Calculation of recycled plastic content in PET bottles

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Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2026/1425 as regards the calculation, verification and reporting of data on recycled plastic content in single-use plastic beverage bottles

What is changing and why?

Under existing European Union (EU) legislation, polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic bottles with a capacity of less than 3 litres sold in the EU must contain at least 25% recycled plastic from 2025, and 30% from 2030.

New rules on recycling technologies

This new Decision extends the existing methods used for mechanical recycling (e.g. shredding and melting) to other recycling technologies, especially chemical recycling. Recycled plastic can now also be produced from a mixture of pre- and post-consumer plastic waste.

Revised methodology for calculating recycled plastic content

The new legislation also introduces new rules on how EU Member States should calculate, verify, and report about the recycled content in PET bottles from all recycling technologies. For each Member State, each year, the recycled plastic content of PET bottles is calculated as the percentage of recycled plastic in the total weight of the bottles' plastic parts placed on the market in that country. Only the plastic parts of a bottle are taken into account. Where the non-plastic parts are less than 5% of the bottle weight (e.g. a paper label), they are not subtracted from the total weight of the bottle. The total plastic parts include the cap, lid, labels, and sleeves.

Plastic waste from production or manufacturing waste, or that has been used as a source of energy for the recycling process, is not included in the calculation. Only recycled plastic made from plastic products previously placed on the EU market ("post-consumer waste") counts towards the target. Packaging from products that expired before being sold is also considered to be post-consumer waste. Post-consumer plastic waste must be recycled and sorted to standards equivalent to EU requirements for human health and environmental protection.

This calculation methodology will serve as a model for future rules on recycled content in other sectors (see Review of packaging and packaging waste rules).

Recycled plastic from non-EU countries

From **21 November 2027**, recycled plastic from a non-EU country may only count towards the EU's mandatory recycled content targets for PET bottles if an agreement between that country

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and the EU recognises that plastic waste has been managed under environmental and human health standards equivalent to those of the EU.

Alternatively, recycled plastic from outside the EU but from countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – may also count towards the EU's mandatory recycled content targets for PET bottles from 21 November 2027, provided the exporting country demonstrates that the waste has been managed in an environmentally sound manner in accordance with OECD requirements.

However, as of July 2026, PET bottles from non-EU countries may still be placed on the EU market as not all PET bottles must be made from recycled plastic (only 25% recycled content from 2025, and 30% from 2030).

Actions

Non-EU countries should start to align with EU standards for human health and environmental protection, especially the requirements set by the Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC and the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation 2025/40.

Agri-food exporters of PET beverage bottles to the EU must provide **declarations of recycled plastic content** using the template in Annex V of Decision 2026/1425.

Operators recycling plastic that is to be incorporated into PET bottles will have to request third-party verification of the most complex stages of the recycling process every year (every 3 years for small and medium-sized enterprises, SMEs).

EU Member State authorities will conduct risk-based controls. Operators will be responsible for checking their business partners' self-declarations on the recycled content of PET bottles.

From 21 May 2029 onwards, non-OECD countries will be able to submit a request to receive plastic waste from the EU for recycling.

Timeline

The new rules apply from **23 July 2026**.

For more information see the full record on the AGRINFO website – where you can also view the latest AGRINFO Update newsletters and search the database.

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