

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): A Quick Guide

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a policy approach that holds producers financially responsible for the post-consumer management of the materials they place on the market. Instead of taxpayers and local governments shouldering the cost of waste collection and recycling, EPR shifts the burden to the companies that produce or import these materials.

This system incentivizes better product and packaging design, reduces environmental impacts, and strengthens recycling systems.

How EPR Works

EPR systems are usually administered by a **Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO)**—a nonprofit or third-party group that helps producers meet their obligations.

What PROs Do:

- **Set Up Collection Systems:** Coordinate how designated materials are gathered
- **Run Education Campaigns:** Teach the public how to recycle correctly under new rules
- **Manage Reporting:** Submit compliance reports on behalf of producers
- **Represent Producers:** Act on behalf of participating companies in regulatory processes

Why EPR Matters

EPR programs help improve recycling systems in the following ways:



- **Incentivizes Recyclable Design:** Producers are encouraged to create packaging that is easier to recycle through fee structures and regulations



- **Expands Access:** Consistent material acceptance across communities simplifies recycling for residents



- **Boosts Engagement:** Education and outreach campaigns funded by producers raise recycling participation



- **Modernizes Infrastructure:** Investment in sorting and processing facilities improves efficiency



- **Stabilizes Markets:** Centralized programs can buffer local recycling systems from market downturns





EPR | Key Roles and Responsibilities

Stakeholder/Roles	Responsibilities
Raw Material Suppliers, Manufacturers and Converters of Packaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide packaging material for producers and importers Their packaging design and material choices are crucial for the reusability and recyclability of packaging waste
Producers and Importers of Packaged Good (Obligated Companies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place system-relevant goods on the market by selling imported or locally produced packaged products Responsible for ensuring their packaging waste is properly collected, sorted, and recycled Register relevant packaging and products with the PRO and pays EPR fees
Distributors, Food Outlets, and Retailers of Packaged Goods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve as the interface between the private sector and end consumers Help inform consumers about environmentally responsible packaging waste handling May implement take-back programs using collection bins or sites and educate consumers
Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dispose of packaging correctly through source-separated waste to enable high-quality recycling Aim to reduce waste, choose unpackaged goods when possible, and reuse packaging
Waste Management Operator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive funds from PROs for collecting, sorting, and processing packaging waste Crucial prerequisite registration with the competent authority Recycle packaging to the highest possible standards to ensure quality output
Municipalities/Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act as a link between consumers and waste management operators Support EPR implementation locally by organizing collection systems (in cooperation with PROs)
Government/Public Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee legislation, governance, and enforcement of the EPR system Manage registration for waste management operators

'Extended Producers Responsibility Fact Sheet', World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

How EPR Programs Accelerate Flexible Plastic Packaging (FPP) Collection and Recycling

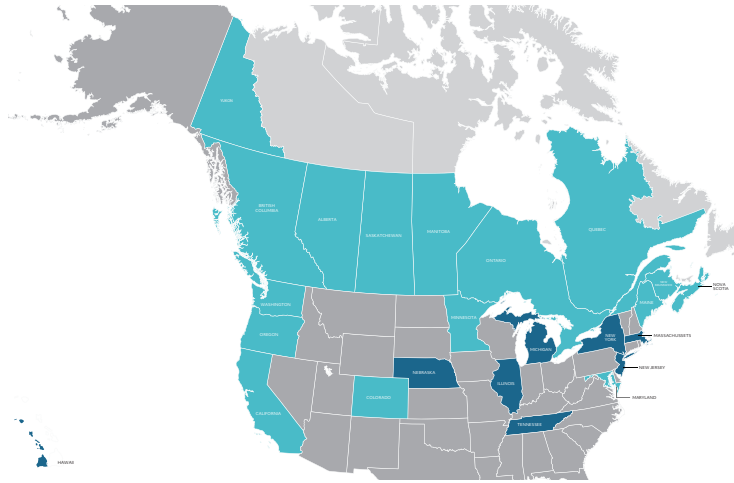
Packaging Design	Consumer Sorting and Collection	Sorting	Recycling and End-Market Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promote design guidelines (e.g., APR, GDR) to producers and packaging manufacturers and suppliers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Apply eco-modulated fees (materials rates and bonus/penalties) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engage with manufacturers and suppliers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Harmonized province/state-level accepted material list and collection systems (curbside, drop-off, depot) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partner with municipalities for harmonized collection services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standardized labeling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engage the public through awareness campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Define FPP bale specifications and quality requirements in MRF contracts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Invest in existing MRFs to enhance FPP capture capabilities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Invest in greenfield MRFs with improved FPP capture capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Establish long-term supply agreements to accelerate recycling capabilities and promote market stability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partner with recyclers to develop markets and expand processing capacity

'Session 2: Policy Landscape for Film and Flexible Plastic Packaging', 'From Financial Compensation to Full EPR', Maxime Lemerise, EEQ, as part of USPP and CPP FILM & FLEX Workshop Series, April 18, 2024.

EPR in the U.S. and Canada

Below is a map that outlines the states and provinces with existing EPR legislation as well as those exploring the possibility of implementing the policy.

