

U.S. PLASTICS PACT ROADMAP 2.0



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



AS PART OF:



The Plastics Pact
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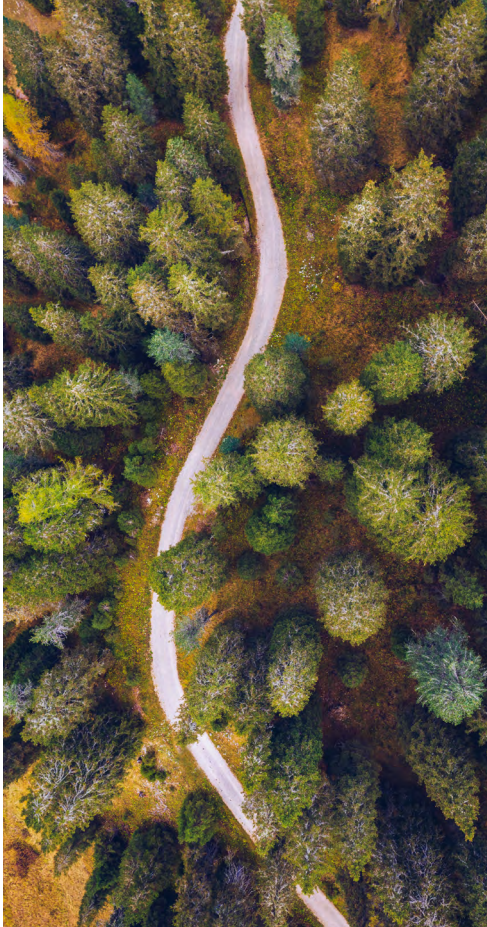
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INTRODUCTION

THE RIGHT PATH FORWARD



By December 2025, the U.S. Plastics Pact's (U.S. Pact) inaugural strategic plan — *Roadmap to 2025* — will have achieved five years of growth and progress toward realizing a circular economy for plastics. *Roadmap to 2025* laid an ambitious path that, in the absence of a federal strategy, was a necessary catalyst for immediate engagement and action to keep plastic packaging in the economy and out of the environment. The Roadmap's four aligned Targets served as a compass toward our Vision of a circular economy for plastics. The 62 original U.S. Pact members (or Activators) — the first to join our Mission — fully committed to these Targets and associated deliverables, as have the 70+ Activators that have joined since. But crucial missions never sit idle, and neither do we.

We begin this next phase fueled by the successes of goals achieved and leveraging the momentum of those we still navigate toward. Our trajectory is positive, but an ever-changing landscape necessitates an agile and adaptive strategy. *Roadmap 2.0* is our response to this. We can and will achieve more in this next phase of our Mission. Our Vision demands it, and we are determined to succeed. But this Vision is not ours alone. The U.S. Pact works in concert with 12 other mission-focused plastics pacts around the world, all committed to change the way plastic packaging and products are designed, manufactured, recycled, and reused on a global scale.

Roadmap 2.0 continues the foundational work established in *Roadmap to 2025*, and also ventures into new territory that has come into view over the past five years. This new strategic plan elevates the importance of reuse innovations and implementation as a new, standalone Target; it presses further on the reduction of virgin plastics; and it addresses the human health and community impact of virgin plastic production and use, as well as disparities in access to necessary resources. It is both the logical and natural next step in reaching our Vision of a circular economy for plastics, and we are prepared and excited to forge ahead.

The four original Roadmap to 2025 Targets:

- 1 Define a list of packaging that is problematic or unnecessary by 2021 and take measures to eliminate the items on the list by 2025
- 2 100% of plastic packaging will be reusable, recyclable, or compostable by 2025
- 3 Undertake ambitious actions to effectively recycle or compost 50% of plastic packaging by 2025
- 4 Achieve an average of 30% recycled content or responsibly sourced, biobased content by 2025

By the end of 2022¹, U.S. Pact Activators made meaningful progress on these Targets², including:

- Decreasing the amount of problematic or unnecessary materials in plastic packaging **from 14% to 8%**
- Increasing the amount of reusable, recyclable, or compostable plastic packaging placed on the market **from 37% to 47.7%**
- Increasing use of postconsumer recycled content (PCR) or responsibly sourced biobased content in plastic packaging **from 7% to 9.4%**

¹ Most recent reporting year at the time of Roadmap 2.0 publication

² Target 3 Progress indeterminate due to lack of update from the U.S. EPA since 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Plastics Pact brings together partners across the entire plastics value chain to reach a unified Vision of a circular economy for plastics. Our Vision is a world where plastics never become waste by eliminating the plastics we don't need, ensuring that the plastics we do need are reusable, recyclable, or compostable, and circulating all the plastics we use to keep them in the economy and out of the environment. Through our inaugural strategic plan — *Roadmap to 2025* — we collectively took the first ambitious steps toward this Vision.

Roadmap 2.0 begins where *Roadmap to 2025* ends — carrying forward Targets, Outcomes, and Deliverables not yet fully achieved, pushing further those that have been successful, and implementing new, necessary objectives born from what was learned during the U.S. Pact's original strategic plan.

The Targets to the right outline the U.S. Pact's focus for the next phase of its Mission. As with the original Roadmap, these Targets are interconnected; the success of one Target relies on successful progress of the others:

- **Target 1** reduces new-plastic production and removes key contaminants that hinder the realization of a circular economy;
- **Target 2** establishes design guidance to help ensure plastic packaging that enters the economy is kept within the economy;
- **Target 3** addresses existing gaps in collection access and infrastructure, processing capabilities, and consumer engagement to increase recycling rates;
- **Target 4** leverages the law of supply and demand for recycled or biobased feedstock, incentivizing investment; and
- **Target 5** elevates reuse and refill systems to — in conjunction with Target 1 — reduce virgin plastic production and use.

In addition to these updated Targets, we have also expanded our Mission's reach and partnerships, increasing participation across all relevant sectors, as well as encouraging and supporting innovation, research, and transparent sharing of data. These efforts have resulted in key resources, including the [PCR Toolkit](#), [Problematic and Unnecessary Materials List](#), [Reuse Policy Guidance](#), and Design for Circularity Playbooks (encompassing recyclability, compostability, and reuse — published summer 2024). We have also created incentivized programs, such as the [Reuse Catalyst](#) program and [Sustainable Packaging Innovation Awards](#). Building on the strengths of these efforts, we will continue to support initiatives that produce viable solutions in real-world contexts at the local, state, and national levels.

The U.S. Pact's role in *Roadmap 2.0* is to serve as an engine of strategic leadership, support, and alignment for our current and future Activators. We will continue to invest energy on effective guidance and resources not only for Activators, but for the entire plastics value chain.

