

Three ways U.S. policymakers can renew the recycling system

The critical connection between public policy, advanced technologies, and recycling capacity

Of the 300 million tons of plastic produced each year, only 12% gets recycled. We can radically change this, but it will take a collective effort and new approach. The market for recycled plastic exists. So does the technology to solve the plastic waste crisis. What's needed to bring it all together is public policy that speeds the adoption of new technology, provides a consistent way to measure the results, and leads to an expansion and modernization of our infrastructure. **Needed actions:**

1 Ensure advanced recycling is included as a viable recycling option

More than 500 brands, governments, and other organizations have made major commitments to use recycled plastic. **But the supply they need can't be met with just traditional or mechanical recycling**, which is mostly limited to polyethylene terephthalate (PET) and high-density polyethylene (HDPE). The good news is the addition of advanced recycling changes the equation.

What's the difference?

Mechanical recycling chops, washes, and sells material as pellets or flake to be reused with limitations. Eastman's material-to-material advanced recycling breaks material down to its molecular building blocks, which can be made into a product indistinguishable from virgin plastic. And it can be used over and over again.

2 Include an accepted definition of mass balance in legislation and regulations

Mass balance is the solution.

Since the recycled and virgin materials are indistinguishable, we need a system to track the recycled content through complex manufacturing processes. Relatively new to the plastics industry, the vetted and standardized system is used in a variety of industries. It's the way power companies measure the percentage of renewable energy consumers get from an electric grid. It's also the way you know the amount of sustainably sourced coffee you buy at your favorite shop.

3 Expand infrastructure through incentives, mandates, and investment

Eastman is doing its part by investing in a \$250 million advanced recycling plant in Kingsport, Tenn. We're committed to processing 250 million pounds of plastic waste annually by 2025 and 500 million pounds annually by 2030.

We can't solve this issue alone. Working together, we can:

- Take an active role in solving the global plastic waste issue.
- Collectively advocate for smart policies that will drive increased recycling through a combination of incentives, mandates, and infrastructure investment.
- Encourage partnerships with companies, nonprofits, and local/state governments to enact smart, effective models for aggregating and collecting plastic waste.

[Read the entire whitepaper here.](#)

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