

## **JMC Paper Tech Built a Paper Mill in Mexico. Here's What Year One Looked Like for Balaji JMC Paper Mill.**

*Balaji JMC Paper Mill — the first Indian paper mill in Mexico — completes twelve months of commercial production*

**By Yesha Patel** CEO, Balaji JMC Paper Mill & JMC Paper Tech Pvt. Ltd. *April 2026*

This past year, JMC Paper Tech crossed a threshold we had been working toward for some time. Through our subsidiary Balaji JMC Paper Mill, we moved from designing and supplying mills to owning and operating one, and year one has validated that step.

Situated at the US–Mexico frontier, the founding of Balaji JMC Paper Mill marked JMC Paper Tech's venture into North America and its evolution from equipment supplier to technology venture partner, a model with implications well beyond this single project.

With this project, JMC Paper Tech marked two historic milestones: Balaji JMC is the first paper mill in Ciudad Juárez and the first Indian paper mill in Mexico. Those are facts worth stating plainly, because they represent what this project set out to prove: that Indian process engineering and machinery expertise, the foundation JMC Paper Tech has spent decades building, can be deployed not just as an equipment export, but as a fully operational international manufacturing venture.

### **THE STRATEGIC LOGIC: WHY JUÁREZ, WHY NOW?**

Ciudad Juárez sits directly across from El Paso, Texas, inside one of the world's most active and established industrial zones. Under USMCA, containerboard grades we produce in Mexico enter the US duty-free, and from our plant gate in Juárez, every ton of test liner and fluting medium Balaji JMC produced can reach a corrugated box plant in the both the Southwest US or Mexico within 24–48 hours of dispatch.

Raw material economics reinforced the advantage. The US Southwest generates enormous volumes of Old Corrugated Containers (OCC) through retail, e-commerce, and logistics operations. Balaji JMC's location enables us to draw from both Mexican domestic OCC channels and cross-border fiber flows, a cost-advantaged feedstock position largely insulated from long-haul freight dynamics.

### **YEAR ONE: FROM GREENFIELD TO COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION**

Commissioning a greenfield paper mill in a border city in Mexico, with an Indian technology team, targeting the North American market, while simultaneously building a digital operations platform, amplifies every challenge inherent to a startup.

The production line is JMC Paper Tech's own design of a Double Wire Paper Machine with a forming section, extended nip press section, multi-cylinder dryer section, and size press, all manufactured by JMC. Q1 focused on mechanical erection and wet-end commissioning as JMC's commissioning engineers, worked alongside a bilingual Mexican operating crew, to achieve first-paper-on-machine ahead of the internal project schedule.

Ramp-up through Q2 and Q3 was deliberately paced to build operational discipline before pushing throughput. A 24/6 production schedule was established with operator training delivered in both English and Spanish; SOPs for all 15 major process areas were developed bilingually. Grade diversification followed: Test Liner (L100–L450 GSM), followed by Fluting Medium (M100–M450) and Core Board (C200–C400), giving the mill the full product portfolio required to serve the corrugated supply chain. By 2025 year-end, sell-through yield consistently tracked above 92% with annualized run rate approaching the 58,500 MT/year target.

### **MILLMIND: AI MEETS PAPER MILL REALITY**

The papermaking industry has historically lagged other manufacturing sectors in digital operations. Most ERP platforms are designed for generic manufacturing environments and require costly customization to handle the specific rhythms of a paper mill such as continuous production, grade changes, reel-to-reel traceability, and the interplay between raw material quality and finished goods specification.

With Balaji JMC we made a deliberate decision to build, rather than buy. MillMind, developed by JMC Paper Tech is an AI-powered, paper-industry-specific platform covering the full production cycle: from OCC receipt and stock management, pulping and stock prep tracking, shift production entry by grade, pope reel and rewinder logs, finished goods weighment and labeling, work order management, and a shutdown and maintenance planner. The platform is multilingual (English, Spanish, Hindi, etc.), role-based, and built for ease of use on the mill floor.

The AI layer provides predictive alerts by flagging draw rate anomalies that may indicate headbox consistency issues, correlating utility spikes with potential steam trap failures, and generating automated daily and monthly production reports that previously required hours of manual compilation.

No comparable Mexican recycled fiber mill operates with this level of digital integration. MillMind is a commercially available SaaS platform for the broader paper industry, a product born on the mill floor, ready for the market.

## **WORKFORCE: BUILDING A BILINGUAL MILL CULTURE**

Perhaps no challenge in year one proved more complex or more rewarding than the human dimension. Ciudad Juárez hosts hundreds of maquiladora plants competing for skilled industrial labor. Balaji JMC's advantage in this environment started with access to JMC Paper Tech's knowledge base and technical expertise of decades of process engineering that most startups simply don't have on day one

Knowledge transfer between Indian engineers and Mexican operators was identified from the outset as the primary operational risk. In order to combat this, JMC's team of engineers developed a bilingual training program with 15 process area manuals in both English and Spanish. One year later, Mexican operators are running complex papermaking equipment with confidence and technical proficiency. This kind of knowledge transfer is central to how JMC Paper Tech operates. We believe our work is not finished when the machinery is installed — it is finished when the mill is running well.

## **THE ROAD AHEAD**

As Balaji JMC enters its second year, the focus has shifted from commissioning and stabilization to optimization and growth. Throughput ramp toward the 58,500 MT/year annualized target remains the primary operational priority. FSC Chain of Custody and ISO 9001 certifications, targeted for H1 2026, will unlock access to the highest-value tier of the Southwest US packaging market — major retail and e-commerce fulfillment operations with stringent supplier qualification requirements.

Commercially, the team is actively developing key account relationships in Texas, Arizona, and Southern California, with particular focus on packaging converters serving the cross-border logistics sector. MillMind's external commercialization at TAPPICon 2026 represents a revenue pathway that extends well beyond Balaji JMC's own production.

Longer term, JMC Paper Tech's is evaluating capacity expansion and grade diversification into tissue and specialty packaging, building on JMC Paper Tech's technology partnership with Kawano Zoki Co., Ltd. of Japan.

## **CONCLUSION**

When Balaji JMC Paper Mill produced its first reel of recycled kraft paper in Ciudad Juárez in early 2025, it was more than a commissioning milestone. It was the first physical manifestation of an idea that had seemed improbable to many: that Indian process engineering could establish a world-class paper manufacturing operation in Mexico, designed from day one to serve the North American market, powered by artificial intelligence, and staffed by a bilingual, cross-cultural team.

One year later, that idea is a running mill. The numbers are tracking. The market is responding. The platform is scaling. I am proud to say that JMC Paper Tech once again demonstrates that the right expertise, deployed in the right market, builds something that lasts.