

NATIONAL FORUM – WESTERN CANADA

Decision-Making for Less Food Loss and Waste, Less Packaging Waste

SUMMARY REPORT | NOVEMBER 2020



The National Zero Waste Council, an initiative of Metro Vancouver, is a leadership initiative bringing together governments, business, and non-profit organizations to advance waste prevention in Canada through the design, production and use of goods.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been completed by Tamara Shulman, Alces Technologies Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

A national forum to capture input from western Canadian stakeholders was held on September 22, 2020. The intent of this document is to summarize event findings.

FORUM OVERVIEW

PURPOSE

This Western Canada National Forum was designed to bring together decision-makers in the public and private sectors to consider how best to implement recommendations from the research report *Less Food Loss and Waste, Less Packaging Waste*. Implementation considerations were discussed in the context of emerging Canadian policy initiatives around plastics, agriculture and climate; increased attention within the Canadian marketplace to meeting business performance targets; and COVID-19 business adaptations. The session was intended to help guide the direction for how businesses and governments can work together through policy and practice to address FLW and packaging issues.



PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Over 250 invitations were sent out by email, resulting in 63 registered participants representing food industry associations, processing and manufacturing, distributors, retailers, food services, packaging design, nongovernmental organizations, institutions, and multiple levels of government primarily from British Columbia and Alberta.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS	
Alberta Agriculture and Forestry	Metro Vancouver
Aslin Canada	Munchies Foodshare
AWARE	Nada Grocery
BASF	Ocean Wise
BC Association of Farmers' Markets	Packaging Consortium
BC Berries	Recycling Alternative
BC Food and Beverage	Red Dog Blue Kat
BC Ministry of Agriculture	Red Dog Deli
Capital Regional District	Red Hat Co-operative Ltd
City of Edmonton	ReFED
City of Edmonton	Regional District of Nanaimo
City of Leduc	Regional District of North Okanagan
City of Surrey	Resort Municipality of Whistler
City of Vancouver	Rethink2gether
City of Victoria	Save On Foods
Coho Commissary	Simon Fraser University
Commission for Environmental Cooperation	Skipper Otto
Dillon Consulting	South Okanagan Food Hub
Earnest Ice Cream	SPUD
Ecolnspire Consulting	Surrey Food Bank
Environment and Climate Change Canada	Susgrainable
Food Eco District	Township of Langley
Fraser Health	Uniserve
Fraser Valley Regional District	University of BC
Georgia Main Food Group	Vancity
Good Natured Products	Vancouver Aquarium/Ocean Wise
Grey to Green	Vancouver Economic Commission
Loblaws	Vancouver Farmers Market
London Drugs	Vancouver General Hospital

AGENDA

The forum was held over a two hour period with guest speakers, an opportunity to rank recommendations and then discuss the top three recommendations in breakout groups. Each breakout group had the opportunity to learn what was discussed in other groups. The event agenda is shown below.

TABLE 1. AGENDA – NATIONAL FORUM WESTERN CANADA, SEPTEMBER 22, 2020

TIMING	TOPIC
8:45	Reception and Zoom Orientation
9:00	Introduction and Purpose
9:10	Recommendations Martin Gooch, Value Chain Management
9:25	Case Study Ron Lemaire, Canadian Produce Marketing Association
9:30	Case Studies Manuel Gorrin, Nature's Path Anthony Rossi, Loop
9:40	Q&A and Poll (Recommendations)
10:00	'Table Talk' Zoom Breakout Groups Question: Based on where your organization is at with respect to working on FLW and packaging, how do you recommend moving forward on this action? What role can your organization play?
10:30	Gallery View/Facilitators Rotate through Breakout Rooms
10:40	Plenary - Q&A
10:55	Wrap Up and Next Steps

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Report recommendations were consolidated into 10 options listed below. See Appendix A for more detailed descriptions.

