

AS IT IS

China Bans Many Imported Recyclable Materials

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Last month, China banned imports of some waste materials that can be reused in manufacturing.

The move is forcing other countries to rethink their policies on **recycled** waste.

Before the ban, China was the first resting place for about half of the world's metal, plastic and paper recyclables.

Now, the government has decided to ban the import of 24 **categories** of solid waste. The decision is causing problems for the international waste processing industry.

Developed countries including the United States are trying to deal with ever increasing amounts of unprocessed waste. Now they have to find new places to send it.

Eric Liu is with Greenpeace East Asia. He says that sending the waste to another country is not a good idea.

“This isn't really a feasible solution,” Liu said. “Very few places are equipped to handle the sheer volume of waste that was being processed in China. Ultimately, the foreign trash ban should act as a ‘wake up’ call to the world. We seriously need to cut down on our production and **consumption** of plastic,” he added.

Environmentalists like Liu hope that the Chinese move will cause countries to reduce unnecessary waste, like single-use plastic products.

The issue was important enough that British Prime Minister Theresa May discussed it with Chinese President Xi Jinping during her visit to Beijing last week.

May has said that Britain would end all avoidable plastic waste by the year 2042. The goal is part of a 25-year **strategy** for the environment.

How well is China recycling materials at home?

Experts say the ban on waste is a good step for China, although it may result in a shortage of some **raw** materials for manufacturing.

Chinese environmentalists hope the ban will bring change to the country's waste processing industry. They want it to become more modern and effective.

Mao Da is a researcher at Beijing Normal University. He said importing recyclable waste caused the industry to ignore similar materials at home.

“The **potential** of locally-disposed recyclables has long been overlooked,” he noted.

Making China more environmentally friendly

Mao has urged Chinese environmental officials to enforce policies that require people to recycle and sort solid waste.

But some in the waste processing industry say China already recycles all it can and the ban will have no effect.

Jason Wang is general secretary of the China Scrap Plastics Association. He said, “With or without the ban and before 2017, any waste in China that was recyclable and of economic value had been fully recycled.”

Feng Juan disagrees. She is the research director of Incom Recycle Co., a recycler of plastic bottles in Beijing. Feng said that, if her company had not found ways to get recyclables, it would not have enough waste plastic to meet its processing **capacity**.

Her company has set up 5,000 **vending** machines in Beijing. Incom collected 55 million used bottles from **consumers** last year.

“Through our platform, we can trace every single bottle we have collected and guarantee its safe [processing] flow,” Feng said.

Possible Restrictions on Use of Plastics

Eric Liu of Greenpeace estimates that plastic waste from China’s cities has added from 1.3 to 3.35 tons of plastic waste to the world’s oceans.

China’s National Development and Reform commission is reportedly considering a new policy targeting waste. If enacted, the policy would seek to control waste created by **e-commerce**, delivery services and the food industry.

For years, China has enacted restrictions on the use of plastics, but the rules are not strongly enforced.

I’m Mario Ritter.

Joyce Huang reported this story for VOANews.com. Mario Ritter adapted her report for Learning English. George Grow was the editor.

Words in This Story

recycle – *adj.* involving something that can be reformed and reused

categories – *n.* different kinds of similarly grouped things

consumption – *n.* the process of using something up

strategy – *n.* a long-term plan aimed at reaching a goal

raw – *adj.* undeveloped or unprocessed; not cooked

potential – *n.* the unrealized possibility of doing something or reaching some goal

capacity – *n.* the ability to do work

vending – *adj.* of or related to sales of products or goods

consumer – *n.* someone who buys and uses up goods

e-commerce – *n.* online sales and the activities linked to it

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