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## **Berry growers commit to 100% recycle-ready packaging**

February 4, 2020

In another step to further reduce the produce industry's environmental impact, major North American fresh berry producers announced their commitment to use 100 percent recycle-ready packaging by 2025. The California Strawberry Commission, the North American Blueberry Council, Asociacion nacional de Exportadores de Berries (Aneberries, Mexico), members of the National Berry Crops Initiative, and South American exporters are joining to maintain industry leadership in sustainable



packaging.

The cornerstone of this collaboration is the commitment to new label standards, which will optimize

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the recycle readiness of all berry clamshells throughout North America. The groups are further unified in their commitments to encourage consumer recycling of clamshells and establish new purchase specifications for packaging manufacturers. By working together as competitive collaborators, these actions will create economies of scale to reduce costs, and stimulate a closed-loop circular economy that recycles berry clamshells back into new berry clamshells.

This commitment to 100 percent recycle-ready clamshells complements existing actions that use recycled content to make berry clamshells. For over a decade, berry clamshells have been among the food packages that use the most California post-consumer recycled content in the U.S. For example, it is common for California berry clamshells to contain more than 50 percent recycled content.

“Berry farming has a long history of innovation and leadership that once again came together to make this ambitious pledge,” said Rick Tomlinson, president of the California Strawberry Commission. “Achieving 100 percent recycle-ready packaging represents the type of continuous improvement that is common among farmers as they strive for ever improving efficiency.”

“The North American Blueberry Council is pleased to join this coalition of berry industry leadership to help achieve this important and ambitious initiative,” said Kasey Cronquist, president of NABC. “This commitment to 100 percent recycle-ready packaging reflects a team effort and our continued focus on helping our growers, shippers and industry partners attain a goal that no one organization could accomplish alone.”

“Mexico plays an important role in creating value in the world supply of fresh berries, including the U.S. market. Our members are committed to forward-thinking sustainable practices and we are aligned in the collaboration efforts to collectively make a difference with more sustainable packaging,” said Aldo Mares Benavides, president of Aneberries. “This reflects our mission as an organization where profitability can’t be separated from the responsibility of sustainability.”

“Clamshell packaging revolutionized the ability of berry growers to transport their fruit to consumers nationwide,” said Henry Bierlink, president of the National Berry Crops Initiative. “Now, the industry is working together on the next phase of that revolution, one that preserves the ability to safely transport fresh berries to market while minimizing product damage, reducing food waste, and demonstrating ongoing environmental stewardship. NBCI is a committed partner in this berry clamshell sustainability initiative.”

Since the 1990s, many berry farmers shifted to the use of clear plastic packaging shaped as a vented box with a hinged lid, also known as a clamshell. This type of packaging created a market to convert recycled plastic water bottles into clear, lightweight containers that protect the fruit from damage and contamination, thus reducing food waste. Further, this type of packaging decreases greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the amount of raw resources needed to make the packaging, and reducing fuel use as lighter packaging makes lighter shipments.

Beyond the climate-friendly reduction in resource use and greenhouse gases, enhanced plastic recycling generates jobs and economic benefits for local communities, creating a circular economy to produce, collect, recycle and reprocess berry clamshells.

Individual berry companies are making commitments to explore more sustainable and scalable solutions that include:

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- Encouraging material recycling handlers and consumers to recycle more clamshells,
  - Including post-consumer recycled content in clamshell packaging,
  - Supporting innovation of new materials that are readily recyclable and/or compostable.

A resource website has been launched to provide more information about sustainable berry packaging. For more information, visit [BerrySustainable.com](https://BerrySustainable.com).

Additional South American partners have also pledged their commitment to 100 percent recycle-ready packaging by 2025, including Argentinean Blueberry Committee, Chilean Blueberry Committee, and ProArandanos (Peru).

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