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## The complex task of handing control to producers (<http://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2016/11/29/the-complex-task-of-handing-control-to-producers/>)

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While Europe and Canada have pushed forward extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs for packaging, in the U.S. the notion remains just an idea. A recent webinar hosted by the Product Stewardship Institute offered some compelling perspective from stakeholders working within producer responsibility frameworks around the globe.

In EPR systems, the companies that manufacture products and packaging are held responsible for financing and managing end-of-life concerns for those goods. In some systems, producers and distributors are charged with funding the whole program; in others, they are on the hook for just some expenses.

A big part of developing a workable infrastructure is laying out fees and management structures to ensure collection and processing of materials. Not surprisingly, things can get complicated quickly.

### Variations by weight and material

Victor Bell with Environmental Packaging International explained how EPR programs impact design. His company “coaches” clients such as Nike, Starbucks and Pepsi about regulatory guidelines and compliance in Germany and other areas of Europe. The business also offers design guidance and packaging analysis.

Bell explained that while every program is different, they are based on similar principals: Fees are imposed on brand owners based on the packaging weight and material. For example, PVC packaging incurs higher fees than PET because it is heavier, and film incurs higher fees than bottles because it is more difficult to recycle. The color of the plastic and use of recycled content also impacts the fee. With regards to paper, any laminate on the packaging also increases the fee.

Bell also noted that more countries are adding penalties for packaging that disrupts the recycling process, which was echoed by Alexandra Lange, policy affairs officer for Eco-Emballages, the packaging stewardship organization in France.

“France really charges a lot extra for pouches,” she said.

The fees imposed by Eco-Emballages are based on weight and unit, and penalties or bonuses are brought into the equation for things like supplying recycling instructions on the package (bonus) or putting a ceramic cap on a glass container (penalty.)

But Lange said that system is only relevant if companies have the tools to change.

“Taking this into account, Eco-Emballages has developed services to encourage packaging reduction and design for recycling,” she said. Those services include research and development, guides, training and other eco-design tools.

Recycling firms are also consulted during this process. Lange used Heineken as an example. The beer maker was using a type of glue on the glass bottle that processors said was going to make the bottle difficult to recycle. Eco-Emballages worked with Heineken to remove the glue and avoid penalties.

### Brand owner: EPR has limited impact

The product producer perspective was also represented during the webinar.

John Coyne, vice president and general counsel of Unilever Canada, said in theory, EPR programs are meant to encourage recycling. “EPR fees themselves do not currently have a sufficient amount of impact to influence packaging design,” he said. “EPR is one element” in a closed loop model.

Unilever has always had its own plans for its packaging and waste, Coyne said, and will continue its internal programs despite EPR programs.

“We have extremely ambitious targets for our waste. And to achieve those, we as a company, are trying to reduce the weight of our packaging,” said Coyne.



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### The latest recycling industry news

#### In other news: Dec. 5, 2016

(<http://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2016/12/05/in-other-news-dec-5-2016/>)

A man is caught defrauding Germany's bottle redemption program, and one California city mulls zoning changes targeting bottle redemption centers.

#### Recycling benefits highlighted on Capitol Hill (<http://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2016/11/29/recycling-benefits-highlighted-in-nations-capitol/>)

The Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI) delivered a State of Recycling Address in Washington, D.C. recently. Two senators from the Congressional Recycling Caucus joined the event, which showcased the upsides of materials diversion.

#### How British Columbia can improve its packaging EPR effort (<http://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2016/11/29/how-british-columbia-can-improve-its-packaging-epr-effort/>)

A government auditor in British Columbia has released a report on the Canadian province's EPR (extended producer responsibility) program for printed paper and packaging. Overall, the auditor is pleased with the program but does identify areas for improvement.

#### Circular economy offered as answer to stagnant recycling rates (<http://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2016/11/29/circular-economy-offered-as-answer-to-stagnant-recycling-rates/>)

After operating within the framework of “take, make, dispose” for so long, can major corporations, retailers and consumers acclimate to a circular economy?

#### Group pushes industry to think about more than percentage points (<http://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2016/11/29/group-pushes-industry-to-think-about-more-than-percentage-points/>)

Coyne also wants an EPR framework that is less about incentives, bonuses and penalties, and more about ruthless economic efficiency. "I want to find the greatest economic benefit that I can generate," he said. "There are so many influences on how it is companies will design their packaging. How do I justify the cost that is being imposed upon me? And, secondly, what steps can I take as a company to effect change as to have an impact on those costs?"

He thinks for an EPR program to be successful, it should be implemented on a regional scale as opposed to the state or municipal level. He also thinks communication between businesses and government needs to improve.

"Without that you will have a collision of policy versus commerce," Coyne said. "We are still a continental economy and we have to be thinking on that scale" to maximize these programs.

And while many brand owners still think recycling and collection costs shouldn't fall to them, Coyne said that school of thought is evolving. In places where brand owners are forced into an EPR program, they are able to extract value from the program by negotiating contracts and having more of a say in the process, he noted.



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The Sustainable Materials Management Coalition (SMMC) released a report recently on how to maximize a product's environmental benefits throughout its life cycle.

**Declines continue in scrap exports**  
(<http://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2016/11/28/decline-continue-in-scrap-exports/>)

Numbers for the first nine months of the year show volume drops in all materials but paper.

**In other news: Nov. 28, 2016**  
(<http://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2016/11/28/in-other-news-nov-28-2016/>)

Chicago passes a budget that includes a fee on shopping bags, and Whirlpool offers an answer to food waste.

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