

Recyclers and NGOs demand law on minimum reuse of plastic

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Only the imposition of a legal obligation will ensure manufacturers use more recycled plastic in their products at a time when low oil prices mean virgin resin is cheaper, a broad alliance of trade groups and NGOs have written in an open call aimed at EU lawmakers.

“A minimum recycled content of just 30% by 2025 would considerably boost the markets for recycled plastics within Europe and strengthen the local market,” according to the statement signed by more than 30 organisations, among them the waste managers' federation FEAD, Plastics Recyclers Europe, the Marine Conservation Society, and the European Environmental Bureau.

They argue that only legal certainty of a mandatory minimum level of reuse will drive the estimated €10 billion in investment in collection, sorting, and treatment facilities to process up to 10 million tonnes of plastic waste annually. This echoes a stance taken by the European Parliament's environment committee earlier this month.

MEPs overwhelmingly backed a [draft resolution on the EU plastics strategy](#) by the Belgian lawmaker Mark Demesmaeker, who had argued that voluntary pledges from industry may not be sufficient and “mandatory rules for recycled content for specific products may be needed”. A debate at a full plenary in Strasbourg has been slated for 12 September.

With the issue of plastic pollution high on the public and political agenda, the bottled water industry [recently pledged](#) to use 25% recycled PET in its plastic bottles, and to ensure that at least nine

out of ten bottles are collected, by 2025. Public sector waste authorities [recently called for a 50% recycled](#) content requirement by the same year, rising to 75% ten years later.

The EU has so far focused more on collection of waste, and ensuring that packaging is recyclable. Under legislation [adopted in May](#), EU members will have to collect 50% of their plastic packaging waste for recycling by 2025, rising to 55% in 2030. However, the package of waste legislation did not fix legally binding targets for the use of such plastic.

“We can set ever higher recycling targets, but our recovery efforts will be impeded if no market can be found for the material that is collected, sorted, and turned into a secondary raw material,” the recyclers and NGOs wrote.

The need for investment in recycling within Europe has been made more acute by China's decision to ban imports of plastic waste as of January this year, their joint statement asserts. “There are reports from all over Europe and North America that recycling programmes are stuck with sorted material with nowhere to go except landfill or energy from waste,” it states.