

PRODUCE PACKAGING EXECUTIVE FRAMEWORK

The increasing awareness of plastics pollution in the global environment is leading consumers to express growing concerns regarding the near-use of plastics, notably “single-use plastics,” many of which have been highlighted in numerous media stories in Canada and around the world.

In June 2019, Canadian federal, provincial and territorial environment ministers released the first phase of the action plan to implement a Canada-wide Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste, which aims to reduce plastic waste across Canada. The action plan lays out concrete measures to achieve the vision of keeping plastics in the economy and out of the environment.

Given the province’s role in regards to the management of waste, this announcement by the Canadian Council of the Ministers of the Environment is a watershed moment, as it brings all the provinces together under a single-action plan to address waste across the country.

In order to achieve the strategy outcomes identified, the conditions need to be created to enable and support the strategy action items that apply to one or more of the desired outcomes. The conditions for success will be achieved by way of the three following pillars, which themselves will be composed of key action items as illustrated.



- Establish standards to reduce the use of virgin plastics and increase the content of post-consumer recycled content;
- Work with international partners to mobilize support to address plastic pollution by way of emerging or evolving global standards;
- Address any ambiguity by ensuring a common set of definitions for key terms (e.g., “single use plastics,” recyclable, etc.);
- Seek harmonized recycling standards across key markets and jurisdictions;
- Work with packaging industry stakeholders to develop guidelines to advance the state of the art in sustainable packaging which recycling systems can utilize;
- Establish ongoing packaging data collection to provide accurate baseline data regarding plastics packaging in Canada; and
- Develop a best practice to permit effective packaging options analysis that accounts for various produce sector considerations, including costs, lifecycle impact, etc.



- Enhance collaboration with the recycling and waste management community to support and accelerate key innovations, pilot projects or other industry-enabling activities;
- Ongoing engagement with the provincial and federal stakeholders via the CCME to drive for national outcomes, such as harmonized recycling standards and other best practices, including Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to ensure that companies that manufacture plastic products or sell items with plastic packaging are responsible for their collection and recycling; and
- Maintain an ongoing dialogue with key policy and regulatory stakeholders to advise on the best options going forward in support of increasingly sustainable packaging options.



- A general public awareness campaign of the benefits of plastics packaging, including success stories achieved within Canada’s produce sector;
- Focused consumer engagement to collect information on consumer concerns, viewpoints and overall packaging trends re adoption of new packaging and related consumer behavior; and
- Supporting community-led action and citizen-science activities (e.g. the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup).

PLASTICS PACKAGING ROADMAP

For Canada's produce industry, and the global produce industry in general, global developments around the use of plastics provide a unique opportunity to leverage the industry's record of driving the use of sustainable produce packaging, as well as bringing together Canada's leading produce industry stakeholders to determine how they can do more, together, to further reduce the produce sector's use of unnecessary or problematic plastics packaging. The following elements make up the roadmap for the produce sector to drive change and innovation.

PACKAGING: A CRITICAL TECHNOLOGY

Produce packaging is essential to deliver to consumers high quality, safe and affordable fruits and vegetables year-round while simultaneously minimizing food waste.

RESPONDING TO EMERGING CONCERNS

Canada's food and vegetable industry acknowledges that more can be done to use produce packaging that have less adverse effects on the environment, are more sustainable and enable a fully circular economy.

INDUSTRY WORKING TOGETHER

Canada's produce industry - from growers to grocers - is working with raw material producers, packaging manufacturers and the recycling industry to reduce the environmental impact of produce packaging.

DRIVING PACKAGING INNOVATION

Industry-led packaging innovations will measurably increase the rate of recycling, eliminate unnecessary and problematic plastics, and reduce produce packaging's total environmental footprint - while not compromising produce quality, safety and affordability, or increasing food waste.

A CALL TO GOVERNMENTS

Canada's produce industry is encouraging governments at all levels to work collaboratively to make sure the necessary infrastructure and education is in place to ensure that plastics, including produce packaging, are ultimately recycled or composted.

A WAY FORWARD, TOGETHER

Canada's produce industry released a packaging roadmap in late 2019 and will be releasing a packaging strategy in 2020 to guide and educate industry, policy makers, regulators and consumers on how best to reduce the environmental impact of produce packaging.

TIMELINES

The produce packaging strategy will be completed and released summer of 2020. At the time of release, the intent is to align the strategy's action items with the most up-to-date plans and priorities of ECCC and the CCME in regards to addressing the use of unnecessary and problematic plastics packaging.