"We have turned what we've learned the past four years into action. Roadmap 2.0 represents an evolutionary moment in our mission, and the stakes are higher than ever."

– Emily Tipaldo,
U.S. Plastics Pact
Executive Director

The five Roadmap 2.0 Targets:

- 1 Eliminate all items on the Problematic and Unnecessary Materials List and reduce the use of virgin plastic by 30% by 2030
- 2 Design and manufacture 100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable, or compostable
- 3 Effectively recycle 50% of plastic packaging and establish the necessary framework to recycle or compost packaging at scale
- 4 Achieve an average of 30% postconsumer recycled content or responsibly sourced biobased content across all plastic packaging
- 5 Identify viable reusable packaging systems and increase their implementation and scale by 2030, as part of reducing the use of virgin plastics

MISSION & VISION

The U.S. Plastics Pact's **MISSION** is to facilitate the transition to a circular economy for plastic packaging in the U.S. by bringing together resources and expertise across the entire plastics value chain. Engaging stakeholders in concert toward the same targets will initiate a profound paradigm shift involving rethinking and innovating the life cycle of materials to help close the loop on plastics.



Our **VISION** is a world where plastics are valued and kept in the economy and out of the environment. Our commitment to this Vision guides the actions we take to create systemic change that protects our planet and our quality of life, molding a more sustainable future for plastics packaging in the U.S.



WHY WE WILL SUCCEED

The U.S. Plastics Pact exists solely to create a circular economy for plastic packaging in the United States. We are uniquely and intentionally structured, and with our 130+ Activators, we are positioned to have a real impact on our Mission to end plastic packaging waste.

WHAT MAKES THE U.S. PLASTICS PACT UNIQUE:

- Full and diverse representation across the entire plastics value chain
- A comprehensive, actionable national strategy closely aligned with global efforts
- A mission-driven nonprofit with a small, agile, and engaged team focused on the public good rather than profit.
- Effectively influences policy through advocacy rather than lobbying
- Incorporates into its strategy the human health and community impact of plastics production and use, as well as disparities in access to necessary resources
- Activator membership is voluntary, but with crucial data-reporting requirements
- Activators are fully engaged in U.S. Pact strategic efforts
- An established culture of transparency and trust
- A knowledgeable space that supports research and development of new technologies, methodologies, and systems for a circular future
- A wealth of publicly available tools and resources to guide, educate, and assist companies and organizations

Photo: Jackie Caserta

U.S. PLASTICS PACT WORKSTREAMS

Implementation of both the original [Roadmap to 2025](#) and the new [Roadmap 2.0](#) is primarily carried out through the U.S. Plastics Pact's 12 active Workstreams. These Workstreams leverage their broad range of industry representation and diverse perspectives, ensuring balanced and comprehensive outcomes. Through their extensive efforts, the U.S. Pact has published the [Problematic and Unnecessary Materials List](#); created Design for Circularity Playbooks; developed recommendations for reuse and scalability; formed an Activator working group to address the unique challenges faced by the public sector; and supported the ongoing development of [The Recycling Partnership's Pathway to Circularity](#), as well as the work of [Closed Loop Partners' Composting Consortium](#).

ACTIVE WORKSTREAMS AND THEIR AREAS OF FOCUS

Communications & PR Provides essential communication strategies and support to all U.S. Pact Workstreams, and helps grow industry and public awareness of the U.S. Pact's Mission

Composting Confirms, aligns, and assesses design for compostability within the U.S. Pact, and identifies applications and contexts where compostable plastic packaging is the most logical route to circularity

Design for Recyclability Confirms, aligns, and assesses design for recyclability within the U.S. Pact framework for all plastic packaging formats

Environmental Justice Works to incorporate environmental justice and social responsibility into the work of the U.S. Pact and its Workstreams, and provides educational opportunities and resources to U.S. Pact Activators

Film & Flexibles Accelerates the implementation of circular design guidelines for film and flexible plastic packaging through identifying solutions to common challenges

On-Pack Labeling Drives change and documents continued improvement for on-pack labeling systems, considering consumer experience, recyclability, and consistent communication across the value chain

Policy Defines the role of the U.S. Pact in the Policy landscape. Demonstrates thought leadership to inform Activators and other partners on principles of effective policy measures

Postconsumer Recycled (PCR) Content Creates valuable, educational resources to assist Activators in increasing PCR usage in their portfolios and understanding factors such as market volatility, policy levers, and chemical recycling considerations

Problematic and Unnecessary Materials Assesses materials according to established definitions and criteria to maintain the [Problematic and Unnecessary Materials List](#); disseminates guidance to assist in the removal or redesign of these items

Reporting Develops the Activator engagement strategy around reporting and refining timelines, definitions, and guidance relating to U.S. Pact-specific reporting

Reuse Using Target 5 as a guide, the Reuse Workstream encourages implementation of reuse in retail, in arenas and cafeterias, and in food service, among others

Target 3 Strategy Works to measurably increase recycling and composting in the U.S., including identifying and examining actions related to infrastructure and market needs for relevant packaging categories

TARGET 1

Eliminate all items on the Problematic and Unnecessary Materials List and reduce the use of virgin plastic by 30% by 2030

1 Eliminate all items on the Problematic and Unnecessary Materials List and reduce the use of virgin plastic by 30% by 2030

OUTCOMES	DELIVERABLES	DELIVERY YEAR
1. U.S. Plastics Pact Activators have completed elimination of the initial 11 problematic and unnecessary items.	1.1 All outlying challenges with existing packaging formats are identified and have outlined solutions.	2026
	1.2 Accountability plans are established to transparently address remaining problematic and unnecessary items in Activator portfolios.	2026
2. U.S. Plastics Pact Activators have in place the necessary plans to facilitate phased elimination in their supply chains of the additional items added in 2024, with complete elimination of these materials by 2030.	2.1 Metrics are developed to track Activator plans to eliminate the additional problematic and unnecessary materials.	2025
	2.2 Innovative solutions are encouraged in areas with no known circular alternatives.	2026
	2.3 U.S. Pact Activators complete the elimination of all items on the updated Problematic and Unnecessary Materials List.	2030
3. The Problematic and Unnecessary Materials List remains relevant to changes in circular solutions and innovations.	3.1 Reassess items on the Evaluation List based on the U.S. Plastics Pact Decision Tree as well as previously identified necessary action steps.	2026
	3.2 Identify additional items not on the Evaluation List that are possibly problematic or unnecessary that should be further evaluated.	TBD*
4. U.S. Plastics Pact Activators have an aligned definition and metrics for "source reduction."	4.1 A definition of "source reduction" is established.	2025
	4.2 Public guidance is established on the trade-offs to consider when using alternate substrates and principles that companies can follow in making these decisions, including circular economy, climate, and environmental justice impacts.	2025
	4.3 Working with industry partners, reduction guidance is expanded and amplified, including eliminating unnecessary primary, secondary, tertiary, and ancillary packaging, and implementation of concentrated products.	2026

*TBD dates require further assessment and will be determined by the implementation of *Roadmap 2.0* in January 2026.

