

Task Force to Study Methods for Reducing Consumer Packaging that Generates Solid Waste

Summary of Recommendations

The following is a Summary of Recommendations that the Task Force is considering as move toward the completion of a final report for the Connecticut General Assembly.

The process has involved extensive informational gatherings through a series of Task Force Meetings between April 2017 and September 2017 at which a wide variety of interested parties and the general public have provided insights, information and suggested recommendations for reducing consumer packaging that generates solid waste.

In October 2017, the Task Force created a master list of suggested recommendations and consolidated the list down to this Summary of Recommendations. The next step will be for the Task Force to meet and review the Summary of Recommendations and make recommendations for the Connecticut General Assembly.

It is critical to keep in mind that packaging plays an important role in delivering products to consumers. As packaging engineers think about what packaging choices to make, there are a huge array of factors that are considered including the recyclability of the material used and the overall environmental impact. Importantly, the packaging must fulfill its purpose to protect the contents for the consumer.

1. Strategies for improving the efficacy of state, municipal and local solid waste recycling infrastructures and systems;

Recommendations:

- 1.1 Fix the bottle bill: The existing bottle deposit program in CT has one of the lowest collections rates compared to the other programs in the United States. Improve the existing bottle redemption program to make more efficient, less costly, and less susceptible to abuse.
 - 1.1.1 Earmark unclaimed bottle deposits (“escheats”) to recycling programs including education activities and infrastructure investments for both the public and private sector.
 - 1.1.2 Expand the bottle deposit to all glass bottles (including wine and liquor bottles) sold in the State to increase the quality and value of glass in the bottle deposit program as well as ensure removal of glass from the single stream program thus increasing the value of single stream recyclables. and increase the deposit to \$0.10 per bottle.
 - 1.1.3 Consider making all other recyclable materials covered under the State’s bottle bill (plastics bottles and aluminum cans) no longer covered by any deposit bottle bill system and would flow into existing residential curbside programs, drop off programs and commercial recycling programs.
- 1.2 Enforce existing laws, rules and regulations: The State and underperforming towns and cities should focus on enforcement of existing laws. Communities that are poor recycling performers must effectively enforce the relevant statutes and ordinances, specifically existing recycling mandates and disposal bans. All local government must do more to enforce the applicable statutes and ordinances as they relate to multifamily homes, apartment buildings and commercial and institutional generators.
- 1.3 Leverage the use of voluntary, industry-funded programs: Voluntary programs like The Recycling Partnership and Closed Loop Fund can assist in the funding and educational needs but are limited in their ability to address the total financing needs for Connecticut’s recycling program. Connecticut’s local governments, waste haulers, and recycling facilities should work with these organizations to help

fund expenses such as large carts for collection and improved sorting technology at MRFs as well as utilize the technical expertise available.

- 1.4 Promote recycling in public spaces: About half of all PET bottles are consumed away from home. Therefore, the State and municipalities should be required to collect recyclables in public spaces and public workplaces.
- 1.5 Promote plastic film recycling: The State should continue with its efforts to increase the availability of drop off sites for film/plastic bags specifically through partnership with the Wrap Recycling Action Program (WRAP).
- 1.6 Require proper planning: Commercial and institutional generators of MSW must provide to local authorities recycling management plans showing that they have in place appropriate collection for MSW and mandated recyclables.

2. Consumer education and awareness efforts aimed at increasing awareness of consumer packaging as solid waste and reuse and recycling solutions for such packaging;

Recommendations:

- 2.1 Promote public education programs: Encourage and promote educational programs in communities in which all stakeholders work together to promote recycling and waste reduction. Raise awareness about the importance of recycling and creating public/private partnerships.
- 2.2 Encourage manufacturing labeling efforts with streamlined consumer messaging: Promote the Sustainable Packaging Coalition's "How2Recycle" label in conjunction with Connecticut new "What's In, What's Out" program (with all communities accepting same list of materials) to increase public education. Adding information to packaging is an example of informing people whether or not they can commonly recycle that item.

