

# Connecticut Coalition for Sustainable Materials Management Meeting

## Meeting Minutes

September 28, 2022, Extended Producer Responsibility Working Group Meeting

Present: See Attachment A

Next meeting: November 15, 2022 at 1:00pm

Prepared by: Luciana Granstrand, DEEP

### I. Call to Order and Announcements

Meeting began at 1:01 pm.

Co-chair of the Connecticut Coalition for Sustainable Materials Management (CCSMM) Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) working group, Wilton's Town Administrator Matt Knickerbocker, provided welcoming remarks, introductions, and an overview of the meeting agenda. Co-chair Diana McCarthy-Bercury was unable to attend the meeting.

### II. Committee Reports

Co-chair Matt Knickerbocker reviewed the meeting's agenda. He shared that the focus would be a discussion on the impact of packing EPR programs on consumer prices.

A panel composed of the following guest speakers with expertise on the topic was presented to help the group understand the correlation between EPR prices and packaging.

Resa Dimino, a managing principal with RRS and a managing partner at Signalfire Group, a subsidiary of RRS, presented a study prepared for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The study compared prices for consumer goods in jurisdictions with and without EPR for packaging and printed paper policy to determine if the presence of the policy correlates to higher prices paid by consumers for the final products. The study found no correlation between the existence of EPR for packaging programs and product price through the empirical analyses of data collected from actual stores.

Dr. Satyajit Bose, professor at Columbia University, presented the economic impacts of EPR regulation on consumers in the consumer-packaged food sector. Dr. Bose's presentation focused on the economic analyses of different factors that affect a product price, noting that demand elasticity for packaged consumer goods and competition were the main drivers identified. The study acknowledged a caveat for the economic analyses regarding the food portion of the budget for most low-income consumers. Price impact will be higher than average in these communities because they already face market price disparities and spend a significant portion of their income on food and beverages; therefore, recycling

subsidies are recommended to minimize price impacts. The study's key finding is that a correlation between the imposition of EPR and price impact has to be less than one percent on grocery bills.

### **III. Roundtable**

Dr. Bose received questions about the differences between economic elasticity and unit elasticity and how it translates to market demands. A member pointed out the working group's need to study the life cycle costs of EPR products and their cost benefits. Another question was if Dr. Bose considered EPR's economic benefits when he concluded that it would increase grocery prices by less than one percent.

### **IV. Public Comment**

Members of the public were asked to use the "chat" or "raise hand" feature to indicate if they wanted to comment.

Virginia Walton, Town of Mansfield, asked Dr. Bose what the group could do to reduce the expected EPR price increase burden on low-income communities.

Resa Dimino, RRS Recycle.com. and Signalfire Group, asked Dr. Bose to clarify the conclusion of his study; there is no certainty that EPR would increase the cost of consumer goods, but if it happens, the price impact would be less than one percent.

Jennifer Heaton Jones, HRRRA, asked Dr. Bose to clarify if low-income communities, which already face high price disparity before any EPR consideration, would see, in the worst-case scenario, an increase from zero to one percent of the cost of packing after EPR policy implementation.

Tom Metzner, CT DEEP, asked Resa Dimino to share with the group how her study played out in Oregon's political process to pass an EPR packing law. Metzner also asked what the impact on recycling rates from EPR would be.

Bud McAllister, Partners in Healthy Communities, expressed hope to build a Recycling Center in New London and envisions a public-private partnership to accomplish that.

Rachel Ajayi, a member of the public, asked Dr. Bose if there are studies showing a correlation between places with no EPR policies but with cost impacts and places with EPR policies to compare these scenarios and see if there are cost benefits to make a case for EPR in some jurisdictions.

Brian Sear, New London, asked Dr. Bose to explain if EPR helps the environment even if its fees affect the end cost of products.

Resa Dimino spoke about the economic benefits of EPR since products will be destined for a recycling stream instead of being disposed of at a landfill. Dimino mentioned that RRS Recycle.com did a study for Connecticut looking at the impact of recycling on the State's economy.

Chaz Miller, a member of the public, enquired of Resa Dimino if the RRS study presented was inappropriate since it failed to consider local variabilities driving EPR costs. Miller also asked why EPR would impact packaging design if its packaging pricing fee is so small in the package's overall price. He questioned if presenters could show that EPR has no impact on prices. Lastly, Miller mentioned a study

from National Waste & Recycling Association that found no discernible impact on packaging and design due to EPR costs.

