

## DOMESTIC PROCESSING OF RPET SURGES AMID FLAT RECYCLING RATE

### Loss of Exports Absorbed by Domestic Markets

**December 16, 2019** – The National Association for PET Container Resources (NAPCOR) announced today the release of the *2018 PET Recycling Report*. The report cites a 2018 United States recycling rate of 28.9 percent for polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic bottles, essentially unchanged from the 2017 rate of 29.2 percent. Despite the flat recycle rate, purchases of US bottles by US reclaimers increased 16 percent to 1,673 million pounds compared to 1,442 million pounds in 2017 which more than offset declines by exports.

The recycling rate is derived by using the total volume of recycled PET material purchased by U.S. processors (reclaimers) and export markets in 2018 — 1,813 million pounds — taken as a percentage of the total volume of PET resin used in U.S. bottles and potentially available for recycling, 6,270 million pounds. Of that 1,813 million pounds collected, 1,673 million pounds was purchased and processed by domestic PET reclaimers, with the balance of collected material, 140 million pounds, sold to export markets, including Canada. Export volumes continued to see a decline, with 2018 being the lowest export fraction recorded since the year 2000, at just under eight percent of total collection. Even with PET exports declining by 50 percent, the domestic market was able to absorb more bottles and more than compensate for the loss.

“We are encouraged by the increase of domestic PET bottles purchased and domestic processing of RPET in 2018,” said Darrel Collier, NAPCOR Executive Director. “It is difficult to point to a single driver, but we have identified several factors that influenced this change including increased value of RPET driven by demand, region specific consumer education, and an uptick in content from brand owners.”

Combined end market usage of RPET saw segment shifts with increases in food/beverage as well as non-food and beverage bottles, while declines were seen in fiber, strapping, sheet and thermoforms. This shift is believed to be driven by growing interest in recycled content by consumer packaged goods companies, as well as tight supply and increased prices of virgin PET.

“We continue to be encouraged by brands and their commitment to utilize postconsumer PET content in their packaging,” states Tom Busard, NAPCOR Chairman, Chief Procurement Officer for Plastipak Packaging, Inc., and President of Clean Tech, Plastipak’s recycling affiliate. “The PET reclaimer industry is truly a critical piece in this change, supporting their customers with RPET needed for content requirements.”

NAPCOR continues to work to address the industry’s ongoing challenges, with particular focus on looking at methods to increase the amount of PET that gets recycled. This is the twenty-fourth year that the PET Recycling Report has been issued by NAPCOR, and the first year with new expanded content. The full *2018 PET Recycling Report* may be purchased on the NAPCOR website, [www.napcor.com](http://www.napcor.com).

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Founded in 1987, the **National Association for PET Container Resources (NAPCOR)** is the industry association for the polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic packaging industry in the United States, Canada and Mexico. NAPCOR is dedicated to promoting the PET package; to overcoming hurdles to the successful recycling of PET; and to communicating the attributes of the PET container as a sustainable package. Visit [www.napcor.com](http://www.napcor.com) to learn more about PET.

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