1 Eliminate all items on the Problematic and Unnecessary Materials List and reduce the use of virgin plastic by 30% by 2030

OUTCOMES	DELIVERABLES	DELIVERY YEAR
5. A 30% reduction of virgin plastic used in plastic packaging across the U.S. Plastics Pact portfolio as of 2030.	5.1 Using the 2023 total weight of plastic packaging sold into the U.S. market by U.S. Pact Activators, a metric is developed to track virgin plastic reduction overall within the U.S. Pact.	2025
	5.2 Necessary virgin plastic reductions are assessed and estimated to meet the overall U.S. Pact goal.	2025
	5.3 Alignment is made on a public-facing virgin plastic reduction goal and internal metrics to reduce the use of virgin plastic in packaging.	2026
	5.4 U.S. Pact Activators have completed internal action plans and achieved their 2030 reduction goals.	2030
6. Manufacturing and supply chain transparency is understood by procuring companies, when PCR is not possible, and virgin plastic is the necessary option.	6.1 External principles are developed for companies to consider environmental and social impacts of virgin plastic procurement.	2026

TARGET 2

Design and manufacture 100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable, or compostable

2 Design and manufacture 100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable, or compostable

OUTCOMES	DELIVERABLES	DELIVERY YEAR
1. Circular pathways are identified for 100% of plastic packaging in the U.S. Plastics Pact portfolio.	1.1 Plastic packaging types are identified that are not likely to have a circular pathway or viable alternative to circularity, and the industry is engaged through calls for targeted innovation.	2026
	1.2 Activators that are packaging manufacturers or users have developed plans to transition all packaging to circular formats by 2030.	2030
2. Circular design guidance is widely available, including guidance on packaging standardization.	2.1 Design for Circularity Playbooks are completed, added to the U.S. Pact website, and amplified within the industry. The Playbook is updated as needed to reflect emerging technologies and learnings.	2024
	2.2 Design for Circularity Playbooks are updated to include guidance with principles for determining when to make a package recyclable, reusable, or compostable.	2025
3. Aligned industry approach regarding on-pack messaging to consumers about how to reuse, recycle, or compost packaging.	3.1 The U.S. Pact has developed guidance on best practices for print and digital on-pack messaging, including standard verbiage and preferred colors, to reduce consumer confusion.	2026
	3.2 Labeling guidance is developed for recyclable or compostable packaging that reflects what consumers are reasonably willing to do to prepare packaging to recycle or compost.	2026

TARGET 3

Effectively recycle 50% of plastic packaging and establish the necessary framework to recycle or compost packaging at scale

3 Effectively recycle 50% of plastic packaging and establish the necessary framework to recycle or compost packaging at scale

OUTCOMES	DELIVERABLES	DELIVERY YEAR
<p>1. To achieve an overall recycling rate of 50% for plastic packaging in the U.S. market by 2030, the U.S. Plastics Pact and its Activators will take action to drive the following recycling rates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PET, PP, and HDPE bottles: 70% • PET and PP non-bottle rigids: 50% • HDPE non-bottle rigids: 30% • PE, PP, and mixed PO film: 30% • Distribution chain packaging: 95% 	<p>1.1 Perform a circularity gap analysis for each packaging format within the U.S. Pact packaging portfolio using partner frameworks to identify gaps and solutions. For each category of packaging, key roadblocks to circularity will be identified as well as actions the U.S. Pact can take to overcome them.</p>	2026
	<p>1.2 Identify and support actions to achieve a 30% recycling rate for small format (i.e., smaller than 2 inches in 2 directions) items.</p>	TBD*
	<p>1.3 U.S. Pact Activators support film and flexible packaging collection for recycling via multiple options, including store drop-off collection, community collection centers, and residential curbside collection, in an effort to ensure broad access to recycling.</p>	2026
	<p>1.4 U.S. Pact Activators encourage and support take back programs where curbside collection of materials is not feasible.</p>	2026
	<p>1.5 Working with industry partners, assistance is provided to develop a means to recycle commercial film at small and medium-sized production locations, warehouses, and stores.</p>	TBD*
	<p>1.6 All U.S. Pact Activators have developed processes to recycle 95% or more of distribution chain plastic packaging that must be single-use versus a reusable packaging system.</p>	TBD*
<p>2. U.S. Plastics Pact Activators politically and financially support collection, processing infrastructure expansion, and consumer engagement to increase recycling rates.</p>	<p>2.1 U.S. Pact Activators publicly support, including through their trade associations, extended producer responsibility (EPR) policy funded by all packaging types, to support community and material recovery processing facilities. The EPR framework will incentivize source reduction, reuse, recyclability, design for lower environmental impact through eco-modulation, and consumer education and engagement.</p>	2025
	<p>2.2 U.S. Pact Activators publicly support deposit return systems (DRS) to meet beverage packaging recycling rates, and potentially other materials' recycling rates.</p>	2026
	<p>2.3 The U.S. Pact, alongside other partners, have explored standardized communication, education, and promotional campaigns to engage consumers on the role they play in a successful recycling system.</p>	2030

*TBD dates require further assessment and will be determined by the implementation of *Roadmap 2.0* in January 2026.

3 Effectively recycle 50% of plastic packaging and establish the necessary framework to recycle or compost packaging at scale

OUTCOMES	DELIVERABLES	DELIVERY YEAR
3. The certification and accountability of postconsumer recycled plastics (PCR) has been promoted, whether sold domestically or exported, to ensure materials are properly and safely processed and not contributing to environmental injustices.	3.1 Supporting external partners, assist with the development of expectations for material recovery facilities and store drop-off site owners to have traceability and awareness of where the commodities they sell end up.	TBD*
	3.2 U.S. Pact Activators understand the full life cycle impact of recycled plastics including environmental and human impacts through certification and educational opportunities.	2025
4. The U.S. Plastics Pact has provided clarity and direction on compostable plastic packaging as a circular solution.	4.1 Work with external parties is conducted to understand consumer access to compost plastic packaging and periodically update data.	2026
	4.2 The following have been identified and incorporated into the U.S. Pact's Design for Circularity Playbook: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial or industrial settings where compostable plastic packaging is the best route to circularity. • Products consumed in consumers' homes that are best suited for compostable plastic packaging due to challenges recycling the material as well as the opportunity to divert food waste from the landfill. • Work with partners to develop a decision tree of key items to consider when choosing compostable packaging. 	2026
	4.3 Necessary policies have been amplified to build sufficient composting infrastructure, as identified by partner organizations, where relevant.	2025

*TBD dates require further assessment and will be determined by the implementation of *Roadmap 2.0* in January 2026.

