

EuRIC Feedback | Regulation on recycled plastic materials and articles intended to come into contact with foods

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EuRIC welcomes the draft regulation on recycled plastic materials and articles intended to come into contact with foods, repealing Regulation (EC) No 282/2008. These updated rules can serve as a means to increase plastics recycling capacity across Europe, fostering its competitiveness through the development of new and innovative recycling technologies, to ensure an increase not only in the quantity but also the quality of recycled plastics. Thus, it is also necessary to increase the recycled content in plastic products and packaging, boosting the market for Raw Materials from Recycling (RMR) in Europe and guarantee the security that the plastics recycling value chain needs to make investments.

Although this regulation is focused on the decontamination process, EuRIC believes that the definition of pre-processing and especially, post-processing should be further clarified in order to avoid confusion and to be in line with the Waste Framework Directive, as these unit operations constitute the 'recycling process', according to Art. 2(17). Making a distinction between the recycling and the converting process is highly needed, since the 'recycler' applies a decontamination process and the 'converter' carries out one or more post-processing unit operations.

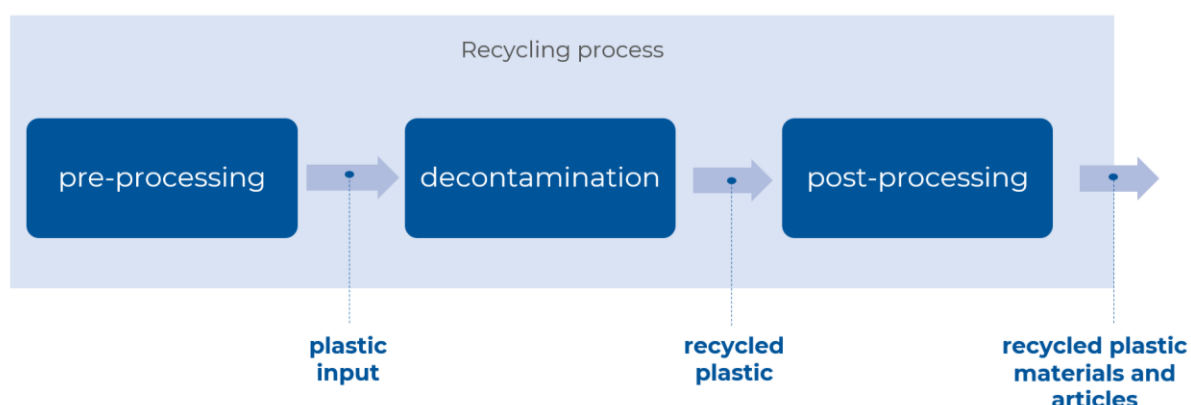


Figure 1. Concepts and definitions in the new regulation

Moreover, the definition of 'plastic input' in Art. 2(7) does not provide clarity between waste and product. In some cases, when end-of-waste criteria are applied, the plastic input is not a waste anymore but a recycled plastic product ready to substitute virgin material.

Regarding the **requirements for collection and pre-processing (Art.6)**, EuRIC supports intra-EU sourcing and plastic waste collected outside the European territory provided it meets EU or equivalent standards. Additionally, according to these requirements, a certified quality assurance system must be set up by waste management operators involved in the collection of plastic and pre-processing activities to ensure the quality and traceability of the plastic input. Sufficient time should be granted for those operators to adapt to that requirement and detailed information should be provided for the certification schemes and audits. EuRIC suggests standard ISO 9001, which sets out the criteria for a quality management system and can be certified.

EuRIC supports the conditions addressed under Art. 6.2, together with better-quality control in collection and acceptance processes, which will minimize the risk of cross-contamination from waste disposal.

As regards the development of novel technologies (Art.10), it does not include the specific criteria to consider the technology as a novel one so it should be modified with clear criteria (e.g., decontamination parameters).

In addition, a harmonized method is needed for the **monitoring and reporting of contamination level** (Art. 13) so the testing of contaminants of plastic input and output batch can lead to comparable results from different recyclers and developers. This should be accompanied by guidelines on how to measure the input batch or which substances can be analysed in which state (bales/flakes), etc. Besides, it does not specify the list of substances or the contamination thresholds (based on EU Reg. 10/2011).

Regarding the assessment of novel technologies (Art. 14), the procedure should be streamlined to minimize the risks of investing in the development and operation of a novel technology, since recyclers are obliged to take samples and report to developers.

In general, the efforts and investments necessary for testing could discourage the installation of novel technologies: input batch sizes of 30 tonnes and analysis of plastic input and recycled plastic output to identify 20 contaminants are not realistic.

EuRIC believes that the required processes to assure the quality and safety of recycled plastics are a shared responsibility along the value chain, and thus, a cross-cutting coordination is needed to guarantee the circular economy of the food packaging.