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News and Information for Recycling Professionals



New rules place restrictions on global plastic scrap trade

The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste has been amended, requiring countries to obtain prior informed consent before exporting contaminated or mixed plastic scrap.



DeAnne Toto

International Recycling News Legislation & Regulations Plastics

Governments at the 14th Conference of the Parties (COP14) of the Basel Convention have voted in support of restricting plastic scrap exports by requiring countries to obtain prior informed consent before exporting contaminated or mixed plastic scrap. According

to the proposal from Norway, a summary of which is available [here](#), the amendments to the [Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste](#) are designed to “clean up the international trade in plastic waste,” helping to reduce leakage of plastics into the marine environment and communities.

Under the amendment, plastic waste is divided into three general categories:

- “clean” plastic “waste” that has been sorted prior to export that has been prepared to specification and is suitable for immediate recycling with minimal further mechanical preparatory treatment processes, if any;
- “other” plastic waste, which contains mixed plastics or other wastes or is contaminated and is subject to the control system of the Basel Convention; and
- “hazardous” plastic waste, which is contaminated with ([Annex I](#)) constituents to the extent that it exhibits ([Annex III](#)) hazardous characteristics and is subject to Basel Convention controls.

The [World Wildlife Fund](#) (WWF) notes that mixes of polyethylene (PE), polypropylene (PP) and polyethylene terephthalate (PET) will be exempted from the consent requirement.

The United States is one of only two countries that has not ratified the Basel Convention. However, the treaty still affects U.S. importers and exporters, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says. Parties to the Basel Convention cannot trade Basel-covered waste with nonparties without a predetermined agreement between the countries.

A number of environmental groups welcomed the passage of the amendment, which will become effective at the start of 2021.

“With this amendment, many developing countries will, for the first time, have information about plastic wastes entering their country and be empowered to refuse plastic waste dumping,” says Sara Brosché, science advisor to Sweden-based [IPEN](#), a global network of public interest nongovernmental (NGOs) working together to end the use of toxic chemicals. “For far too long developed countries like the U.S. and Canada have been exporting their mixed toxic plastic wastes to developing Asian countries claiming it would be recycled in the receiving country. Instead, much of this contaminated mixed waste cannot be recycled and is instead dumped or burned or finds its way into the ocean.”

Jim Puckett, director of the [Basel Action Network](#) (BAN), Seattle, says the passage of the amendment is “a major first step to stem the tide of plastic waste now flowing from the rich developed countries to developing countries in Africa and Asia, all in the name of ‘recycling,’ but causing massive and harmful pollution, both on land and in the sea.”

He adds, “A true circular economy was never meant to circulate pollution around the globe. It can only be achieved by eliminating negative externalities and not just thrusting the harm on developing countries.”

However, the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI), Washington, says the effort “will hamper the world’s ability to recycle plastic material, creating an increased risk of pollution.”

ISRI’s statement on the passage of the amendment reads in part: “Recycling is part of the solution to the global issue of plastic pollution. In fact, the amendment does not restrict trade in scrap plastic commodities that meet the ISRI Specifications. However, as written, the new listings for controlled plastics, and the requirement that exporters file ‘prior informed consent’ requests, will create an administrative burden that will make it harder for countries without recycling capacity to export collected plastics to countries with the infrastructure in place. It also does little to fight the illicit trade and poor handling of end-of-life plastics that are the real cause of pollution around the world.”

ISRI adds that it intends to actively participate in the Partnership on Plastic Waste that the Conference of Parties adopted, saying, “Recycling works, and ISRI will share its expertise with the international community to demonstrate that recycling plastics in a responsible manner helps save the environment. Recycling that incorporates the highest standards in environmental, health, safety and quality directs these valuable resources into the manufacturing supply chain, thereby generating both economic and environmental opportunities.”

In a news release regarding the amendment’s approval, the Bureau of International Recycling (BIR), Brussels, says, “Countries across the world worked together to create a step-change in the Basel Convention itself in order to alleviate the damage plastic does to life in the oceans and on land.” The BIR says the change will “force countries to do more to manage their own plastic waste at the point of generation.”

The BIR adds that the next challenge will be implementation, saying it “has pledged to work with the new Basel Convention Partnership on Plastic Wastes, having already played an active role in the related Household Waste Partnership that includes inter alia plastic waste. BIR is also very supportive of avowed intentions to remove or reduce hazardous constituents in plastics among the ‘further actions to address waste under the Basel Convention.’”

PET

Polyethylene/PE

Polypropylene/PP

ocean shipping



OSHA to offer \$10.5M in training grants

The grants will fund training and education to help workers and employers identify and prevent workplace safety and health hazards.



Posted by Adam Redling

Financial Safety

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced the availability of \$10.5 million in Susan Harwood Training Grants for nonprofit organizations including community and faith-based organizations, employer associations, labor unions, joint labor/management associations, Indian tribes and colleges and universities.