TARGET 4

Achieve an average of 30% postconsumer recycled content or responsibly sourced biobased content across all plastic packaging

4 Achieve an average of 30% postconsumer recycled content or responsibly sourced biobased content across all plastic packaging

OUTCOMES	DELIVERABLES	DELIVERY YEAR
<p>1. U.S. Plastics Pact Activators increase the demand for postconsumer recycled content (PCR) through all feasible means, prioritizing packaging with the fewest challenges, supporting the highest and best use of the material in all types (primary, secondary, and tertiary) of plastic packaging, and developing interim markets as necessary.</p>	<p>1.1 A tiered, prioritized timeline and plan to utilize PCR is identified based on which packaging can most easily incorporate PCR based on technical feasibility and supply availability.</p>	2025
	<p>1.2 Working with industry partners, industry aligned/accepted standard specifications for recycle is identified to increase efficiencies in producing and qualifying PCR for use in various applications.</p>	2026
	<p>1.3 U.S. Pact Activators have internal procurement systems and staff in place to facilitate the use of PCR in packaging (primary, secondary, tertiary) and non-packaging items (such as durable goods, supplies, or indirect materials used in manufacturing).</p>	2026
	<p>1.4 A toolkit is developed and shared to educate Activators on resources that can be used for recycled plastic commodities trading and procurement mechanisms.</p>	2025
	<p>1.5 In conjunction with Target 5 Deliverable 3.1, all consumer packaged goods company Activators conduct a tertiary packaging audit on 50% of their manufacturing operations (by production volume) to identify opportunities to incorporate PCR into their tertiary packaging for raw materials and finished goods.</p>	2026
<p>2. U.S. Plastics Pact Activators have developed strategies to achieve the following PCR averages (by weight) in select plastic packaging formats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beverage bottles (PET, HDPE, PP) have a minimum 25% PCR by 2026, and a minimum 60% by 2030. • Household cleaning products (PET, HDPE, or PP bottles, containers, spray bottles) have a minimum 25% PCR by 2028, and a minimum 50% by 2030. • Thermoforms (PET, PP) have a minimum 20% PCR by 2028, and a minimum 40% by 2030. • Commercial secondary films (such as pallet stretch wrap) have a minimum of 15% PCR by 2028, and a minimum of 30% PCR by 2030. 	<p>2.1 U.S. Pact holds technical guidance webinar sessions on increasing PCR in the select plastic packaging formats, and highlights success stories of converters who have increased PCR in the select formats.</p>	2025
	<p>2.2 PCR content goals are developed for additional packaging categories as needed.</p>	2026
	<p>2.3 Guidance is developed for increasing PCR in food-contact packaging, including blow-molded products, injection-molded products, and film that contacts the product.</p>	2025
	<p>2.4 Working with Activators and industry partners, support is provided for the expansion of thermoform to thermoform recycled content.</p>	TBD*
	<p>2.5 Working with Activators and industry partners, support is provided for the expansion of film-to-film recycled content.</p>	TBD*

*TBD dates require further assessment and will be determined by the implementation of *Roadmap 2.0* in January 2026.

4 Achieve an average of 30% postconsumer recycled content or responsibly sourced biobased content across all plastic packaging

OUTCOMES	DELIVERABLES	DELIVERY YEAR
3. U.S. Plastics Pact facilitates an understanding of PCR regulations, conditions of use and constituents for food contact materials.	3.1 A metric is developed to understand the tonnages of food-contact-grade PCR versus non-food contact grade PCR used and required within Activator portfolios.	2025
	3.2 Accountability and safety measures are supported to keep potential contaminants harmful to human health or the environment out of recycled plastic feedstock.	TBD*
	3.3 U.S. Pact PCR Toolkit is further developed to include recommendations on ways to use greater amounts of PCR in food contact applications, and to understand the regulatory requirements and nuances of food contact grade PCR.	2025
4. The U.S. Plastics Pact and its Activators are aligned on the role of chemical recycling in a circular economy.	4.1 The U.S. Pact creates and communicates a public statement on the role of chemical recycling in a circular economy, including the assessment of environmental justice concerns.	2025
	4.2 Encourage and assist with the development of industry-wide acceptance of bale specifications for chemical recycling.	2026
5. The use of responsibly sourced biobased content meets the five criteria outlined to insure against unintended consequences: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is legally sourced, conforms to Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and is produced in a safe and healthy way for workers and surrounding communities; 2. Is one that is derived from renewable biomass; 3. Does not adversely impact food security and affordability and maintains or improves social and economic conditions along with ecosystem services in producing communities; 4. Does not result in destruction of critical ecosystems or loss of High Conservation Value (HCV) habitats, and; 5. Contributes to landscape resilience and is resilient to the impacts of climate change. 	5.1 An analysis is completed in the U.S. on what feedstocks are most available and meet the “responsibly sourced biobased” criteria, while monitoring future trends and opportunities annually.	2026
	5.2 Collaborate with external groups leading on responsible sourcing for bioased plastics (e.g., WWF – Bioplastic Feedstock Alliance, Roundtable on Sustainable Materials), as it relates to translating technical positions into policy guidance and corporate target setting.	TBD*
	5.3 Continue to monitor the utilization of biobased materials by U.S. Pact Activators.	Annually

*TBD dates require further assessment and will be determined by the implementation of *Roadmap 2.0* in January 2026.

TARGET 5

Identify viable reusable packaging systems and increase their implementation and scale by 2030, as part of reducing the use of virgin plastics

5 Identify viable reusable packaging systems and increase their implementation and scale by 2030, as part of reducing the use of virgin plastics

OUTCOMES	DELIVERABLES	DELIVERY YEAR
1. U.S. Plastics Pact Activators have established clear reusable packaging targets that align with virgin plastic reduction goals by 2026 and demonstrate progress toward those targets through 2030.	1.1 U.S. Pact Activators align on what metrics should be used to measure annual U.S. Pact progress on reuse, and what is feasible to capture from Activators on an annual basis. Begin reporting annually and showcase successful case studies where possible.	2025
	1.2 Prepare a quantified goal for reusable packaging systems (inclusive of refill and return models) for the U.S. Pact packaging portfolio.	TBD*
	1.3 Each converter, consumer packaged goods, and retail Activator has set a 2030 reusable packaging commitment and action plan that aligns with the U.S. Pact's virgin plastic reduction target and reuse success metrics.	2026
2. The U.S. Plastics Pact promotes reusable packaging programs across supply chains, from manufacturing to retail, encompassing both B2B and B2C applications to scale proven reuse systems with environmental and social benefits.	2.1 Work with industry partners to identify product categories where reusable packaging (inclusive of refill and return models) is most likely to succeed in end consumer adoption in retail and develop a reuse hierarchy report with these findings. One product category is selected to focus consumer packaged goods and retailer efforts on in the immediate term.	2025
	2.2 In collaboration with others across the plastic packaging value chain — within and external to the U.S. Pact — facilitate precompetitive discussions to help participating consumer packaged goods companies and retailers create a blueprint for reuse design and implementation of a selected product category.	TBD*
	2.3 The U.S. Pact identifies and partners with 1-2 organizations with an environmental justice focus that have developed best practices that ensure reuse systems are equitable and accessible, and publicly endorse and make these resources available to Activators.	2026
	2.4 The U.S. Pact leverages resources from industry associations and reusable packaging providers to enable U.S. Pact for-profit Activators to perform tertiary packaging audits in their largest U.S. manufacturing operations sites and distribution centers, and identify opportunities for implementation of reusable distribution supply chain packaging for incoming and outgoing goods.	TBD*

