

# Chinese Policies Affect U.S. Recycling



For many years China has been a leading importer of recycled plastics and paper from across the globe. However, the Chinese government recently imposed stricter standards for the quality of imported recycled materials due to a growing concern over the environment. Historically, Chinese recycling facilities have accepted materials with “impurities” or waste contamination of up to 5%.

The new Chinese standards lower that threshold to only 1%. In short, recycling programs in the United States and elsewhere will have to do a better job at sorting and cleaning recycled materials. If recycling programs are unable to meet these new thresholds, exporters will be forced to send materials to other markets, which will increase costs, or reroute the materials to landfills.

Manufacturers rely on using high-quality recycled materials to produce new products, such as cereal boxes and shipping cartons. When food waste, debris, oils, or other materials contaminate these recycling streams it makes it more costly and difficult for the facilities to make new products. In addition, if it is too contaminated, it generates a new waste stream.

**How you can help!** When recycling, make sure to not add trash and to keep recyclable items “Empty, Clean, and Dry.” This will help us to continue diverting waste from landfills.