1. **Food Loss and Waste (FLW)/Packaging Prevention**
- Loose/Bulk Food Sales and Reusable/Refillable Containers at the Consumer Level
2. **FLW/Packaging Prevention and Type** - LCA Analysis and Follow up Implementation
3. **FLW/Packaging Prevention** - Goal Setting with Monitoring and Measurement
4. **Packaging Prevention** - Accelerate Buy-in and Implementation for Reusables and Refillables
5. **Packaging Types** - Establish Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Packaging based on Science-based Information
6. **Packaging Types** - Accelerate development of new/improved packaging materials
7. **End of Life Management** - Support Efficient Collection and Processing for Recyclable and Compostable Packaging
8. **National** - Legislative Initiatives such as extended producer responsibility, packaging certification, postconsumer recycled content
9. **National** - End of Life Management - National Recycling and Composting Strategy
10. **National** - End of Life Management - National Recycling and Organics Processing Infrastructure Investment and Funding

Recommendations #1, 4, and 8 were ranked highest through an online polling exercise as shown in *Figure 1. Recommendations Polling Results*. These three recommendations were then discussed in five breakout groups – with two groups each assigned to recommendations #4 and #8.

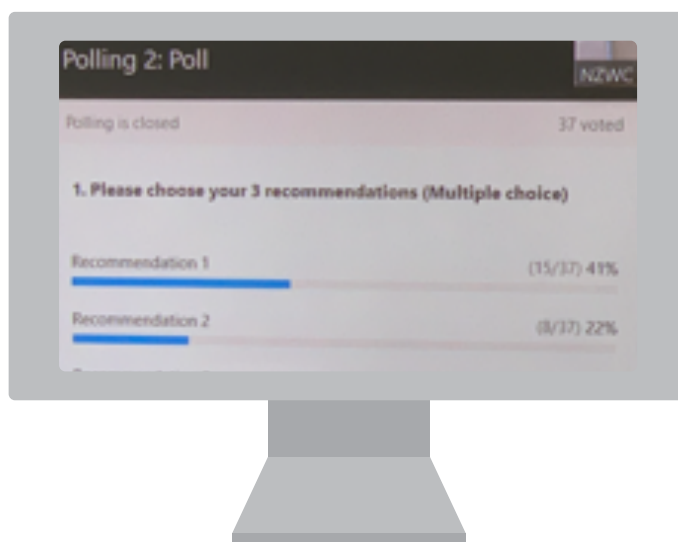


FIGURE 1. RECOMMENDATIONS POLLING RESULTS

FORUM FINDINGS

SPEAKER PROCEEDS

Martin Gooch, CEO, Value Chain Management Inc. provided an overview of report recommendations. Subsequently, three guest speakers shared industry innovations through brief presentations.

Ron Lemaire, President of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association, provided an update on, “The Path to Changing a Food Packaging System” which included a produce supply chain roadmap and the Association’s Preferred Plastics Guidelines List.

Manuel Gorrin, Brand Engagement Manager, Nature’s Path Food presented on, “Enabling a Circular Economy Food Manufacturing” to share packaging reduction efforts and founding partner role with Loop.

Anthony Rossi, VP of Global Business Development, Loop outlined the refillable company’s progress to date related to participating companies, distribution channels, and geographical expansion – including to Canada via Loblaws for 2021.

Presentations are available at nzwc.ca.



BREAKOUT SESSION FINDINGS

Three recommendations were discussed in breakout groups; one group discussed recommendation #1 while recommendations #4 and #8 were discussed by two groups each. Primary themes that emerged from breakout discussions are summarized in this section. Figure 2 shows an example of digital white board breakout group notes for #4 recommendation. The detailed discussion notes are available in Appendix B. Detailed Breakout Discussions – by Recommendation.



FIGURE 2. DIGITAL WHITEBOARD BREAKOUT GROUP NOTES EXAMPLE

Recommendation 1. FLW/Packaging Prevention – Transition to Loose/Bulk Food Sales and Reusable/Refillable Containers at the Consumer Level

Highlights for how to transition to less packaging at the consumer level fit into the following groupings:

- 1. Promotion and Education for Consumers**
 - a. Find unique ways to brand bulk food.
- 2. Collaboration Across Sectors**
 - a. Facilitate connections within the industry, share information to leverage funds and research to seek potential reusable container use opportunities.
 - b. Leverage relationships with support organizations and existing municipal work in this area (i.e., single use reduction strategies).
 - c. Work with food recovery organizations to utilize reusable containers.
- 3. Operational and Supply Chain Adjustments**
 - a. Find ways to create convenience for distributors.
 - b. Create a service model and shopping convenience.
 - c. Discourage single use alternatives as a default.
 - d. Seek ways to use the increased hygiene awareness as an opportunity to change practices.
 - e. Consider deposit return systems for reusable packaging.