*TBD dates require further assessment and will be determined by the implementation of *Roadmap 2.0* in January 2026.

5 Identify viable reusable packaging systems and increase their implementation and scale by 2030, as part of reducing the use of virgin plastics

OUTCOMES	DELIVERABLES	DELIVERY YEAR
<p>3. Activators support reusable packaging systems, and the efficacy of the systems is demonstrated through commercial applications.</p>	<p>3.1 The U.S. Pact amplifies and disseminates resources such as design guidelines and best practices for implementing reusable packaging programs as well as highlighting where effective reuse solutions have been successfully implemented in settings such as sports venues, campuses, and food service.</p>	2025
	<p>3.2 U.S. Pact supports Activators and partner organizations in implementing reusable packaging systems and infrastructure at the local level.</p>	2026
	<p>3.3 Activators leverage U.S. Pact guidance in their advocacy at local, state, and federal levels, and the U.S. Pact seeks out opportunities to engage in policy conversation and promote reuse policy guidance and best practices.</p>	2026

DEFINITIONS

The U.S. Plastics Pact adopted the [Ellen MacArthur Foundation Global Commitment and Plastics Pact definitions](#) based on Pact Activator direction, with the addition of a few modifications to fit the needs of the U.S. market. The U.S. Pact continues to address required definitions, and additional terms may be added to the list below.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

An economy that is restorative and regenerative by design. It is focused on economic activity that builds and rebuilds overall system health. The concept recognizes the importance of the economy needing to work effectively at all scales — for big and small businesses, for organizations and individuals, and for the environment, both globally and locally. It is based on three principles: design out waste and pollution; keep products and materials in use; and regenerate natural systems.

COMPOSTING

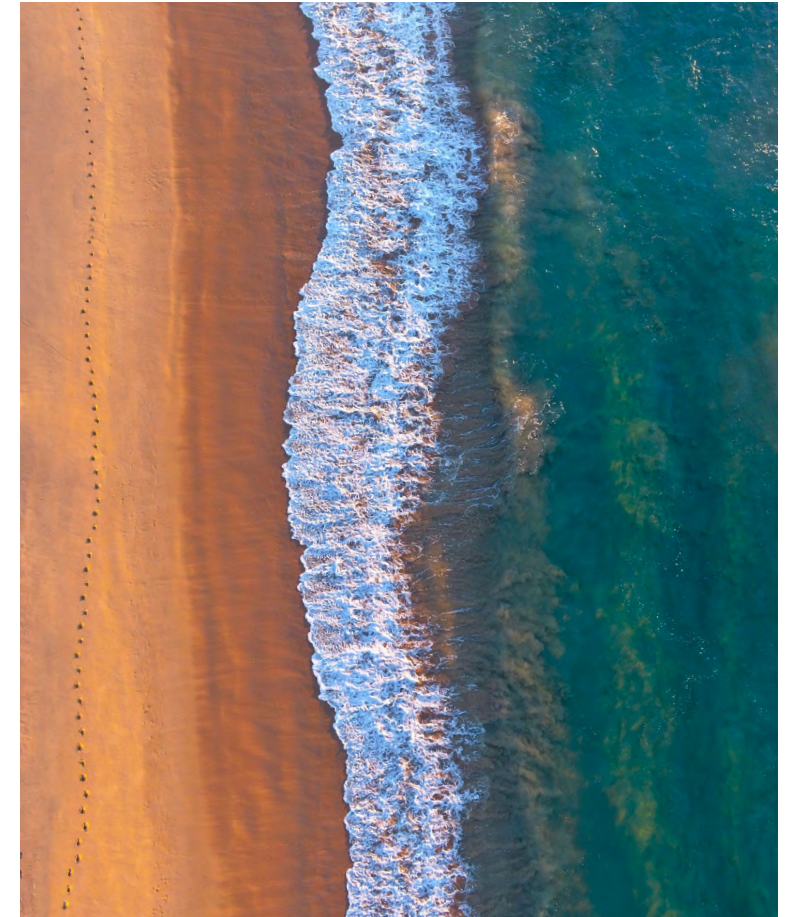
Composting is an aerobic process designed to produce compost.

Note 1 to entry: Compost is a soil conditioner obtained by biodegradation of a mixture consisting principally of vegetable residues, occasionally with other organic material and having a limited mineral content.

Source: ISO 472:2013, Plastics — Vocabulary.

Further explanatory notes:

- a. Composting can take place in an industrial facility, a collective, or at home:
 - Industrial composting: Municipal or industrial composting is a professionally managed and controlled, aerobic thermophilic waste treatment process covered by international standards and certification programs, which results in compost, a valuable soil improver.
 - Home composting: Designing packaging so that it is home-compostable means it adheres to more stringent conditions than industrially compostable packaging and increases the range of possible composting processes (both industrial and home composting). The home-composting process remains subject to the variability of householders' skills and experience, and the final product is not standardized.



COMPOSTABLE PACKAGING

A packaging or packaging component (1) is compostable if it is in compliance with ASTM standards (2) and if its successful postconsumer (3) collection, (sorting), and composting is proven to work in practice and at scale (4).

Notes:

1. ISO 18601:2013: A packaging component is a part of packaging that can be separated by hand or by using simple physical means (e.g., a cap, a lid and (non in-mold) labels).
2. Including ASTM D-6400 and ASTM 6868 (coatings), ISO 18606, ISO 14021, EN13432, and AS4736.
3. ISO 14021's usage of term clarifies postconsumer material as material generated by households or by commercial, industrial and institutional facilities in their role as end users of the product which can no longer be used for its intended purpose. This includes returns of material from the distribution chain.
4. "At scale" implies that there are significant and relevant geographical areas, as measured by population size, where the packaging is actually composted in practice.