Calvin Lakhan gave the group an overview of his experience with EPR work in Ontario and British Columbia, Canada. Lakhan respectfully disagreed with the RSS study presented by Resa Dimino since, in his opinion, it failed to control variables that potentially impact the price of products, thus, not allowing the determination of whether EPR influences prices. Lakhan also discussed the challenges associated with EPR legislation and stated that he is an opponent of EPR's broad assumptions without understanding its fundamental mechanics. Lakhan commented that it would be prudent for Connecticut to assess its data before adopting legislation in this regard.

Tom Metzner, CT DEEP, shared that the current cost of managing recycling programs in Connecticut is about forty million dollars and aligns with the British Columbia study once currency values are accounted for.

Joseph Gresko, State Representative, shared his thoughts on how challenging the EPR policy-making process is.

Jennifer Heaton-Jones reminded the group that they are formed by municipalities interested in learning how EPR policies impact the cost of products at the grocery stores while considering that taxpayers are paying the cost and the burden of managing materials produced by manufacturers. Heaton-Jones supports the idea that manufacturers and producers should take responsibility for their product's life cycle.

Virginia Walton, Mansfield supported Heaton-Jones's comments and shared that all EPR programs in Connecticut are successful in the community she serves.

Resa Dimino, RSS, reminded Senator Gresko that studies show no evidence proving consumer prices increase due to EPR policies. In the worst-case scenarios, as Dr. Bose presented, the increase would be slight compared with the economic benefits.

Tom Metzner, CT DEEP, asked municipalities to send topics of interest for the next working group meetings to him, Chris Nelson, or Matt Knickerbocker.

## **V. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 2:25 pm.

The following working group meeting will be held on November 15, 2022 at 1:00 pm. The group plans to discuss household hazardous waste, tires, and batteries.

**Attachment A:**

Chris Nelson - CT DEEP
James Albis - CT DEEP
Luciana Granstrand - CT DEEP
Denise Raap (Denise Raap)
Stacey Leitch
Christine O'Neill - NVCOG
Carl Fortuna - Old Saybrook
Brian Sear - New London
Sam Saunders - Ellington
Pamela Roach - SCRCOG
Bill Watkins - Coventry
Virginia Walton - Mansfield
Matt Knickerbocker - Co-chair CCSMM
Laura Pointek - CT DEEP
Emma MacDonald - CT DEEP
Elly Moore - CT DEEP
Tom Metzner CT DEEP
Chelsey Hahn - CT DEEP
Dr. Satyajit Bose - Columbia University
Resa Dimino - RRS
Catherine Matzul - CT DEEP
Courtney Lindberg-Manchester
BudMcAllister – New London
Kevin Sullivan – CT DEEP
Lori Vitagliano - RWA/HazWaste Central
Maureen Goulet
Mya Sjogren - US EPA
Katherine Bruns - West Hartford
Anna Shugrue - NECCOG
Ed Mone - Thomaston
Chris Lippke - Canterbury
Lena Tan - CT DEEP
Stephanie Bahramian - Bloomfield
Kim O'Rourke - Middletown
Jennifer Heaton-Jones - HRRRA
Joseph Gresko - Bridgeport

Lauren
Kara
Christopher
Brooke
Maria
Esther Fishman
Hannah Scholes
Kristen
Peter
McKenna
Dana
Carolyn
Joy
Racheal Ajayi
Alli Kingfisher
Janine Bogar
Sydney
Waneta
Abigail Sztein
Jessica Nadeau
Will
Kellie Kish
Robbie McLuckie
Paul Aresta
Joe Canino
Sean Hughes
Sarah Bloomquist
Gaia
Josh Hughes
Linda
Andrew
Kaelah Smith
Mike Smaha
John sheerin
Lew
Michelle Goetsch
Mike Noel
Kris Coperine

Brian Sear
Brian Bartram
Casey
Helen
Brian Sullivan
Scott Cassel
Michael
Debra
Jennifer Heaton-Jones
Delia
Lisa Fecke
Chris
Daniel McGowan
Liz Connelly
Reagan Kenney
Kristine VITELLI
Rick Eldridge
Katie
Jennifer Baum
Mary Vihstadt
Geraldo
Ian
Ashley Zane
Diane
Susan Bush
Fernanda
Jillaine Dellis
Thomas
Melissa Lavoie
Asila
Susan Eastwood
Chaz Miller
Calvin Lakhan
Gary
John Hite
John Hite
Jim
Susan Barney

Karen Weeks
Laura Healey
Mike Manfre
David Boomer
Garth Hickle
Amanda Cox
Carol
Brad Weeks
Joe DeRisi
Paul Catino
Krishna Winston
Tameka Taylor