

THE OCEAN

Policy in practice

STRENGTHEN MARKETS FOR RECYCLED PLASTICS

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Life below water

Policy in practice

Governments can support the development of a differentiated demand for secondary plastics, which would increase incentives for separate collection and treatment of plastic waste and reduce leakage.

This can be done by:

- Introducing recycled content labels
- Requiring recycled content in public procurement rules
- Requiring recycled content through product standards regulations
- Introducing a tax on virgin plastics that reflects the environmental costs of the material

The European Union's Waste Framework Directive set recycling targets to be achieved by EU Member States by 2020, including recycling rates of 50% by weight for household wastes and 70% for construction and demolition waste. These targets are thought to have been instrumental in driving up recycling rates in the EU. Statutory plastics recycling targets are considered to be essential to drive supply of waste plastics for recycling.

Many countries have introduced public procurement requirements to increase the purchase of recycled-content products (e.g. UK, Italy, France, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, Latvia, Japan, USA). This has the potential to increase economies of scale and demand for supply of recycled content. Initial review indicates that there is limited clear evidence of success for driving demand for recycled plastics but it is thought that, it were if implemented widely and explicitly targeted plastics (among other materials), this could have a high impact.

Key policy message

Strengthening secondary plastics markets would increase incentives for separate collection and treatment of plastic waste and reduce unwanted leakage.

Strengthen markets for recycled plastics

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