



News Release

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DOMESTIC PURCHASING OF RIGID PLASTICS AND FILM CONTINUES TO INCREASE

Challenging Market Conditions Lead to Dip in Recycling Rates

WASHINGTON (July 2, 2019) – Despite tough global market conditions, two new reports (the [2017 National Post-Consumer Non-Bottle Rigid Plastic Recycling Report](#) and the [2017 National Post-Consumer Plastic Bag and Film Recycling Report](#)) found that domestic U.S. purchasing increased by two percent for both categories in 2017.

The reports attributed recyclers' ability to sell to more domestic markets on the focus towards decreased contamination and increased segregation of resins. The category of film that increased in 2017 was material that is collected through retail collection programs including the [Wrap Recycling Action Program](#).

However, the overall recycling totals (including exports) for both categories decreased, after having previously sustained growth. Prior to 2017, the volume of rigid plastics collected for recycling had increased nearly 4.5 times since 2007, and film recycling had grown for twelve consecutive years, more than doubling since 2005.

The first of the referenced reports found that recycling for post-consumer non-bottle rigid plastics dipped slightly in 2017. A minimum of 1.35 billion pounds was collected for recycling in 2017, down from 1.46 billion pounds in 2016 (a seven percent decrease). The second report which addressed post-consumer plastic film recycling found that a minimum of one billion pounds of film was collected for recycling in 2017, an increase of 54 percent since 2005, but down from 1.3 billion pounds in 2016.

The reports attributed the decreases primarily to changes in the marketplace. China's policy to restrict imports of scrap heavily impacted film export. Non-bottle rigids also faced challenges due to older recycling infrastructure in the United States and Canada, which relied on China's market rather than added sorting technology.

"Improving plastics recycling and recovery will help us achieve a more circular economy, and we are resolved to do our part" said Steve Russell, vice president of the American Chemistry Council's Plastics Division. "In 2018 plastics makers committed to reuse, recycle, or recover all plastic packaging by 2040. Across the value chain—from resin producers to brands to recyclers—we see commitments to improve recycling education, invest in infrastructure, and use more

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recycled content. Aligning value chains to incorporate recycled materials into products that are sold and then brought back for recycling will promote circularity and help remedy the current disconnects. Additionally, emerging advanced recycling and recovery technologies, such as chemical recycling, are growing to help meet demand for recycled content and drive a more circular economy. America's Plastic Makers® are taking action to respond to recycling challenges that will help us in the short term and long term."

Recycled plastic film is used in composite lumber, new film and sheet, agricultural products, crates, buckets, and pallets. Typical end markets for non-bottle rigid plastics include automotive parts, crates, buckets, pipe, lawn and garden products, and thick-walled injection molded parts.

Plastic film includes flexible product wrap, bags, and commercial stretch film made primarily from polyethylene. The rigid plastics category contains food containers, caps, lids, tubs, clamshells, cups, and bulky items, such as buckets, carts, and lawn furniture, along with used commercial scrap, such as crates, battery casings, and drums. High-density polyethylene and polypropylene comprised the two largest resins in this category, representing 40 percent and 36 percent, respectively, of total rigid plastics collected.

Both the film and the rigids reports were based on an annual survey of reclaimers and exporters conducted by More Recycling and due to the methodology represents a conservative estimate of the amount recycled.

ACC's Plastics Division tracks recycling collection annually in three categories: film, rigids, and bottles. Statistics on plastic bottle recycling were reported previously in the [2017 United States National Postconsumer Plastic Bottle Recycling Report](#) (December 2018).

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