Recommendation 4. Packaging Prevention – Accelerate Buy-in and Implementation for Reusables and Refillables

Key discussion points for preventing packaging by further optimizing reusable and refillable containers were as follows:

- 1. Education and Incentives**
 - a. Educate customers on reusable options.
 - b. Encourage businesses across the supply chain to build from existing initiatives and successes; create a centralized network to share business case studies and provide best practices webinars.
 - c. Consider a deposit return system for reusable packaging, research options.
 - d. Seek funding for small businesses to support the shift to reusables.
- 2. Policy**
 - a. Government to support legislation to reduce options for disposables and influence consumer behaviour.
 - b. Develop an action-oriented map at the municipal level and lobby senior government for related legislative changes.
- 3. Operational and Supply Chain Adjustments**
 - a. Foster design change across the supply chain, capture materials effectively and factor in convenience.
 - b. Educate and collaborate with suppliers to develop reusable options. Provide best practices webinars.
 - c. Consider publicly accessible and convenient reusable packaging drop off locations and cleaning facilities for reusable packaging.
- 4. Product Design**
 - a. Design standardization across jurisdictions, e.g., international trade requires different pallet sizes.
 - b. Find material alternatives – that can be more easily recycled or composted – for situations requiring single use packaging.
- 5. Program evaluation**
 - a. Measure impact and develop metrics for programs at the municipal level.

Recommendation 8. National Legislative Initiatives (Extended producer responsibility – EPR, packaging certification, recycled content)

Input on national legislative changes fit into the themes below:

1. Overall Intent

- a. Create policy and standards at the national level; use local governments for messaging.
- b. Create a groundswell to push for higher standards, upstream solutions, and a high level of engagement.

2. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

- a. Consider national legislation while considering current realities by province.
- b. Support continued Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment (CCME) EPR action plan efforts.
- c. Collaborate with existing groups invested in EPR, including government and product stewards to determine ways to harmonize across provinces.
- d. Work with existing industry groups to foster harmonization and inform legislation (e.g., grocery retailers).

3. Packaging Certification

- a. Support industry groups that continue to seek best practices and build consensus; encourage government/industry communication and collaboration.
- b. Support national legislation as the best way to create consistent standards.

4. Post-consumer Recycling Content (PRC)

- a. Use national legislation to close the gap and provide a harmonized approach to requiring PRC in products; support a national plastics pact.
- b. Support voluntary participation and existing technology for recycled content use.

5. Composting Infrastructure

- a. Review national composting standards and evaluate alignment with current infrastructure.
- b. Support small in-vessel composter use at commercial, institutional and multi-unit sites.
- c. Review and assess bioplastics decomposition.

CONCLUSION

The Western Canada National Forum – Decision-Making for Less Food Loss and Waste, and Less Packaging Waste took place September 22, 2020. It was one of three forums completed in fall 2020 to review and prioritize key recommendations stemming from the report [Less Food Loss and Waste](#), [Less Packaging Waste](#). It is intended that the aggregated feedback from these three forums will help inform next steps for addressing packaging options and reducing food loss and waste in Canada.

Many organizations representing business, government and community – from throughout the food and packaging supply chains – registered and attended the session. Participants heard from guest speakers who shared inspiring and context-setting case studies; and identified for themselves which of ten recommendations made the most sense for them to support /or implement. These results, in conjunction with others from the Eastern and Quebec National Forums, can serve to guide the National Zero Waste Council's next steps around the issue of food loss and waste, and packaging.

APPENDIX A. RECOMMENDATIONS

FLW Prevention

1. **FLW/Packaging Prevention** – Transition to Loose/Bulk Foods Sales and Reusable/Refillable Containers at the Consumer Level
 - Determine viability and best practices for expanded use of loose/bulk food sales through research, then implement those practices; educate consumers on loose/bulk sale usage while minimizing food loss and waste (FLW).
2. **FLW/Packaging Prevention and Type** – Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) and Follow up Implementation
 - Create a program that supports the implementation of holistic lifecycle analysis (LCA) on FLW and packaging, and guided by LCA results, establishes Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Factor in reusable packaging opportunities across the supply chain while also minimizing FLW.
3. **FLW/Packaging Prevention** – Goal Setting with Measurement and Monitoring
 - Goal Setting
 - Establish a FLW reduction target/goal that aligns with the federal and/or retail target of 50% reduction by 2025 (based on 2016 baselines). Seek industrial, commercial, and institutional (ICI) buy in.
 - Measurement and Monitoring
 - Provide a standard FLW quantification and reporting method for ICI and municipalities

