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Soft Plastic Recycling Scheme ready for move towards regulated product stewardship

The Government's announcement to move towards co-designed and regulated product stewardship for single-use plastic packaging acknowledges the work of the existing voluntary Soft Plastics Recycling scheme.

The Packaging Forum set up soft plastics collections in 2015 and the soft plastic recycling scheme received accreditation as a voluntary product stewardship scheme under the Waste Minimisation Act in March 2018.

Chair of the scheme Malcolm Everts says that the impact of China's National Sword policy and the collapse of global markets for mixed plastics forced a major re-set of the scheme.

"One year ago, there was no onshore processing of post-consumer soft plastics. Today there are two North Island plants Future Post in Waiuku and Second Life Plastics in Levin which are great examples of Kiwi ingenuity. We are working with them and our members to increase demand for their products. To have a sustainable circular economy where waste materials are re-processed into new valuable products and commodities, we need industry, councils and government departments to start buying products which are made from our recycling efforts."

"However, the principal limiting factor for our scheme is lack of near shore / on shore processing facilities. It is not a lack of industry support or a lack of consumer willingness to drop off their soft plastic packaging, it is the fact there are currently only two processors in North Island that are able to process post-consumer softplastics."

"We have re-set the scheme so that collection volumes will match NZ processing capacity. We re-started collections in Auckland in May and will add collections in the Waikato next month with other regions being added as processing capacity becomes available."

Scheme members' levies fund collections from stores, quality checks, baling, transport to end markets and contribute to the processing costs as well. This is different from the traditional model where the processor pays the collector/recycler for the materials.

The Government's proposals are consistent with our message outlined in our August newsletter which summarises the formula for success as a combination of the following:

Materials: Kiwis drop off their clean soft plastic packaging for recycling

Funding: Industry joins the Scheme to increase available funding



Demand: Local and Central Government, Consumers and Industry buy from our processing partners; and

Collaboration: to introduce More Processing Capacity throughout New Zealand, plus support reduce and reuse initiatives.

“To achieve effective soft plastics recycling product stewardship within the timeframe set in the Discussion Paper, we hope to see soft plastic recycling processing projects funded in this year’s Funding Round and through the additional \$40 million in funding announced through the Provincial Growth Fund. It is only with a substantial increase in processing capacity including on South Island that the Scheme can deliver its full potential”

For more information about Soft Plastics Recycling Scheme visit

<https://www.recycling.kiwi.nz/solutions/soft-plastics>

For further information please contact:

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