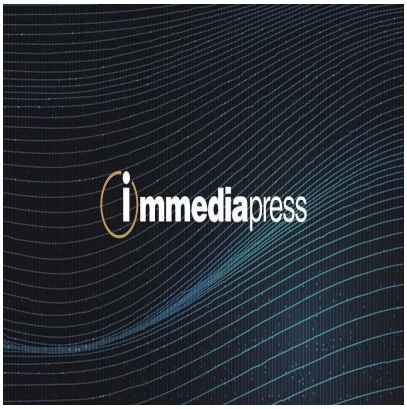


New Oxford Economics Study: Plastic Production Cap Would Raise Cost of Goods

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Targeted recycling policies would deliver 68% greater recycling gains than a 5% virgin plastic production cap while supporting affordability by minimizing impacts on household welfare

BRUSSELS, Sept. 16, 2026 /PRNewswire/ â?? Focusing waste collection and recycling policies where they can reduce the most mismanaged waste could achieve the same reduction in plastic leakage as a global cap on virgin plastics production, but at substantially lower economic costs and significantly more plastics recycling, according to a new Oxford Economics study commissioned by the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA).

Evaluating Policy Pathways to End Plastic Pollution is the second phase of Oxford Economicsâ?? analysis for ICCA. It builds on the 2024 study, Mapping the Plastics Value Chain, which documented the plastics industryâ??s global economic footprint and examined the potential consequences of constraining production.

The reportâ??s main comparison is between a scenario with a modest 5% cap on virgin plastics production (Scenario 1) and a scenario that targets stronger collection and recycling incentives to regions with the greatest potential to reduce mismanaged plastic waste (Scenario 2a).

Oxford Economics used the modeled leakage outcome under a 5% production cap as a common benchmark to calibrate the remaining scenarios. This allowed the study to compare each scenarioâ??s effects on recycling, prices, output and welfare on equal terms.

Compared with the 5% production cap scenario, targeted collection and recycling policies and incentives would deliver:

These effects would be felt around the world, though their scale would vary significantly by region. Under the production cap scenario, household welfare would decline by $38.5 billion in East Asia, $37.7

billion in Western Europe, $22.1 billion in North America, $8.8 billion in Southeast Asia, $6.1 billion in the Middle East and $6.0 billion in Latin America. Every region modeled would experience a decline in household welfare.

â??Plastics are deeply embedded in products and supply chains, and other materials cannot readily replace them in many applications,â?• said Alice Gambarin, one of the reportâ??s authors and associate director at Oxford Economics. â??That makes demand for plastics relatively inelastic. When virgin supply is capped, demand does not simply disappear or shift to other materials. Instead, prices rise across the plastics value chain, increasing costs for businesses and consumers and lowering household welfare.â?•

In contrast, targeting recycling incentives according to each regionâ??s potential to reduce mismanaged waste would achieve the same global leakage reduction at far lower economic cost. In that scenario, recycling could increase by 20.5 million metric tons in South Asia and 13.7 million metric tons in East Asia, the two regions where the model identified the greatest absolute opportunity for improvement.

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â??This study shows that environmental ambition and economic well-being do not have to be in conflict,â?• said Marco Mensink, ICCA council secretary and director general of Cefic. â??The global plastics pollution agreement is an opportunity to boost a circular economy worldwide by expanding plastic recycling and reuse, while tackling plastic waste pollution by prioritizing solid waste collection for the 2.7 billion people worldwide who still lack access.â?•

The findings reinforce the need for a global agreement that mobilizes finance, builds capacity, and enables governments to focus resources to tackle plastic waste leakage most effectively in their communities.

Oxford Economics conducted the analysis independently, and the conclusions reflect its views.

The full report and a fact sheet are available here.

International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA)

The International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) is an association of innovators, visionaries, solutions providers and product stewardship pioneers. Through ongoing innovation in chemistry and the constant improvement of safe chemicals management, the global chemical industry makes a significant contribution to a sustainable society: improving human health, protecting the environment, and delivering prosperity worldwide.

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Data di creazione
Settembre 16, 2026
Autore
redazione

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