Packaging – science-based standards and terms, and innovation

4. **Packaging Prevention – Accelerate Buy-in and Implementation for Reusables and Refillables**
 - a. Prioritize designs that incorporate reusable packaging across the supply chain (e.g., <http://usereusables.org> – pallets, transport containers)
 - b. Expedite adoption of refillable initiatives (e.g., Loop and other local initiatives)
5. **Packaging Types** – Establish Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Packaging based on Science-based Information
 - a. Tier and categorize packaging materials based on LCA results and waste prevention hierarchy (including reusable packaging across the supply chain), compostability standards, minimum acceptable incorporation of post-consumer recycling (PCR), and factor in downstream management (recyclability and compostability)
6. **Packaging Types** - Accelerate development of new/improved packaging materials
 - a. Establish and support packaging material R&D accelerators; optimize recyclability and compostability.
7. **End of Life Management** – Support Efficient Collection and Processing for Recyclable and Compostable Packaging
 - a. Invest in organic material collection with private or municipal haulers, and where volumes are sufficient, invest in AD facilities
 - b. Establish effective collection points and systems for flexible packaging

National recycling and composting strategies

8. **National** – Legislative Initiatives such as extended producer responsibility, packaging certification, postconsumer recycled content
 - a. Create a national EPR implement strategy, and establish a national program
 - b. Establish packaging certification of recyclable or compostable packaging based on common standards, and ensure all packaging used within the food industry is fully recyclable or compostable.
 - c. Phase in increasingly rigorous PCR requirements and a corresponding implementation strategy that includes performance monitoring and reporting requirements on meeting PCR and recycling targets, as well as communication around best practices for using PCR.
9. **National** – End of Life Management - National Recycling and Composting Strategy
 - a. Develop and implement a national recycling and composting strategy that includes establishing targets, common minimum composting/anaerobic digestion (AD) standards, and ongoing monitoring.
10. **National** – End of Life Management - National Recycling and Organics Processing Infrastructure Investment and Funding
 - a. Create a national recycling and composting/AD infrastructure strategy that includes investment and innovation targets. Begin securing infrastructure investment from public and private sources.

APPENDIX B. DETAILED BREAKOUT DISCUSSIONS – BY RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation 1. FLW/Packaging Prevention – Transition to Loose/Bulk Food Sales and Reusable/Refillable Containers at the Consumer Level

General feedback from the group on how to best transition to bulk food and other waste reducing consumer options were provided as follows:

- Use existing city work to help facilitate the effort.
- Find unique ways to brand bulk food.
- Facilitate connections in the industry (innovators to users, research etc.).
- Reach out to specific organizations to aim for harmonization.
- Ensure information sharing on available options.
- Create a service model and shopping convenience.
- Encourage collaborations to leverage funds and do more research.
- Create convenience for distributors, not only consumers.

The importance of encouraging ways to reduce food loss and waste (FLW) as part of day to day work was reinforced.

Packaging-related recommendations fit into two categories, prevention and reuse:

- Prevention
 - Discourage default use of single use alternatives.
- Reuse
 - Assess ways to partner with the BC Centre for Disease Control to identify ways to use reusable packaging.
 - Seek ways to use the current COVID-19 global pandemic and associated more stringent hygiene as an opportunity to change practices.
 - Research potential uses for reusable containers.
 - Recovery food network – evaluate use of packaging for food recovery.
 - Implement deposit return systems for reusable packaging.

The importance of downstream material management was also discussed as related to the option of separating compostable plastics from other compostable materials.

Recommendation 4. Packaging Prevention – Accelerate Buy-in and Implementation for Reusables and Refillables

Recommendations related to reusables and refillables linked to program development considering education and incentives, product design, and ways to evaluate progress.