The Harwood Training Grant program supports in-person, hands-on training for workers and employers in small businesses; industries with high injury, illness and fatality rates; and vulnerable workers who are underserved, have limited English proficiency or are temporary workers. The grants will fund training and education to help workers and employers identify and prevent workplace safety and health hazards.

Grants are available in three areas: targeted topic training, training and educational materials development and capacity building.

Targeted topic training grants support educational programs that address identifying and preventing workplace hazards. These grants require applicants to conduct training on OSHA-designated workplace safety and health hazards.

Training and educational materials development grants support the development of quality classroom-ready training and educational materials that focus on identifying and preventing workplace hazards.

Capacity building grants support organizations in developing new capacity for conducting workplace safety and health training programs and must provide training and education based on identified needs of a specific audience or a set of related topics.

Details on the grants and how to apply are available at Grants.gov. Harwood applications must be submitted online no later than July 2. Applicants must possess a "D-U-N-S" number and have an active System of Award Management (SAM) registration. A D-U-N-S number may be obtained free-of-charge from Dun & Bradstreet.

Grants



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Cup recycling collection expanding in Netherlands, Belgium

Simply Cups plans to offer paper cup recycling through a partnership with Product for Product and Cupcare Company.



Posted by Megan Smalley

International Recycling News Plastics Paper

Simply Cups, Kings Hill, England, plans to extend its geographical footprint by launching its cup collection and recycling services into the Netherlands and Belgium on June 12, 2019. The company partnered with Product for Product, Purmerend, Netherlands, and Cupcare Company, Deventer, Netherlands, to offer opportunity for businesses to have their used beverage cups collected and recycled into new, functional products.

According to a news release from Simply Cups, it is estimated that 3 billion cups are used each year in the Netherlands and 1.5 billion cups per year in Belgium. While a number of cup recycling schemes already exist in these areas, none cover the entire Benelux region and not all have the technology to transform both paper and plastic cups into second-life, durable products.

“With more than a years’ planning invested into the launch of Simply Cups in the Netherlands and Belgium, we are highly confident that we have chosen the right partners

and commercial approach to meet market needs. Consequently, we fully expect that the scheme will quickly become the region's dominant cup recycling brand," says Peter Goodwin, co-founder of Simply Cups. "At the official launch, in Eindhoven, at the beginning of June, we also expect to announce a number of major customers, including leading retailers and large corporations. Furthermore, we will also launch our rCUP, the world's first reusable cup made from used cups."

Product for Product runs a variety of successful closed-loop recycling programs for clients throughout northern Europe, with particular expertise in turning segregated waste streams back into functional office supplies, paper products, packaging and interior fabrication.

"Over the last five years, Simply Cups has developed the most-trusted cup-recycling brand in the UK and Australian market," says Frans van den Berge, director of Product for Product. "We are now excited to be able to bring their experience to the Benelux market as well as a unique range of cup collection bins, suitable for any location, and, most importantly, the know-how to create functional new products, made from used cups, that our clients can buy back and incorporate into their branded merchandise."

Retour, managed by Cupcare Company, currently recycles more than 100 million plastic and paper cups per year from the Dutch market.

Martin Wernsen, founder and managing director of Cupcare Company, says, "The market particularly in Belgium, is crying out for a fresh approach to the tricky issue of cup recycling. Nothing explains the success of recycling schemes better than products, such as the rCUP, that are both made from the used materials and stimulates re-use. Demand for recycled products consequently drives up demand for the waste material which in turn stimulates businesses to try even harder to increase recycling rates."

According to a news release from Simply Cups, the company is currently collecting more than 30 million cups annually from more than 100 businesses. It launched in the United Kingdom in 2014 and Australia in 2017, with plans to expand into Benelux, United Arab Emirates and the United States in 2019.

Linerboard

Mixed Paper

Packaging

Dreamstime



Black Bear, MMEC partner to boost tire recycling efforts

The companies will develop tire-to-carbon-black recycling operations.



Posted by Dan Sandoval

International Recycling News Tires

The engineering and construction firm MMEC Mannesmann, Dusseldorf, Germany, has announced plans to partner with Black Bear, a Netherlands-based tire recycling firm, to open and expand the number of tire-to-carbon-black recycling operations throughout the world. Under the agreement, the two companies will take part in the rollout of Black Bear's technology to produce recovered carbon black from scrap tires.

Black Bear manufactures recycled carbon black, including a Cradle-to-Cradle certified product. The company developed a carbonization process to transform used tires into valuable resources. In several industries, recycled carbon black is used as an additive in rubber, tires, plastics, coatings plastics and inks.

As part of the partnership, MMEC will perform the detailed engineering, procurement and construction of Black Bear's facilities.

