

Frequently Asked Questions—California

America's Plastics Makers: Who Are We?

We are the [leading U.S. producers of plastic resin](#), the modern raw materials used to make countless consumer goods and innovations that improve the quality of our lives, our environment, and our economy.

What Problem Are We Trying to Solve?

We are committed to doing our part to end plastic waste in the environment. Far too many plastics find their way into our environment, especially our ocean and rivers. This is unacceptable. To solve this multidimensional problem, plastics must be recovered and repurposed in ways that benefit people and our planet.

What Are We Doing to Help End Plastic Waste in California?

Most importantly, we have worked and continue to work with recyclers and local governments on programs and policies to improve plastic collection and recycling. We have supported: legislation that requires all types of food ware at state facilities to be recyclable or compostable; reducing straw waste by making straws available only “on request;” a plastic pellet stewardship program aimed at containing plastic raw materials throughout the production and distribution processes; and a ban on plastic microbeads in wash-off applications. We also collaborate with a number of groups to help keep plastic waste out of the environment, including Adopt-A-Beach, [Keep California Beautiful](#), the [LA Conservation Corps](#), [Friends of the LA River](#), [Aquarium of the Pacific](#) and [The Recycling Partnership](#).

What Are We Doing Globally to Help End Plastic Waste?

In addition to initiatives specific to California (above), we are engaged in multiple U.S. and international efforts to improve waste management, increase recycling, and keep plastics out of our environment.

We are partnering with conservation groups, researchers, and governments to help stop the flow of plastics into the environment, including our ocean. We are investing in research and development to deliver essential infrastructure to collect and manage waste and to increase recycling in the United States and in developing nations. We are committed to a circular economy for plastic packaging and are working toward a goal of [100 percent recovery of plastic packaging by 2040](#). And we are working across the plastics value chain to improve the design, efficiency, and recyclability of plastic packaging.

In addition, our members are leaders and founders of the [Alliance to End Plastic Waste](#), an organization of more than thirty companies from across the globe in the consumer goods, plastics, and waste management value chain. The Alliance aims to invest \$1.5 billion over the next five years in projects to eliminate plastic waste in the environment.

The Alliance will initially invest in rapidly developing countries that lack basic waste management, particularly the five countries in Asia reported to account for 60% of trash in our Ocean. Although the United States accounts for less than 1 percent of trash in our ocean, America's Plastic Makers are taking action in the United States and California as discussed above.

What Plastic Packaging Policy Initiatives Do We Support and Not Support?

We support public policy that helps improve waste management, increase recycling and new technologies, and keep plastics out of our ocean and environment. In addition, we support initiatives that consider the full life cycle attributes of materials, packaging, and products and that treat materials (paper, metals, plastics, etc.) equitably. For example, as we consider plastic policies we must account for greenhouse gas emissions and potential impacts on food waste in addition to how we recover packaging items post use.

On recyclability, as noted above, we supported legislation (SB 1335) in 2018 that requires all types of food ware at state facilities to be recyclable or compostable. We support "straws up on request" policies. And we supported legislation (AB 258) to help keep plastic raw materials out of the environment, something we hope to work closely with the state to implement broadly.

We also support approaches that address the root causes of plastic entering the environment and strategies focused on education, better access to recycling, innovative product design, and technologies that lead to a more circular economy for plastics.

We don't believe that product-by-product bans are an effective way to reduce ocean plastic. While product bans might feel good to some, they may lead to greater use of alternatives that increase our environmental footprint and still fail to address the root cause of the problem

Why Are Product Bans a Step Backward for California's Economy and Environment?

- Banning plastic packaging and consumer goods typically results in greater cost to the environment. [Life-cycle studies](#) demonstrate the environmental cost of using plastics in consumer goods and packaging is nearly four times less than it would be if we switched to alternatives. In fact, replacing all plastic packaging with alternatives would significantly increase energy use, create more greenhouse gas emissions, and result in more waste.

- A little plastic packaging can help **prevent a lot of wasted food**. Nearly 40 percent of food produced in the United States spoils before it can be eaten, and food production emits as much as 13 percent of greenhouse gasses. Every time food is wasted, all the natural resources that went into producing it (water, land, energy, fuel) are wasted as well. In addition, ten times more resources are used to make and distribute food than are used to make the packaging that protect it. Efficient packaging is a small investment in the resources we use in food production.
- It's important that we maintain convenient access to collection points for recycling flexible plastic wraps. Many of California's grocery and retail stores allow **consumers to bring back used plastic wraps and bags** to be recycled. This includes bags from produce, bread and store carryout; wraps from paper towels, napkins, and beverage cases; and shipping pillows and bubble wrap. These items are widely recycled, but they require a different system than curbside recycling.
- Banning plastics would force businesses and consumers to change the products they use, but would not alter the underlying behavior that leads to littering. Data in studies of litter in San Francisco show that banning certain types of food ware simply changed the type of litter found across the city.

Increasing costs on businesses, consumers, and the environment makes no sense. Instead of misguided bans, legislators should pursue policies that expand recycling and composting in California, among other common sense measures.

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