The Wrap Up
PROMOTING THE SOFT PLASTICS CIRCULAR ECONOMY recycling.kiwi.nz

Eleven years on: a new chapter for soft plastic recycling

Eleven years ago this November, soft plastic recycling began at 70 stores across Auckland. What started as a new way to keep bags and wrappers out of landfill has grown into a scheme shaped by community enthusiasm, strong partnerships, and a determination to find lasting uses for the plastic we collect.

Some readers may remember the launch at New World Mount Roskill on 25 November 2015. Hon Nick Smith, then Minister for the Environment, officially opened the Scheme, with TVNZ and TV3 news teams there to capture the moment. Take a look back.

As consumers embraced soft plastic recycling, collections quickly expanded to Hamilton, Christchurch, Wellington, Dunedin and Queenstown. At first, we exported the collected material to Australia, where it became plastic benches and other long-lasting products; but when those overseas markets dried up, collections had to pause. Restarting depended on building processing capacity here at home.

That challenge marked a turning point. Future Post, followed by saveBOARD and, more recently, Pact Recycling, now provide processing capacity for the approximately 1,000 tonnes of soft plastic we collect each year. Their contribution has helped give New Zealand's soft plastic material a new life here in Aotearoa.

Now we are exploring what might come next. Through our partnership with Soft Plastic Stewardship Australia (SPSA), we have followed IQ Renew's progress at its soft plastic processing plant in New South Wales. There, optical sorting separates post-consumer soft plastics into different grades of recyclate, with the highest grades offering the potential to be made back into packaging.

Could the soft plastics collected through our Scheme follow a similar path? Our export trial with IQ Renew will help us understand how our material can be graded, and where those sorted plastics could find their next use.

Getting the trial under way has taken perseverance. Today's stricter rules on the movement of mixed plastics make exporting very different from the Scheme's early days. Securing the necessary approvals to send material to Australia took almost a year.

That work has now paid off - our first trial container has arrived in Sydney, cleared customs and been delivered to IQ Renew.

As we mark 11 years, we remain focused on finding new pathways for our plastic, preparing for growth and ensuring we are ready to transition to a mandatory stewardship programme.

Ngā mihi nui

Lyn Mayes, KSM
Soft Plastic Recycling Scheme Manager

Craig Miller
CEO The Packaging Forum



And a huge thanks to Donna and Carole who have been with the Scheme since day one.



VALPAK DATA COLLATION

The third webinar in our series supporting producer members with their soft plastic consumption reporting provided an update on data collation. Valpak shared a summary of data received from 25 producers, representing some of New Zealand's largest brands

AIP WEBINAR

THE FUTURE OF SOFT PLASTICS

The Australian Institute of Packaging recently examined advances, challenges and opportunities for soft plastics across Australia and New Zealand. Lyn Mayes shared the latest on New Zealand's soft plastics recycling scheme, one of the world's longest-running voluntary stewardship schemes for soft plastics.

Watch the webinar

Password: AIP-261007



PLASTICS NZ LUNCH & LEARN

WHAT MAKES A RECYCLING SCHEME WORK?

Lyn Mayes and Nicole McCann, Caps and Lids Recycling Scheme Manager, joined Plastics NZ for a Lunch & Learn webinar on 20 October, sharing their perspectives on what makes a recycling scheme successful.

Lyn outlined how New Zealand's soft plastic recycling programme has grown from 14 brand partners in 2015 to around 200 members, more than 350 drop-off locations and four processing facilities today. Almost 90% of New Zealanders now have access to the network.

The discussion emphasised how partnerships improve efficiency and broaden processing options. Lyn highlighted three priorities for growth: extended producer responsibility, robust reporting and compliance systems, and ongoing investment in processing infrastructure and end markets.

Sustaining demand for products made with recycled soft plastics is essential to building a more resilient circular economy.

Watch the webinar

NAU MAI TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

Allpress

GSF Fresh

Taghleef Industries

Timberline Landscape Supplies

Wildfolk

Not a member?
Come and join us!



CELEBRATING LEAFT FOODS' RECOGNITION

Canterbury-based Scheme member Leaft Foods was recognised in TIME's best inventions of 2026 for Leaft Blade, a ready-to-drink pouch containing protein extracted from lucerne leaves.