Further explanatory notes:

- a. As per ISO 18606, a package is industrially compostable if it meets the following criteria:
 - Characterization: identification and characterization of components prior to testing;
 - Biodegradation: conversion of at least 90% of organic carbon to CO₂ within 26 weeks under controlled composting conditions (at +58°C +/-2°C);
 - Disintegration: disintegration is considered satisfactory if within 12 weeks under controlled composting conditions, no more than 10% of the original dry mass of a package remains in the oversize fraction after sieving through a 2,0 mm sieve (at +58°C +/-2°C)
 - Compost quality: the compost obtained at the end of the process does not cause any negative effects;
 - Maximum concentration of regulated metals: it does not exceed a given concentration. Of regulated heavy metals and other substances hazardous to the environment.
- b. As per ISO 18606, a package is considered compostable only if all the individual components of the package meet the compostability requirements specified. If the components can be easily, physically separated before disposal, then the physically separated components can be individually considered for composting.

- c. Compostable plastic can be composted in a municipal or industrial facility as well as, if it is designed to be home compostable, in a collective or at home as a complementary after-use option where relevant — see "Composting" definition.
- d. In line with ISO 14021 and US FTC Green claims, a marketer should clearly qualify compostability claims to the extent necessary to avoid deception, e.g., taking into account if one component is not compostable or if the item cannot be composted safely or in a timely manner in a home compost pile or device. For example, the US FTC Green guide states: "§ 260.7 Compostable Claims: "To avoid deception about the limited availability of municipal or institutional composting facilities, a marketer should clearly and prominently qualify compostable claims if such facilities are not available to a substantial majority of consumers or communities where the item is sold."
- e. This "compostable" definition applies at a global level for global commitments: it is a characteristic of packaging and is not linked to any local context or specific geographical area. It does not imply that it will be composted in every geographic area where it is put on the market. Local context and available infrastructure should be taken into account when claiming compostability in a specific geographic area.

In line with how "recyclability proven in practice and at scale" was defined, the suggested test and threshold to assess if the compostability of a packaging is proven to work "in practice and at scale" is to check if a 30% postconsumer composting rate is achieved across the U.S.

ELLEN MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation develops and promotes the idea of a circular economy. They work with, and inspire, business, academia, policymakers, and institutions to mobilize systems solutions at scale, globally.

MATERIAL RECYCLING

Reprocessing, by means of a manufacturing process, of a used packaging material into a product, a component incorporated into a product, or a secondary (recycled) raw material; excluding energy recovery and the use of the product as a fuel.

Source: ISO 18604:2013 — Packaging and the environment — Material recycling, modified (note to entry not applicable).

Further explanatory notes:

- a. This includes both mechanical (maintaining polymer structure) and chemical (breaking down polymer structure into more basic building blocks, for example via chemical or enzymatic processes) recycling processes.
- b. It explicitly excludes technologies that do not reprocess materials back into materials but instead into fuels or energy. Chemical recycling can be considered in line with a circular economy if the technology is used to create feedstock that is then used to produce new materials. However, if these same processes are used for plastics-to-energy or plastics-to-fuel applications, these activities cannot be considered as recycling (according to ISO definitions), nor as part of a circular economy. For a chemical recycling process, just like for the production of virgin plastics, no hazardous chemicals should be used that pose a significant risk to human health or the environment, applying the precautionary principle.
- c. A high quality of recycling and of recycled materials is essential in a circular economy, where one aim is to keep materials at their highest utility at all times. This maximizes the value retained in the economy, the range of possible applications for which the material can be used, and the number of possible future life-cycles. It therefore minimizes material losses and the need for virgin material input.
 - Maximizing the quality and value of materials during recycling is made possible through a combination of packaging design and high-quality collection, sorting, cleaning, and recycling technologies and systems.



PACKAGING

Product to be used for the containment, protection, handling, delivery, storage, transport and presentation of goods, from raw materials to processed goods, from the producer to the user or consumer, including processor, assembler or other intermediary.

Source: ISO 21067-1:2016, Packaging — Vocabulary — Part 1: General terms.

POSTCONSUMER RECYCLED CONTENT

Proportion, by mass, of postconsumer (1) recycled material in a product or packaging. Note 1. ISO14021's usage of the term clarifies postconsumer material as material generated by households or by commercial, industrial and institutional facilities in their role as end users of the product which can no longer be used for its intended purpose. This includes returns of material from the distribution chain.

Source: ISO 14021:2016 modified, Environmental labels and declarations — Self-declared environmental claims (Type II environmental labeling), Usage of terms, modified (focus on postconsumer recycled material)

Further explanatory notes:

- a. While in a circular economy it is encouraged that pre-consumer waste is kept in the system, the priority is to avoid such pre-consumer waste as part of an efficient production process. This definition therefore excludes pre-consumer recycled content (ISO 14021, Usage of terms, Recycled content: Pre-consumer recycled content includes materials diverted from the waste stream during a manufacturing process).
- b. Transparency on the nature of the recycled content (i.e., postconsumer versus pre-consumer) is to be ensured whenever possible.
- c. As referred to in ISO 14021, the percentage of recycled material (by weight) shall be mentioned when a claim of recycled content is made, separately stating the percentage of recycled content used in products and packaging, without aggregating it.
- d. Amounts and quality of packaging made out of recycled content should be in line with relevant food contact and health and safety regulations where a packaging is put on the market.
- e. To verify or certify the use of recycled content, various verification systems from different assurance bodies exist.

“PROBLEMATIC OR UNNECESSARY”

Plastic packaging items, components, or materials where consumption could be avoided through elimination, reuse or replacement, and items that, post-consumption, commonly do not enter the recycling and/or composting systems, or where they do, are detrimental to the recycling or composting system due to their format, composition, or size.

RECYCLABLE PACKAGING

A packaging (1) or packaging component (2,3) is recyclable if its successful postconsumer (4) collection, sorting, and recycling (5) is proven to work in practice and at scale (6) and if the outcome of its processing via recycling is a specification-grade commodity for which a market exists.

Note:

- In the context of a 2025 time frame and the Plastics Pact and the Global Commitment, a package can be considered recyclable if its main packaging components, together representing >95% of the entire packaging weight, are recyclable according to the above definition, and if the remaining minor components are compatible with the recycling process and do not hinder the recyclability of the main components.

Otherwise, only the recyclable components of a package (or the recyclable parts of components) can be counted towards achieving this commitment, and only when other components do not hinder or contaminate their recyclability.

Examples:

- If a bottle and its cap are recyclable, the packaging can be claimed to be recyclable if it has a label (<5% of total weight) that does not hinder the recyclability of the bottle and cap.
- If that same bottle has a label that hinders or contaminates the recycling of the bottle and cap, the entire packaging is non-recyclable.
- If a package has (a) certain component(s) that are not recyclable and that make up >5% of the total packaging weight (e.g., 12%) and that do not hinder or contaminate the recycling of the remaining recyclable components of the package, then only that recyclable part (e.g., 88%) can be counted towards this commitment.

