

RISE: Research Institutes of Sweden

Some members may not be aware of the fact, but the precursor organisation to Research Institutes of Sweden (RISE) was one of only a handful of founder members of IAPRI back in 1971.

Packforsk, as it was then, first merged with the pulp-and-paper industry's STFI in 2003, before evolving further with a name change to Innventia in 2009. Then, some two-and-a-half years ago, Innventia joined RISE.

This latest episode in the organisation's history is more than just a name change. Mikael Nygårds, research director within RISE Bioeconomy, Papermaking and Packaging, explains that the organisation is now 100% owned by the Swedish government, whereas Innventia was up to 70% privately-owned, with around 50% in the hands of just five large companies.

"The government understands that applied research is a national asset," he says. "It not only attracts investment but also has a direct impact on the development of our own industries."

Paper and packaging research now occupies a relatively small space within a much larger structure covering many different fields.

In all, RISE has around 2,700 employees. Senior research associate Thomas Trost estimates that there are around 90 or 100 scientists working in the Stockholm region across the twin areas of packaging and papermaking.

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The hub for packaging research is the RISE Packaging Science Centre, created on the former Packforsk site in Kista on the outskirts of the capital. "We have new labs and offices, with a fair amount of investment in improved facilities," he says. "We want to invest still more."

What kind of support can the organisation offer to industry? Nygårds provides an example: "Say you are a brand-owner with a turnover of several million dollars, transporting glass and wanting to be sure you're doing it safely. You want to investigate the burst strength of your corrugated board. There's a bridge there that needs to be crossed, and we are able to offer expertise and understanding of both the packaging materials involved and the total package."

Although terminology may have changed, the organisation has always had a focus on the bioeconomy, he insists. "We think that is



Mikael Nygårds (right) and Thomas Trost in the RISE packaging lab

where growth lies," Nygårds says. "Of course, plastics will always be there. But we think we can give the most support to industry in the areas of bioeconomy and sustainability."

While industry may no longer have any ownership role, it funds around 75% of packaging research, he estimates. Ongoing research programmes include: one on paperboard, covering areas such as converting, creasing, folding, printing and overall performance; one on corrugated board, examining areas such as transport testing, creep behaviour and other phenomena; and one on renewable barriers.

While some customers are from the Nordic region, many others come to RISE from considerably further away than that. Around 34 companies are signed up to the nine research programmes across paper and packaging, with some 15 of them involved in specific packaging-related programmes.

Trost says: "We also have our Trade & Industry Groups, such as the Packaging and Product Protection Group and our Corrugated Group. These can act as a bridge between the SMEs and larger players. What we offer is a 'helicopter' view of the whole technical area."

In the future, the organisation hopes to work on more EU projects, but also bilaterally with research partners located anywhere from the US to India – including with other IAPRI members, Nygårds adds.

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