



TO: WTO/TBT National Notification and Enquiry Center of the People's Republic of China E-mail: tbt@aqsiq.gov.cn

RE: Notification: G/TBT/N/CHN/1211
Catalogue of Solid Wastes Forbidden to import into China by the End of 2017 (4 classes, 24 kinds)

From: Bob Gedert, President, National Recycling Coalition
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Subject: Response from the National Recycling Coalition (NRC) to Trade Restrictions of Secondary Materials prepared for Recycling

ISSUE

On July 18, 2017, China notified the World Trade Organization (WTO) of its intent to ban the import of certain scrap materials by year end. Among the items included on the list are most scrap plastics ("including polymers of ethylene, styrene, vinyl chloride and PET..."), mixed paper and slags and drosses. Following on its notification to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Government of China officially announced on July 21, 2017, it has "banned the importation of 24 categories of solid waste such as waste plastics, unsorted waste paper, waste raw textile materials, and vanadium slag that pose very high risk of environmental pollution."


On September 13, 2017: draft revised "GB 16487" Environmental Protection Control Standards for Imported Solid Wastes as Raw Materials, with further restrictions on allowable prohibitives.

WHO IS NRC?

The National Recycling Coalition is a non-profit organization that is focused on the promotion and enhancement of recycling in the United States. We are 23-affiliated recycling organizations strong, and have a network of more than 6,000 members that extends across waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting. The organization works to maintain a prosperous and productive recycling system that is committed to the conservation of natural resources, as well as accelerate sustainable approaches to the management of discarded materials. Our website: <https://nrcrecycles.org/>

DEFINITIONS

The China's State Policy Objective (July 18. 2017) quotes "For strict management of *solid waste* importation, completely prohibit the importation of *solid waste* with major environmental hazards and intense public reaction by the end of 2017; and by the end of 2019, gradually halt the importation of *solid waste* that can be replaced with domestic resources."



The NRC notes that the Trade Restrictions referred to by China applies to all secondary materials utilized as raw materials to produce new products or packaging. The material referenced is not “solid waste” in traditional terms, but rather “recyclables” as commonly referenced in most nations. Solid waste, by traditional definition, refers to refuse or trash that is disposed of in landfills or incinerators. This terminology confusion could generously be credited to translation concerns from Chinese to English, however the terminology does matter in the disposition of the material and the environmental platform of the issue.

The NRC definition of “Recycling” is:

“Recycling is a series of activities by which material that has reached the end of its current use is processed into material utilized in the production of new products.”

The material being referenced in these documents is best described through the term “recycling”, and we ask the WTO to embrace this term in dealing with this issue.

QUALITY STANDARDIZATION

Given the discussion above, recyclables delivered to China should be clean and within generally acceptable and allowable prohibitive levels. Through global trade, the allowable limits are set through best practices, and the assistance of standardization guides. The most widely utilized standardization guide for bale quality is the ISRI standard commodities and scrap market specifications, located at: <http://www.isri.org/recycling-industry/commodities-specifications#.WcFtXcjfrIU> These standards are embraced and utilized by recycling markets within North America and through ISRI member companies in at least 34 countries globally. We ask the WTO for consideration of utilizing the standards of bale quality utilizing these global ISRI adopted standards as a basis for resolving quality issues with China’s GB 16487 claim on allowable prohibitives.

RESPONSE TO TRADE IMPORTATION RESTRICTIONS

The NRC does not object to China’s motivation to protect its environment within its borders. In essence, we do object to a sharp December 31, 2017 cut-off of shipments from the United States on the false grounds that American recyclers are shipping “solid waste” that harms the environment. Barriers to trade require an honest assessment and reasonable terms toward resolution. The NRC requests the use of internationally accepted terminology, as well as the use of globally accepted bale quality standardization. We are willing to have honest discussions with our membership on quality bale shipments. However, we are in need of an extension of time beyond the looming December 31, 2017 import restriction deadline, and appeal for intervention from WTO for negotiations to adopt international quality standards.

Bob Gedert, NRC President