and other fixed structures. As for mobile structures there simply isn’t a number, and you wouldn’t want to mess around moving machines! Therefore, health and safety instructions here don’t seem excessive to
anyone. For example, there is a requirement for employees to wear hi-vis jackets at all times when on-site – after all, the plant works around the clock and even in the day in bad weather people need to be visible both indoors and outside. Those working on the production line have to wear helmets, protective eyewear and often earplugs. Soft shoes and high heels are forbidden, as are long necklaces and large rings which might catch onto something. All of these seemingly small things protect the health and safety of the workers – and the nerve cells of their bosses. It has even reached the point where an employee of the Svetogorsk pulp and paper mill will fasten their seatbelt when sitting on a public minibus. It has become a reflex that might save their lives if something happened. According to Minas Souris, such corporate safety measures are mandatory for huge global companies with serious output. The management of the pulp and paper mill is adamant that every day all workers should return home alive and well. July marked two years at the plant without an accident (even very minor), showing the success of the program for staff health and safety.

**PEOPLE FROM “PAPER TOWN”**

Since International Paper is a town-forming enterprise, it is closely linked with all aspects of life in Svetogorsk. One of the company’s most important values is “Investing in People”. This means the company takes care of both its employees and local residents, and addresses vital issues in the community. There are, of course, families living nearby which have no connection to the company, but more often found here are the families of factory workers, many of whom worked at the plant for decades, and whose children and grandchildren will likely commit their working lives to the corporation. **Vera Terentyevna Isayeva, a veteran of the firm**, moved here as an apprentice in 1954, and retired from her post as head of the department of water communications in 2005.

“My entire life is linked with the plant,” says Vera Terentyevna. “I am from Karelia, just outside Kostomuksha. We came here because of the war, travelling in a freight cart, a mother with young children and a goat. I was nine years old, and we stayed. We moved into the barracks, I walked to school along the dam of the hydroelectric power station on Vuoksa river. At first I wanted to become a teacher, but then I changed my mind; I left Vyborg teacher training school for the paper mill, and I don’t regret it one bit. Working with water supply of the plant and town was not just my career, but my calling. After all, clean water is one of life’s basic necessities. I saw the country change with my own eyes, I saw the old replacing the new… but the water in Vuoksa flowed just the same then as it does now, and the life of the factory and town depends on it. I am happy that the mill works, that Svetogorsk lives; I feel valued and respected here, and that my work was necessary for someone.”

These words reflect the values of the company better than any others; to improve people’s lives, the planet and the company’s performance by transforming renewable resources into products people depend on every day.