3. Existing methods employed in the consumer packaging and recycling industry to reduce and minimize the amount, weight and volume of consumer packaging that generates solid waste;

Recommendations

- 3.1 Encourage continued source reduction: Source reduction through packaging design along with recycling can reduce the amount of material that ends up as waste. The packaging industry has seen a decrease in the tons of packaging per capita over the past 15 years. That said, every type of packaging material is different and may not need to be treated the same.
- 3.2 Focus on environmental benefits of recycling different material types: The State may wish to consider how to assess, on a normalized basis, the relative environmental impact for different packaging materials to show greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions saved by each ton of material recycled. This would allow the State to prioritize its recycling efforts on certain packaging materials, which provide the biggest environmental benefit.
- 3.3 Support best practices: Support the continued development and promotion of proven best practices that will leverage and encourage the existing investments in recovery. Widespread adoption of these best practices for recovery (including efficient collection systems, an optimized processing infrastructure, effective education, and appropriate support mechanisms) will contribute to the recovery success sought.

4. Incentives for consumer packaging producers to reduce the amount of such packaging that they create;

Recommendations

- 4.1 The State and legislature should encourage packaging innovation as new materials and applications reduce solid waste generated by consumer packaging.
- 4.2 State government should encourage innovation in packaging by incorporating sustainable packaging criteria in the State procurement/bid process.
- 4.3 Encourage the use of light-weighted material. Light-weighting packaging is a proven method of reducing the amount of packaging waste generated by providing tax incentives, positive promotion or lower fees. The State should hold an annual awards competition and publically recognize and promote manufacturers who have taken voluntary steps to reduce the amount and weight of packaging material. We note that legislative mandates requiring the light weighting of packaging on a state-by-state basis is not feasible and could lead to increased product spoilage or damage resulting in even great amounts of solid waste.
- 4.4 Any EPR program for packaging and printed-paper should award packaging reduction and encourage packaging recycling.

5. Opportunities to cost-effectively increase the proportion of biodegradable, postconsumer recycled and recyclable materials used in the manufacture of consumer packaging;

Recommendations

- 5.1 Any EPR program instituted by the state should encourage through incentives or discounts the use of biobased resins and postconsumer recycled material.
- 5.2 Oxodegradable and degradable resin that negatively affect packaging recyclability should be discouraged and a negative incentive should be placed on these materials though any EPR program if implemented.

6. Strategies for achieving a reduction of not less than twenty-five per cent of consumer packaging in the state's solid waste stream on and after January 1, 2024, and decreasing municipal costs associated with managing such waste stream through the implementation of: (A) alternative low-cost methods of managing and reducing consumer packaging in an environmentally sustainable manner that additionally yields economic benefits through the creation of job opportunities or (B) an extended producer responsibility program for consumer packaging;

Recommendations

- 6.1 Earmark unclaimed bottle deposits: Earmark the unclaimed bottle deposits ("escheats") as a dedicated fund to be utilized for managing and reducing consumer packaging including for consumer education, recycling infrastructure investment (e.g., recycling bins, public space recycling, etc.), and MRF improvements. Testimony estimated this amount as between \$20-\$35 million in funding annually which is a significant source of funding to help decreasing municipal costs associated with managing the consumer packaging waste stream as well as direct funding to recycling facilities, which may help spur job creation.
- 6.2 Evaluation of mixed waste processing facilities: Connecticut should investigate the pros and cons of mixed waste processing facilities to advance recycling of consumer packaging that remains in the waste stream. If positive, the State could relax regulations and streamline the permitting process to encourage economic development of these facilities.
- 6.3 Encourage Public-Private Partnerships. The State should encourage the development of Public-Private Partnerships that leverage the expertise of government, academia, industry, and other non-

governmental organizations. Such partnerships are critical to driving innovation and the development of next-generation packaging.

6.4 Incentivize investment in recycling infrastructure: Local and state authorities should provide tax incentives, tax exemptions, and/or accelerated depreciation for recycling machinery equipment to encourage private investment. This will assist operators to upgrade equipment and systems to meet market demands and the evolving recycling stream.

