

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) 101 – A primer

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Overview

Extended producer responsibility is an environmental policy approach in which a producer's (or steward's) responsibility, physical and/or financial, for a product is extended to the post-consumer stage of the product's life cycle.

Simply put, this means that the producer and/or seller of the product, or packaging, assumes responsibility for its collection and disposal. **It means that individuals using the product, or packaging, contribute to collection/disposal costs.**

Note: In this context “producer” refers to the seller of the product. It likely does not refer to a grower/farmer. Cleanfarms will likely use the term stewards/retailer in most materials to identify the parties selling plastics.

Are there other approaches?

Yes. There are a number of different approaches in use across Canada. This graphic outlines some of them:



Note: The current ag film and twine pilots fit closer to the left side of this graphic. This project will explore moving the pilots closer to the right side of this graphic.

Why is EPR one of the preferred approaches?

- Individuals using the product, or packaging, contribute to collection and disposal costs. Stewards have control and input into the program.
- For both users and stewards, this likely fits into public trust and sustainability initiatives.
- Governments often prefer this approach because they feel it provides a financial incentive to producers to develop more environmentally friendly products & packaging. Governments take on more of a hands-off approach and focus on oversight and compliance.

- For municipalities, this provides structure, including predictable financing, to waste management functions.

Manitoba's EPR history

This model is in use in Manitoba. Producers (typically) assume full financial and administrative responsibility for the recycling/management of items like used oil, beverage containers, tires, electronics and empty pesticide/fertilizer containers.

EPR – it can be complicated

The following themes/stories are being shared to ensure that stakeholders have a good idea of the different aspects of an EPR-based program that tend to draw attention:

- Consumer fees – This is one of the most highly visible components of a program:
[Price for grain storage bags inflates with recycling fee](#), October 2018, Saskatchewan
[Ontario Federation of Agriculture acknowledges drop in tire recycling fees but says they're still too high](#), April 2013, Ontario
- Transparency – Consumers and stewards want to ensure that any fees they are required to pay are being spent appropriately:
[Some recycling agencies raking in millions in profits](#), February 2016, British Columbia
- Level playing field – Conversations related to non-program materials, non-compliant stewards, out-of-province purchases are raised often with users and stewards alike.

Best practices can help manage these pain points. Best practices include multi-year pilot projects, strong steward/user engagement and a solid communications strategy.

Cleanfarms case studies

- Container recycling program
 - Levies (per container): \$1.00 (1989) vs. \$0.49 (2016) vs. \$0.52 (2018/2019)
 - Added fertilizer containers (2013)
 - Program financing required when purchases made through the [GROU \(US import\) program](#)
- Bag collection program
 - PEI (2006); Eastern Canada (2014 - 2016); Western Canada micro pilots (2018)
- Saskatchewan's grain bag recycling program
 - Pilots (2011 – 2017); Transition-year (2018); Onset (2019-2020); Steady-state (2021)

Key takeaways

- It can be complicated and is a multi-step process.
- 'Ag is different'