Longer-term, the aim should be for all packaging components (e.g., including labels) to be recyclable according to the above definition.

- A packaging component is a part of packaging that can be separated by hand or by using simple physical means (ISO 18601), e.g., a cap, a lid and (non in-mold) labels. ISO 18601:2013: A packaging constituent is a part from which packaging or its components are made and which cannot be separated by hand or by using simple physical means (e.g. a layer of a multi-layered pack or an in-mold label).

- A packaging component can only be considered recyclable if that entire component, excluding minor incidental constituents (6), is recyclable according to the definition above. If just one material of a multi-material component is recyclable, one can only claim recyclability of that material, not of the component as a whole (in line with US FTC Green Guides 15 and ISO 14021).
- ISO 14021 defines postconsumer material as material generated by households or by commercial, industrial and institutional facilities in their role as end users of the product which can no longer be used for its intended purpose. This includes returns of material from the distribution chain. It excludes pre-consumer material (e.g., production scrap).
- Packaging for which the only proven way of recycling is recycling into applications that do not allow any further use-cycles (e.g., plastics-to-roads) cannot be considered “recyclable packaging”.
- The test and threshold for Plastics Pacts to assess if the recyclability of a packaging design is proven “in practice and at scale” is: Does that packaging achieve a 30% postconsumer recycling rate in multiple regions, (collectively representing at least 400 million inhabitants — only relevant for the global assessment) and is a 30% postconsumer recycling rate achieved in the Pact market. If the threshold is met either globally or in the U.S., then it can be concluded for the purposes of the Plastics Pact reporting that a “system for recycling” exists for that plastic packaging category.

Further explanatory notes:

- By being based on the principle that recycling needs to be proven to work in practice and at scale, the definition requires the entire system to be proven to work: material choices, packaging design, the manufacturing process, the most likely way of using, disposing and collecting the packaging, and the availability, compatibility, and performance of infrastructure for collection, sorting and recycling. It also implicitly requires the system to work technically, conveniently (if it works in practice and at scale, it must be convenient enough for actors in the system to participate) and economically (if it works in practice and at scale, it must be that the economics are reasonable and that there are end markets for the resulting material).

- By being based on the principle that recycling needs to work in practice and at scale, the definition of recyclable packaging allows for innovation. A packaging item that is not currently recyclable could be so in future (e.g., by putting in place effective collection, sorting and recycling technologies at scale).

- It is important to assess the recyclability of each package separately, taking into account its design, manufacturing processes and most likely way of using, disposing and collecting it, which all have a significant impact on the possibility and probability of the package being recycled in practice. For example:

- Design: choices of materials, the shape and size of the packaging, additives and colorants, glues, inks, caps, labels.
- Manufacturing process: sometimes additives are added to facilitate the manufacturing process or residual amounts of catalysts or other products end up in the packaging during the manufacturing process.
- Most likely way of using and disposing: One should assume the most likely way of using and disposing of the packaging and not assume unlikely conditions. For example, in most countries one cannot assume that a significant share of households will disassemble packaging before disposing of it. Other questions to consider include: Would the package be disposed most often with or without the label or cap still attached? Would it most likely be disposed of empty and clean, or contaminated with product residues, glue or lid residues?
- Most likely way of collecting: Is the pack most likely to end up in a collection system for business-to-business bulk materials or in that for household materials? A package could be recycled in practice and at scale in business-to-business but not in business-to-consumer applications (e.g., PE pallet wraps usually end up in different collection systems than PE wraps around consumer products).

- While the definition does not specify where a package is recycled (i.e., allowing for the export and import of materials), businesses should ensure any exported packaging actually gets recycled before considering the recycling pathway to work in practice.

- The available technical design-for-recycling guidelines by organizations such as APR bring a more technical and in-depth analysis of design for recycling prerequisites. As such, these guidelines are complementary to the “recyclable” definition of this appendix, and businesses are encouraged to refer to and apply these design-for-recyclability guidelines.

RENEWABLE MATERIAL

Material that is composed of biomass from a living source and that can be continually replenished. When claims of renewability are made for virgin materials, those materials shall come from sources that are replenished at a rate equal to or greater than the rate of depletion.

Source: ISO 14021:2016, Environmental labels and declarations — self-declared environmental claims (Type II environmental labeling) — Sections 7.14.1. Usage of term and 7.14.2. Qualifications.

Further explanatory notes:

a. ISO 14021: “An unqualified claim of renewability shall only be made when the product consists of 100% renewable material, allowing for de minimis amounts of non-renewable materials being contained in that material. Otherwise, renewability claims shall be qualified as follows: a) where a claim of renewable material content is made, the percentage by mass of renewable material to the total mass shall be stated; b) the percentage of renewable material content (mass fraction) for products and packaging shall be separately stated and shall not be aggregated.”

RESPONSIBLY SOURCED, BIOBASED MATERIAL

U.S. Plastics Pact Target 4 references “responsibly sourced, biobased content”. This term addresses feedstock sources used in packaging (as opposed to end-of-life characteristics such as compostability or biodegradability) and permits the use of plastic derived from plants or other biomass as part of the achievement of Target 4.

Bio-based content has an important role to play in the circularity of plastics by ensuring that the plastics industry can move towards 100% renewable sourcing.

The following definition is adopted by the U.S. Plastics Pact, and includes the need for proven certification:

A responsibly sourced, biobased feedstock is a substrate derived from plants or other biomass that:

1. Is legally sourced, conforms to Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and is produced in a safe and healthy way for workers and surrounding communities.
2. Is one that is derived from renewable biomass whose production is sustainably managed.
3. Does not adversely impact food security and affordability and maintains or improves social and economic conditions along with ecosystem services in producing communities.
4. Does not result in destruction of critical ecosystems or loss of High Conservation Value (HCV) habitats.
5. Contributes to landscape resilience and is resilient to the impacts of climate change.

WWF supported certifications and continuous improvement platforms relevant to responsibly sourced, biobased materials are as follows:

- Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB)
- Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS)
- Bonsucro
- Rainforest Alliance / Sustainable Agriculture Network (WWF acknowledges this certification when a commodity-specific certification is not available)
- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
- Field to Market
- Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)
- Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)

REUSE

Reuse of packaging Operation by which packaging is refilled or used for the same purpose for which it was conceived, with or without the support of auxiliary products (1) present on the market, enabling the packaging to be refilled.

