

# Why we need change in the plastic recycling sector

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Plastic-phobia is a growing phenomenon. Fear of all things plastic, driven by consumers, who forget how convenient and ubiquitous plastic is. And while the industry is responding to the greater calls for recycling – both from consumers and legislators, supply of recycled feedstock is challenged.

Plastic packaging is more complex than ever before as it has moved beyond functionality to a marketing tool. But we need to strip it back to a simpler level and encourage design for recycle at inception of new product development.

We are in a situation where in some markets prices for virgin materials are lower than for the recycled materials, yet producers are under enormous pressure to use – and be seen to use – recycled materials. The issues are collection, quality and reprocessing capacity.

How we address these issues and make greater strides towards a circular economy is something that clearly needs to be discussed, with conferences such as the **Circularity for Polymers: The ICIS Recycling Conference** which took place in Berlin and the forthcoming **ICIS Asian Recycling and Sustainability Conference** taking place in Bangkok in February 2020, presents the opportunity to understand the changing market and discuss any industry developments.

The EU has set the bar with the Single Use Plastic Directive, requiring higher collection rates– even with 2018 recovery rates for PET bottles in Europe at 63%, 55% in the UK. The European country PET collection rates range from 21% - 96% reflecting the differences in systems, consumer participation and government ability to prioritise investment in waste management. This lack of standardisation in everything from waste infrastructure to final R-PET product specification continue to present as many challenges as opportunities for one of the most developed recycled markets in the plastic industry.

Helen spoke at the [Circularity for Polymers: The ICIS Recycling Conference](#) on November 5 in Berlin, Germany.