Program Development

- Work better to collaborate across provinces/ jurisdictions.
- Obtain feedback from existing initiatives.
- Work with suppliers to develop reusable solutions given that disposable plastic options are often the industry default.
- Government to reduce options for disposables and influence consumer behaviour.
- Consider a deposit based system for a high return rate.
- How to use EPR so reusable-level fees add incentive to use reusables rather over cheaper disposable alternatives (e.g., contract-based incentives).
- Conduct additional research into deposit return systems versus amounts [needed] to drive further change. Is cost the way to drive high return rates? Or are there other social pressures?
- Consider education and communication during roll out.
- Educate market players to find suitable alternatives (e.g. suppliers such as farmers).
- Utilizing networks to promote reusable packaging.
- Encourage our suppliers to use alternatives and showcase their success.
- Remove obstacles such as bylaws, health-related rule rules on reuse.
- Provide clear requested actions to the public versus providing conflicting messaging

- Work to create design change across the supply chain to capture different materials efficiently, factoring in convenience.
- Seek funding for small businesses to use reusable packaging.
- Communicate to consumers why and what options are available – for reusables and refillables
- Consider publicly accessible and convenient reusable item drop off locations.
- Implement cleaning facilities for small businesses to provide and clean reusable packaging.
- Research into behavioural economics for decision making.
- Educate through targeted best practices webinars.
- Lobby provincial and federal governments from the municipal level.
- Develop action-oriented road map (3 years) at the municipal level.
- Increase consumer awareness through small businesses.
- Create a centralized network to share business case studies related to actions.
- Map out existing solutions, don't reinvent the wheel.

Comments were also provided on product design.

- Design standardization across jurisdictions, e.g., international trade requires different pallet sizes.
- Find material alternatives for situations where we require single use packaging.
- The importance of measurement was also noted.
- Measure impact and develop metrics for programs at the municipal level.

Recommendation 8. National Legislative Initiatives (Extended producer responsibility - EPR, packaging certification, recycled content)

Feedback relevant to legislative changes overall was shared.

- Broad stroke communication is challenging to do at the federal level; it's best to do messaging through local governments and instead focus on wide reaching policy and standards.
- Push for higher standards, participate in discussions, and encourage others to participate as well.
- Use goals and standards for sustainability a commitment to investment into the community, engagement tools and upstream solutions to stop plastic waste. Engage in civic committees and with government.

Discussion points related to EPR also emerged.

- Grocery retailer role: bring light to ongoing conversations in a national context with harmonization as the goal.
- In BC, Regional District representatives meet with EPR agencies; determine ways to harmonize and work together. Bring similar groups together across provinces.
- We need specific groups to collaborate across regions; for example the BC Product Stewardship Council (government) and the Stewardship Association of BC (SABC).
- We need bottom up input along with top down legislation.
- We need to account for regional differences as well; prairies have different dynamics compared to other locations (e.g. Ontario blue box, BC existing EPR).
- AB doesn't currently have EPR but municipalities currently use product stewardship programs for hazardous and bulking items. Many are supporting a political push for EPR adoption.
- The Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment (CCME) action plan has provided direction so far on EPR and BC has started, but so far has left specifics to producers. We anticipate that additional categories and sections will be added to the action plan, to allow for specific product regulation and to put pressure and timelines on producers. There are challenges to managing incoming/imported products and materials. There is a need for additional public education re EPR and the roles of public, producers, recyclers; we need to clarify roles and expectations as well.

The groups had the following comments related to packaging certification.

- The Packaging Consortium Group has discussion underway on how to support businesses re best practices for packaging type choices; it is ideal to have 'one version of the truth'.
- Some types of legislation can only happen at higher levels of government.
- How to develop a common guidebook around best packaging options? Need industry and government buy in across geography.
- First step is to vet options, discuss in detail, consolidate and begin to build consensus. Common ground areas will come to light.
- Government is engaging industry to get initial input [on packaging certification].

There was support expressed for Post-consumer Recycling Content (PCR).

- Legislation closes the gap – we need a plastics pact.
- We have global leadership potential here in Canada.
- Smart label scan – let consumers check to see if it's recyclable before purchasing.
- Technology exists to use recycled content, we need harmonization [through legislation].
- ECCC is working on PCR initiative and whether voluntary participation is enough or not

Infrastructure

- ECCC is looking at standards for composting, they don't match infrastructure
- Compost initiatives for small in vessel composters are underway at waste generation locations (malls, offices, apartment buildings), provide technical support, determining bioplastics decomposition, expanding from BC to Ontario.

