

Plastics Extended Producer Responsibility & Regulatory Framework

The Plastics Extended Producer Responsibility & Regulatory Framework was a key discussion aimed at addressing the evolving landscape of plastic waste management and sustainability. The session brought together industry experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to deliberate on the challenges and opportunities within the EPR framework.

This session focused on the pivotal role of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and regulatory frameworks in driving accountability and sustainability in plastic waste management. It explored industry best practices, policy mechanisms, and regulatory enforcement strategies essential for transitioning towards a circular economy. The discussion emphasised the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration, innovative approaches to effective plastic waste recycling, and strict compliance with Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) guidelines to ensure long-term environmental sustainability.

The session provided actionable insights to enhance the implementation of EPR policies and foster systemic change. It also served as a platform to discuss recent developments, including the new Draft Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, and their potential impact on EPR implementation and waste management practices in India.

Through presentations and interactive dialogue, this session aimed to provide policymakers, practitioners, and researchers with actionable takeaways.

Speakers

- Mr Tusar Ranjan Pattnaik, National Head EPR (Sustainability), Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt Ltd, Bangalore
- Mr Amit Patel, Head, Business Development & Partnerships, NEPRA, Ahmedabad
- Mr. Debarth Banerjee, a techie turned social entrepreneur
- Mr. Prabhjot Sodhi, Senior Programme Director at the Centre for Environment Education

Presentations and Key Messages

Mr Tusar Ranjan Pattnaik (Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt. Ltd.) highlighted the importance of partnerships between brand owners, government agencies, and NGOs in achieving net-zero emissions. He noted that collaborative efforts have been a key driver in reducing the carbon footprint associated with plastic production, use, and disposal. Mr. Pattnaik pointed to a significant growth in EPR registrations: in 2021, only 321 brand owners were registered under EPR guidelines, but by 2023, over 40,000 Producers, Importers, and Brand Owners (PIBOs) were registered on the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) portal, reflecting increased awareness and regulatory compliance among businesses. Regarding Plastic Waste Collection Targets, he stated that initially, brand owners were mandated to collect 70% of the plastic waste they generated; with updated guidelines, a 100% collection target has been implemented, demonstrating India's commitment to stringent waste management.

He also outlined Key Policy Updates, including the ban on 12 single-use plastic items in India as of July 2023, and a new requirement from February 2024 for raw material suppliers to register on the CPCB portal, enhancing traceability and accountability across the supply chain. Mr. Pattnaik emphasised the recycling industry's bright future, especially in reducing plastic waste, e-waste, and

tyre waste, noting that while challenges persist, they present opportunities for innovation and sustainable growth in waste management.

Increased awareness of waste segregation at the source has led to significant improvements in urban waste management. Over the last four to five years, cities have experienced noticeable progress in managing plastic waste more effectively. Mr. Pattnaik emphasised his optimism about India's future in sustainable waste management, highlighting the collective responsibility of stakeholders in achieving the vision of a developed and sustainable India by 2047, aligning with the nation's broader developmental goals.

Mr Amit Patel (NEPRA) provided a comprehensive overview of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). He described EPR as a structured framework aimed at ensuring the sustainable disposal of plastic packaging, detailing the involvement of five key entities: Producers (plastic packaging manufacturers), Third-Party Manufacturers (TPMs), Importers (those bringing in goods with plastic packaging), Brand Owners (who market products with plastic packaging), and Plastic Waste Processors (such as recyclers, cement factories, and road construction industries). He also clarified the distinct characteristics and recycling challenges by categorising plastic waste into the following categories: Rigid Plastics, Flexible Plastics, Multi-Layer Packaging (MLP), Compostable Plastics, and Biodegradable Plastics.

Mr. Patel then delved into innovations in EPR implementation. He highlighted the introduction of a new category for third-party manufacturers on the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) portal, alongside the mandatory marking of plastics with index numbers and proper labelling to ensure transparency in waste tracking. In terms of circular economy initiatives, he pointed to the gradual increase in the use of recycled plastic granules in manufacturing and the complete traceability of the plastic waste supply chain through GST-linked data and invoices, which ensures accountability and transparency.

Mr Patel concluded by reflecting on the significant transformation in waste management practices seen between 2018 and 2024. His insights demonstrated the growing effectiveness of regulatory frameworks and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policies in enhancing both recycling and overall waste disposal practices.