

Recyclables – Changing Markets: National Waste and Recycling Association Issue Brief



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02/18/2019

The National Waste & Recycling Association (“NWRA”) issued a February 2019 Issue Brief titled:

Recyclables: Changing Markets (“Issue Brief”)

A key focus of the *Issue Brief* is the impact of China’s establishment of a ban and imposition of strict quality standards on recyclable materials on the United States’ recycling industry.

The *Issue Brief* illustrates the traditional importance of China as a consumer of recyclable materials by noting:

- In 2016, approximately 41% of paper recovered in North America was exported with about 25% going to Chinese mills
- 20% of post-consumer bottles/33% of non-bottle rigid plastics were exported in 2015
- The European Union exports over 95% of its plastic to China
- China consumed over 50% of the world’s recycled paper and plastic in 2016

Also referenced is the fact that while other countries were possible outlets for recyclable materials, they have become overwhelmed by the quantity of materials and imposed their own restrictions.

The *Issue Brief* provides detailed analysis of this and related issues such as:

- Background
- Timeline of international impediments (February 2017 to November 2018)
- Impact to U.S. Recycling
- Higher costs and lower revenues
- Affected commodities
- Actions to Take
- Ensure high quality of recyclables
- Work with the entire industry
- Communicate
- Review contracts
- Talk with regulators
- Infrastructure improvements
- Communication Strategy
- Develop a communication plan appropriate for your market area
- Check facts and update employees, and external messaging
- Contact your state regulatory agency to ensure they are aware of the issue

- Consider engaging local industry groups to help with the messaging
- Communicate with transparency to your customers, and work to shore up the long-term benefits of recycling to reduce public backlash
- This is a good time to develop and execute public education programs focused on quality
- Public education programs need to be robust

A copy of the *Issue Brief* can be found [here](#).