Comparing Packaging EPR Programs: U.S. & Canada



■ Passed EPR Legislation as of June 2025

■ Proposed EPR Legislation as of June 2025.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws for packaging are well established in Canada, and interest in similar legislation has grown across the United States since 2021, when Maine became the first state to enact an EPR system for packaging materials. States such as Oregon, Colorado, and California soon followed. In 2024, Minnesota became the first in the Great Lakes region to adopt EPR legislation through the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act. Since the creation of this resource, two additional states, Washington and Maryland, have also signed EPR bills into law. While these policies vary in scope, cost coverage, oversight, and performance targets, depending on the specific needs of each jurisdiction, coordination and collaboration across borders will be essential to advance robust circular solutions in the Great Lakes region.

[https://packagingschool.com/lessons/reintroduced-epr-for-packaging-laws-in-2025-united-states;](https://packagingschool.com/lessons/reintroduced-epr-for-packaging-laws-in-2025-united-states)
[https://rev-log.com/us/epr-packaging-laws-in-canada-where-are-we-now/;](https://rev-log.com/us/epr-packaging-laws-in-canada-where-are-we-now/)
<https://sustainablepackaging.org/2025/05/25/packaging-policy-news/#:~:text=What's%20noteworthy%20about%20Maryland's%20EPR,of%20the%20cost%20per%20ton>

Jurisdiction	Year Enacted	Covered Products	Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO)	Cost Coverage by Producers	Recycling Targets	Implementation Timeline
Maine	2021	Packaging material	Single PRO selected by state	100% of program costs	State develops targets	Fully operational by 2027
Oregon	2021	Packaging, printed paper, food serviceware	Multiple PROs allowed	Approximately 30% of system costs	20% by 2028 50% by 2040 70% by 2050	Recycling program changes start July 2025
Colorado	2022	Packaging, printed and other paper	Multiple PROs allowed (after 2028)	100% of program costs	PRO develops targets	Producer compliance by July 2025
California	2022	Packaging, plastic food serviceware	Multiple PROs allowed (after 2030)	100% of program costs	30% by 2028 65% by 2032	Producer compliance by January 2027
Minnesota	2024	Packaging, paper products	Multiple PROs allowed	90% of program costs by 2031	State develops targets	Producers register by July 2025
Ontario	First iteration passed in 2002, several updates made through 2021	Packaging-like and printed paper	Multiple PROs allowed	100% of program costs	60% of materials able to be collected curbside	Phased in from 2023 to 2025
Quebec	First iteration passed in 2006, several updates made through 2020	Packaging, printed paper	Single PRO designated	100% of program costs	To be developed	Fully operational by 2025

<https://www.swca.com/news/2025/01/unpacking-epr-series-the-basics-of-extended-producer-responsibility-epr-packaging-laws?>
<https://clarity.eco/knowledge/an-overview-of-packaging-epr-regulations-in-the-us-canada/>
<https://www.maine.gov/dep/waste/recycle/epr.html>
<https://www.ncsl.org/environment-and-natural-resources/extended-producer-responsibility/os/vbf?>
<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/air-water-land-climate/extended-producer-responsibility-for-packaging?>
<https://www.packagingdive.com/news/minnesota-packaging-producer-responsibility-walz/716743/>

Estimate Benefit of EPR-Style Policies on the U.S. States Within the Great Lakes Region






The table below outlines the estimated increase in recycling rates for states within the Great Lakes region. Estimates suggest that well-designed EPR-style policies could help move the region toward achieving the EPA's goal of a 50% recycling rate by 2030.

States	Current Tons Recycled Including Deposits	Current Recycling Rate (All Materials, %)	Additional Recycling Tons Including from and Ideal EPR System	Total Recycling Tons Including from an Ideal EPR System	Est. Recycling Rate with an Ideal EPR System	Gain in Recycling Rate with an Ideal EPR System (%)
IN	171,000	17%	512,000	683,000	67%	+50%
MI	411,140	26%	685,500	1,096,640	70%	+44%
OH	369,000	20%	868,403	1,237,403	67%	+47%
PA	399,000	20%	955,054	1,354,054	67%	+47%
WI	213,034	23%	409,944	617,978	66%	+43%
IL + MN + NY	1,100,000	26%	1,700,000	2,800,000	67%	+41%
Great Lakes U.S. States	2,663,174	26%	5,125,401	7,788,575		+45%

'The State of Recycling: Present and Future of Residential Recycling in USA', The Recycling Partnership, 2024 https://recyclingpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2024/05/SORR_Methodology-1-1.pdf

Key Considerations for Implementation

When developing an EPR program, governments and stakeholders should consider:

-  **Regional Cohesion:** Use established EPR programs as models; ensure legislation complements others in the region to facilitate participation among impacted businesses
-  **Clear Regulations:** Define producer roles, timelines, and reporting standards
-  **Transparency:** Ensure public access to data and performance benchmarks
-  **Stakeholder Engagement:** Include municipalities, recyclers, residents, and others required to participate in the program in the planning process
-  **Scalable Design:** Build flexibility to adapt as material types and markets evolve