Johann-Georg Rathgeb, MMEC's head of technologies, says, "Black Bear's proven technology is highly promising. We have been closely monitoring their technology developments for quite some time now. Considering the lessons learned of their first industrial-sized pilot-plant and despite the fire that happened in early February, we are convinced that together we can realize state-of-the-art plants across the globe."

Oliver Apelt, CEO of MMEC Mannesmann, says, "We are delighted about this partnership with Black Bear. We carry strong belief in their technology and look forward to rolling it out around the world."



From left: David Eldridge of Plastics Recycling World magazine, Brett Stevens, Michelle Hedlund, Prem Patel and Chris Parker

Breaking through barriers to boost recycling rates

Four unique perspectives on how to address challenges with sustainability goals and recycling education.



Megan Smalley

Municipal / IC&I Plastics

In the past year, many major brand owners announced commitments to incorporate a certain percentage of recycled content into their packaging by 2025. Coca-Cola, Walmart, Aldi and other businesses all pledged to increase the amount of recyclable, reusable or compostable packaging they used by 2025.

However, a challenge exists for these goals: Plastic scrap recovery rates in the United States can't currently meet all the demand coming online.

Several recycling industry stakeholders gathered to discuss this challenge in an educational session at the Plastics Recycling World Expo in Cleveland May 8.

"The amount of high-end PCR (postconsumer resin) available on the market is finite," said Brett Stevens, global vice president of material sales and procurement at Trenton, New Jersey-based TerraCycle. "The reason it's finite is because curbside collection levels are stable. If levels are stable and producers are oversold, where is the supply coming from?"

Stevens added that the companies that are making changes have "the right idea at heart," but he is not sure how they will source the material with current plastic scrap recovery rates.

Prem Patel, global strategy and business development manager of plastic additives at Milliken & Co., Spartanburg, South Carolina, added that the majority of brand owners making commitments seem to be genuine. He noted that he's seen some of the sustainability teams at these major brands working more quickly on these sustainability initiatives than normal.

"I think they're passionate," Patel said. "I don't know if they know what they signed up for. One of the biggest challenges is on the collection and sort side to get enough good quality material to drive use in these applications. It's a big task they signed up for."

Chris Parker, sustainability manager at Winnipeg, Manitoba-based Winpak, offered a brand owner perspective in the panel discussion. He noted that most brand owners do want to see improvement, but it requires a lot of stakeholders to reach that point.

"We can't put 20 percent PCR in a product if it's not collected or collected properly," he said. "It has to be balanced. You have to do this in a time when the price of virgin resin

increases. But we're in a tight time frame—2025 will be here before we know it. So, we have to work together to continue to grow this sector so the resources are there, the material recovery facilities (MRFs) are there and MRFs can make money.”

He added that meeting sustainability goals will be challenging, given that virgin resin prices are at all-time lows. “That’s a difficult situation for recycling. Somehow, we have to break that mold. [In Canada], EPR (extended producer responsibility) is the way to do that. If brand owners want to get a circular economy, grease has to be on the wheel to keep it turning, otherwise it dies. MRFs have to pay bills—it all costs money.”

Addressing residential recycling

Michelle “Mitch” Hedlund, founder of [Recycle Across America](#), noted in the session that there seem to be two issues facing the industry: meeting brand owner sustainability goals and reducing contamination rates in residential recycling.

“If you keep pushing demand and have greater expectations, more companies need to meet this goal, but there’s no [plastic scrap] feedstock,” she said. “It’s like promising someone a Maserati with sugar in its fuel—it can’t go.”

Hedlund added that fixing public confusion about recycling is likely a “good first step” to help achieve these sustainability goals. “The public absolutely cares about recycling. They love it and defend it. The reality that we’re all witnessing right now in the media, and what I recognized 10 years ago, is that it’s too confusing for the public to do properly.”

With demand in place for recycled plastic scrap and with technology coming on board to process it, public education could help boost recovery rates. She added that she’s a proponent of placing standardized educational labels on bins and recycling containers across the U.S. as one method to reduce confusion.

“We have all the major ingredients in place for recycling to thrive,” Hedlund said. “Yet, the way it’s presented to the public makes it absolutely, undoubtedly impossible for them to do properly or take seriously.”

“Confusion levels today are insane,” Stevens added. “Most consumers, and even some industry professionals, throw any plastic they see into a bin because it seems simple. But the resin code on the bottom of the package doesn’t tell the consumer the whole story. There’s probably a need to simplify the message. Maybe the government can help with this, but some level of standardization is needed.”

Also, Hedlund noted that stakeholders need to ensure the MRF operators’ opinions are heard on this topic since the MRFs are the ones dealing with contamination. She said stakeholders must collaborate with MRF operators to communicate clearly with the public what they accept.

Patel said there also needs to be improved infrastructure to ensure people can recycle properly outside the home.

“You walk around town and you don’t see many recycling bins,” he said. “Someone has to invest in that infrastructure to make [improving recycling rates] more feasible.”