

China's waste paper import ban in 2017 reduced global trade volume by 42%

China's 2017 ban on unclassified waste paper imports, aimed at curbing environmental pollution, significantly alters global waste paper trade networks (GWPTN). Researchers in China have found that with imports peaking at 31 million tons in 2012 and averaging 20 million tons annually from 2000 to 2020, China accounted for 42% of global waste paper trade. The ban has reduced China's imports, destabilized GWPTN, and shifted trade flows, according to a study using complex network theory and Difference-in-Differences models.

The ban caused a decline in key network indicators, including network density, average degree, and average strength, highlighting reduced scale and stability of GWPTN. Exporting countries have faced decreased trade volumes and backlogs, while other Asian countries near China increased imports of cheaper waste paper, although none could replace China's role in the network. Declining waste paper prices due to oversupply have further disrupted global markets, exacerbating challenges for exporters while benefiting some importers.