



The Association of  
Plastic Recyclers



# ECONOMIC OVERVIEW AND CASE STUDIES EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## OVERVIEW

The Grocery Rigid Plastics Recycling Economic Overview and Case Studies, prepared by Brown Sustainability Solutions, Inc., and with additional financial support from the American Chemistry Council (ACC), have been developed for the benefit of the grocery supermarket industry to provide valuable economic-based data demonstrating the value of recovering rigid plastic containers generated from supermarket operations.

## BACKGROUND

As supermarket chains look for opportunities to reduce waste as part of strategic zero waste objectives, the recovery of valuable rigid plastics from supermarket deli, bakery, seafood, floral and pharmacy departments is gaining momentum.

Responding to requests from supermarket sustainability leaders to help them better understand the comparative economies of three methods for recycling grocery rigid plastics (baling, stacking and single stream), several large supermarket retailers were approached and agreed to share their hands-on experiences, effectively demonstrating how to collect, move and market recovered rigid containers and pharmacy bottles. In addition, using knowledge gained over four years of researching grocery rigid plastics recycling and incorporating historic pricing, an Economic Overview was created to provide an easy to use economic comparative of the three handling methods.

## ECONOMIC OVERVIEW RESULTS

The Economic Overview reveals that **once sufficient volume** of rigid plastic containers (and pharmacy bottles) is realized, centralized **Baling** of rigid plastics is economically justifiable and offers the most attractive revenue return.

Alternatively **Stacking** (nested) pails and buckets offers incremental revenue at market prices lower than baling, however, combined with waste cost avoidance, this handling method does result in economic advantages.

The **Single Stream** method of recycling grocery rigid plastics typically does not offer any revenue and results in costs similar to traditional waste disposal. However, this method offers grocery stores ease and simplicity.

Over the last four years, the Association of Postconsumer Plastics Recyclers (APR), North America's largest plastic reclaimers alliance, has actively researched and promoted the recovery of grocery rigid plastics. APR looks forward to soliciting greater industry participation in its efforts to recover greater volume of clean plastic for reclamation. Please visit [www.recyclegroceryplastics.org](http://www.recyclegroceryplastics.org) for additional information and resources on recycling grocery rigid plastics.