Explore TIME's Best Inventions of 2026



OUR PARTNERS - **REDLINE**

Our partnership with Redline Transport began in July 2022, when the company started collections for the Scheme's Tauranga launch. Redline has since become a key part of our service, collecting soft plastics from supermarkets in Auckland and Waikato.

We asked Managing Director Greg Hutchinson about Redline's beginnings.

"I began in 1978 as an owner-driver in Andrew & Andrew Transport's RED Express Division. NZ Express took over the division in the 1980s, followed by the formation of Blue Streak Parcels for the Five-Star Group in the 1990s. By then, I was contracting as an owner-driver with three trucks."

"Transpac later took over Five Star, which then regrouped under TNL Group, now MOVe Logistics. In 2008, we left TNL Group to become fully independent, based in Drury. Today, we have 10 trucks and 12 staff — a close-knit family."

Are you one of our **11,000+** Facebook followers?

If not, head on over and like the Love NZ Soft Plastics Recycling Facebook page and keep up to date with everything happening in the soft plastic space as well as promoting your support! We value your feedback!

facebook.com/softplasticrecycling



Soft Plastic Recycling comes to New World Balclutha

Soft plastics recycling is back at New World Balclutha after almost a decade, giving Clutha District shoppers a convenient local option following many requests for its return.

Owner-operator Josh Lee worked with Logan Black of Manco Environmental to bring the service back to the community, utilising the Manco Compactor Bin System, a technology-driven solution for collecting post-consumer soft plastics in-store. New World Balclutha is the first South Island store to introduce this new recycling technology.

Using the machine is easy – just make sure your soft plastics are clean, empty and dry before dropping them off.



Kate Eastoe, Lyn Mayes, Craig Miller, Mayor Grant Smith, Jason Stockhill at the launch of soft plastic recycling in Palmerston North

EXPANDING AND ENHANCING COLLECTIONS

Palmerston North celebrates soft plastics recycling milestone

Palmerston North residents have dropped off more than four tonnes of soft plastics since the recycling trial began in July – equivalent to around 600,000 bags and wrappers diverted from landfill.

Mayor Grant Smith, councillors and council officials joined Craig Miller of The Packaging Forum, Scheme Manager Lyn Mayes, local Scheme members, and Woolworths representatives Jason Stockhill and Kate Eastoe at Woolworths The Plaza on 18 September to celebrate the milestone.

A big thank you to the Council's Resource Recovery team, Scheme members and partners, and everyone in the community supporting the trial.

SOFT PLASTIC RECYCLING AUDIT

INVESTING IN EVIDENCE-BASED DATA

We've commissioned Sunshine Yates Consulting to carry out this year's audit of soft plastics collected at selected stores in Auckland and Bay of Plenty. This is our 7th year of auditing soft plastic collections and it provides insights into what people are recycling and importantly highlights the sort of contamination we want to avoid.

Over two days, 15,143 items amounting to 105kg of bags and wrappers were sorted into 29 categories to build a clearer picture of what people are recycling. The five most common items in our soft plastic bins in the 2026 survey are:

- Chip packets
- Bread bags
- Fresh produce bags
- Coffee, tea and drink packaging
- Confectionery packaging

Together, these five categories accounted for 40% of soft plastic collected in the survey.

Contamination remains low at 4.4% with the main contaminant being a bag of coffee capsules which had been put in the soft plastic recycling bin.

Help reduce contamination: check what you put in the soft plastic recycling bin.



BUILDING PROCESSING CAPACITY

On its way with IQ Renew!

Another milestone achieved as Greg and Sam Hutchinson from Redline loaded 60+ bales of soft plastic collected across Auckland and Tauranga into a 40-foot container destined for IQ Renew.

It's exciting to see the trial moving from planning to action as we explore further opportunities for the soft plastics collected through the Scheme.

A big thank you to the Council's Resource Recovery team, Scheme members and partners, and everyone in the community supporting the trial.

If you're not buying recycled, you're not recycling!

NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



What does it take to recycle plastic and why isn't it being done? | 60 Minutes Australia

Australian recyclers, including IQ Renew, have been vocal about the challenges facing the sector following the Australian Government's decision to shelve plans for mandatory recycled-content requirements in packaging. The industry has highlighted the recent collapse of Recycling Plastics Australia as evidence of the need for stronger policy support. On Sunday 60 Minutes Australia featured IQ Renew following filming at the plant and an in-depth interview with owner Daniel Gallagher, who has publicly stated that long-term viability for recycling businesses will require the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations. Please get in contact with us if you have any questions on this news item or the IQ Renew situation.

Check it out here



Japan advances multilayer-plastic recycling

A new development in Japan is tackling one of the more difficult recycling challenges: multilayer and composite plastic packaging.

The Yuki Circular Factory in Ibaraki Prefecture processes composite plastics without first separating the different polymer layers, instead converting the mixed material into recycled pellets. The facility began full operation in April 2026 and is described as Japan's first plant dedicated to material recycling of composite plastics. The recycled material is not a like-for-like substitute for virgin plastic but is being used for applications such as pallets and other moulded products.

Read about Japan's new recycling facility

UK gives producers a greater role in shaping recyclability rules

PackUK and the UK Packaging PRO have introduced a new process for updating the Recyclability Assessment Methodology (RAM), giving producers and other stakeholders a more structured, evidence-led route to propose changes. For RAM 2028, the organisations will focus on a smaller number of priority areas, including guidance for take-back schemes, as the new annual update process is developed. The current RAM 2027 materials assessment guidance assesses packaging through collection, sortation, reprocessing and application, using green, amber and red ratings to determine recyclability.

Read the RAM27 guidance



Polytag recognised by TIME

Polytag UV Tag has been named one of TIME's Best Inventions of 2026. Its technology uses invisible UV tags on packaging that can be detected by optical scanners at recycling facilities, helping provide information about packaging and its recycling journey.

Read more here

FROM OUR PROCESSING PARTNERS

LEADING THE WAY TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY FOR PLASTIC



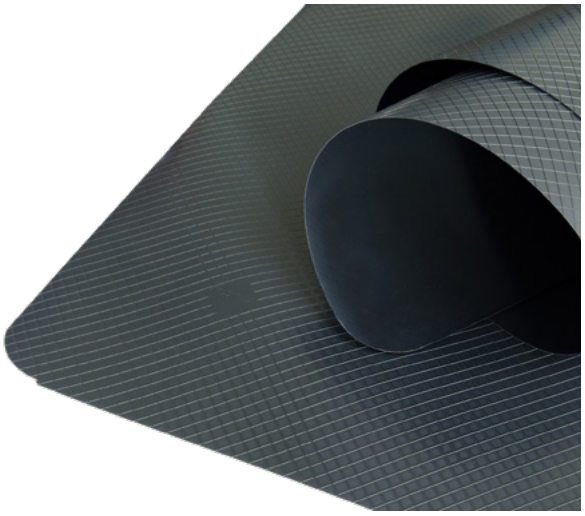
Future Post's recycled plastic products are being put to use in parks and schools throughout New Zealand

At Auckland's Cornwall Park, the posts protect a magnificent Algerian oak, while durable bollards carved with decorative designs help manage vehicle access. Future Post has also enjoyed working with young gardeners. Children at Kerikeri Kindergarten enthusiastically helped founder Jerome Wenzlick install a garden bed, while primary school students in Porirua created a beautiful artwork to thank the company for two new beds. Whether protecting treasured trees or inspiring young gardeners, these projects show how New Zealand's waste plastic can serve a new purpose.

The team at Future Post thank the Soft Plastics Recycling Scheme for their continued support in making projects like these possible.

PACT RECYCLING

As well as underground cable covering, Pact Recycling NZ is turning soft plastic material collected through the Scheme into other durable products including slip sheets which are a lightweight, space-saving alternative to traditional wooden pallets.





saveBOARD

Rather than relying solely on virgin building materials, Woolworths is incorporating emerald green saveBOARD panels into store fit-outs, including self-checkout areas, trolley bays and milk fridge surrounds. What makes these panels remarkable is their origin: they are manufactured from used food and beverage cartons and soft plastics collected from Woolworths stores. The model is simple but powerful, creating a true circular economy in action, where waste generated by supermarkets is converted into valuable building products and then returned to the very places where it originated.

Paul Charteris, Founder of saveBOARD, shares the story of how difficult-to-recycle soft plastics are being given a second life as building materials. The initiative demonstrates how innovative thinking can reduce landfill waste, lower demand for virgin resources, and create practical products with real commercial value.

Watch the video