Source: ISO 18603:2013, Packaging and the environment — Reuse, modified (clarification in note 1 below). Note 1. An auxiliary product is a product used to support the refilling/loading of reusable packaging. (...) An example of an auxiliary product is a detergent pouch used to refill a reusable container at home (ISO 18603). As per ISO 18603, auxiliary products that are one-way products (i.e., designed to be used once) are not considered reusable packaging.

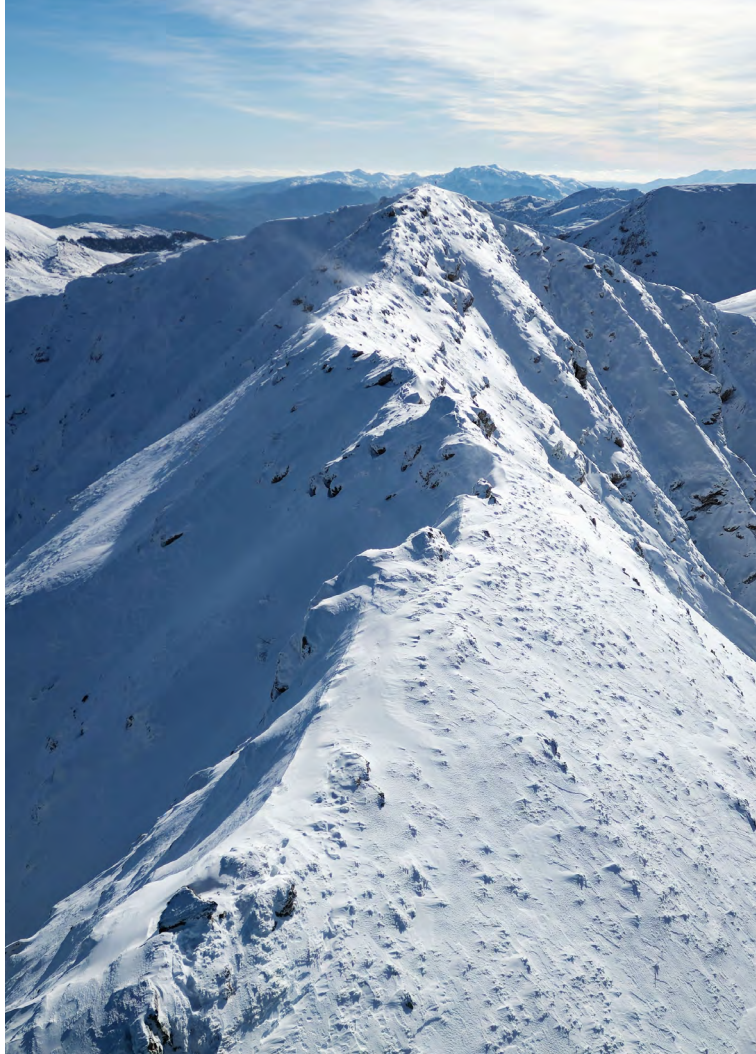
Further explanatory notes:

- a. Attention should be paid to the intended use and function of the packaging to verify whether it is being reused for the same purpose or a secondary use. In the latter case, the packaging is not considered as reusable packaging (ISO 18603, 'Packaging used for the same purpose'). For example, the use of a package as a pen holder or as decoration cannot be qualified as reuse.
- b. A package is considered reusable if the design of the packaging enables the principal components to accomplish a number of trips or rotations in normally predictable conditions of use (ISO 18603). According to ISO 18601, a packaging component is a part of packaging that can be separated by hand or by using simple physical means (for example a cap, a lid, a (non-in-mold) label).

Examples packaging can be reused in different ways:

- Business-to-business applications: packaging is reused through a redistribution system between one or more companies (for example pallets loaded with the same or different product, crates, pallet wraps).
- Business-to-consumer applications: packaging returned to the supplier or a third party to be cleaned and reused for the distribution and sale of an identical or similar product (for example a container that is part of a deposit return or refund system for reuse, a returnable transportation packaging item, a reusable container in the food service industry) or packaging not returned to the supplier, but instead reused by the user as a container or as a dispenser for the same product supplied by the manufacturer for the same purpose (such as a reusable spray bottle for cleaning products for which the manufacturer provides refills).





REUSABLE PACKAGING

Packaging which has been designed to accomplish and proves its ability to accomplish a minimum number of trips or rotations (1,2) in a system for reuse (3,4).

Source: ISO 18603:2013 — Packaging and the environment — Reuse, modified (packaging component mentioned in notes).

Notes:

1. A trip is defined as transfer of packaging, from filling/loading to emptying/unloading. A rotation is defined as a cycle undergone by reusable packaging from filling/loading to filling/loading (ISO 18603).
 2. The minimum number of trips or rotations refers to the fact that the 'system for reuse' in place should be proven to work in practice, i.e., that a significant share of the package is actually reused (measured e.g., by an average reuse rate or an average number of use-cycles per package).
 3. A system for reuse is defined as established arrangements (organizational, technical, or financial) which ensure the possibility of reuse, in closed-loop, open-loop or in a hybrid system (ISO 18603).
 4. See above for the definition of reuse, which stresses amongst other things the need for the packaging to be refilled or used again for the same purpose for which it was conceived.
- b. A package is considered reusable if the design of the packaging enables the principal components to accomplish a number of trips or rotations in normally predictable conditions of use (ISO 18603:2013). According to ISO 18601, a packaging component is a part of packaging that can be separated by hand or by using simple physical means (e.g., a cap, a lid, a (non in-mold) label). (ISO 18601:2013, Packaging component definition.)
 - c. Single-use packaging (i.e., designed to be used once) aimed at delivering a refill for a reusable package is not considered reusable packaging.
 - d. A reusable item can undergo reconditioning, that is operations necessary to restore a reusable packaging to a functional state for further reuse (ISO 18603:2013).
 - e. Reusable packaging should be designed to be recyclable, as it will inevitably reach the maximum number of reuse cycles at some point, after which recycling ensures, the material is kept in the economy.

Further explanatory notes:

- a. For a container to qualify as reusable, there needs to be a 'system for reuse' in place that enables the user of the package to ensure it is reused in practice where the item is placed on the market. Such a system for reuse should be able to prove a significant actual reuse rate, or average number of use-cycles of a package, in normal conditions of use.
- f. Updated reuse frameworks can be adopted to ensure cohesive, consistent action across the U.S. landscape.

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The U.S. Plastics Pact is grateful for the companies, governments, nonprofits, and public-sector organizations who dedicate their time, knowledge, and experience to our collective Mission.



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The U.S. Plastics Pact depends on strong leadership and guidance to advance toward its Mission. Both our Board of Directors and Advisory Council represent the diversity of U.S. Pact Activators* across the plastics supply chain. We are grateful for the dedication and experience they provide for our Mission and Vision.

*Participation in the U.S. Pact is voluntary and does not necessarily signify an individual Activator's endorsement of this document.

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