6.5 Registration/permit fees for recycling: Local authorities should increase registration/permit fees to support recycling efforts. Local authorities should use the registration fees solely to support their recycling efforts and programs.

Comments from Co Chair Will Flower: I believe the majority of the Task Force discussion on Dec. 12 2017 will be focus on 6.6. I have included two diverse options for consideration as recommendations. The Task Force will discuss these two options and create a final recommendation at the Dec. 12 meeting.

6.6 Packaging and printed-paper extended producer responsibility (Packaging EPR):

Option 1:

Avoid EPR as a State initiative. Consistently high recovery rates, a well-established infrastructure already in place to collect and process paper products, and the industry's ongoing efforts to increase voluntary recovery, make mandates like EPR on paper and paper-based packaging unnecessary.

- Creating a state-administered board to control the flow of materials subject to an EPR program will disrupt the complex and efficient markets for recovered fiber, likely resulting in less fiber recovered for recycling and substantial additional administrative cost that eventually will be paid by consumers or taxpayers.
- Understand that all stakeholders in the value chain must be in agreement on the program to avoid undermining of an EPR program. As no such agreement exists, it would be premature to push forth with EPR legislation in Connecticut without the support of the product manufacturers, packaging producers, the waste and recycling industries, consumers, and municipalities.
- Avoid patchwork programs. Do not implement a patchwork of packaging take-back legislation at the State level. Mandated approaches on a state-specific level are extremely burdensome to industry, heavy-handed in their approach and ineffective in terms of changing packaging design. Industry does not design products or packaging specific to an individual state.

Option 2:

Establish a comprehensive funding system that shifts all or part of the burden of the recovery of packaging materials from municipalities to the producers and brand owners. EPR options for packaging and printed-paper should be investigated further based primarily on the opportunity to stabilize and increase funding for recycling programs and expand infrastructure to improve the quality of recyclable materials and market access. An EPR system acknowledges the following:

- Global Packaging EPR programs vary widely with different levels of shared to full responsibility, nonprofit compared to competitive schemes, and other variables.
- EPR (if properly structures) can provide an economic incentive to improve packaging design and reduce packaging as proven in other countries (e.g., France) via modulating fees. However, implementation of Packaging EPR in Connecticut alone will have minimum

impact on packaging design as most packaging is designed for the US as a whole and one program would not elicit sufficient incentives.

- Packaging EPR should address concerns raised such as:
 - Control of the solid waste stream.
 - Total cost of the program
 - Transparency.
 - Monopoly versus competitive systems.
- The administrative costs of state-by-state Packaging EPR programs.
 - Coordination with other states and/or regional organizations should be pursued for minimum administrative costs and maximum effectiveness. In addition, all stakeholders (DEEP, local governments, waste management industry, and packaging industry including brand owners, retailers, packaging suppliers, material manufacturers and the environmental community) should be part of the framework development.
 - The EPR system should be industry led with funding going directly to an industry led third party organization and not funnel through Connecticut State government.

7 Methodologies for measuring and verifying the reduction described in subdivision (6) of this subsection;

Recommendations

7.1 Set realistic goals: The State should review the 60 percent diversion rate. In doing so, the State should choose a diversion goal that is realistic, practical, and economical. This evaluation should include the impact of light weighting and design innovations have had on the generation of packaging materials and life cycle analysis (including greenhouse gas reductions).

7.1.1 Before setting any recycling or diversion goals, DEEP should present data establishing how much and what kind of consumer packaging is generated within the State, the current recycling levels for those packages and the primary sources of packaging that is not recycled.

8. Incremental performance targets to assure achievement of the reduction described in subdivision (6) of this subsection.

Recommendations

8.1 Every 3 years, DEEP should perform a waste characterization study to track progress, evaluate priorities, and create new priorities based on markets, technological innovations, and the evolution of the waste streams.

- DEEP should track the disposal of residential MSW to assist towns and cities in evaluating their efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle.
- DEEP should track the disposal of commercial MSW to assist towns and cities in evaluating their efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle.