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Maturing Approach

FEATURES - CANADIAN MARKET REPORT

Canada's extended producer responsibility programs continue to evolve as they mature.

Duncan Bury
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In Canada extended producer responsibility (EPR) has become a mature environmental policy and regulatory instrument widely used to manage packaging and printed papers as well as products including electronics, paint, batteries, household hazardous wastes, pharmaceuticals, tires, pesticide containers and crankcase oil.



The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) has defined EPR as "an environmental policy approach in which a producer's responsibility for a product is extended to the postconsumer stage of a product's life cycle," which is similar to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) definition. The fundamental principles, tenets, guidance and goals for EPR up to 2017 are set out in the CCME's Canada-wide Action Plan for EPR (See www.ccmec.ca/ourwork/waste.html?category_id=128), which was adopted by all jurisdictions in October 2009.

From the first EPR program for waste paint that was launched in British Columbia in 1994, Canada now has more than 80 product-specific operational programs grouped into more than 50 producer responsibility plans. In Manitoba, for example, 13 EPR programs are regulated under the province's Waste Reduction and Prevention Act (WRAP). Estimates suggest that more than C\$2 billion (US\$1.99 billion) flow through these programs nationally each year with significant associated employment.

Most EPR programs are regulated provincially, but EPR also is under consideration by the northern territories and by the federal government. In some product areas, such as electronics, program coverage is almost national in scope.

A number of nonregulated programs also exist, such as the one operated by Clean Farms for used pesticide containers, which are managed and funded by producers voluntarily on a national basis. The only national inventory of EPR programs and stewardship programs without producer responsibility was released by Environment Canada in 2011. (See www.ec.gc.ca/gdd-mw/default.asp?lang=En&n=9FB94989-1.)

EPR Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting on the state of Canadian EPR regulation has been undertaken by Extended Producer Responsibility Canada, a nonprofit association interested in encouraging EPR policies, programs and best practices (See www.eprcanada.ca). EPR Canada surveyed the provinces, territories and federal government and issued a report card in July 2012 on the state of EPR in Canada for the year

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