

# Coca Cola and Nestle Show Signs of Support for Improved Recycling Laws

by Rachel Cernansky on 08.12.11



Image: DeusXFlorida via flickr

Of the 224 billion beverage containers sold in the U.S. every year, only about 29 percent are recycled. Companies have been blamed in the past for not doing more to increase that rate—but that may now be changing, according to reports that Coca-Cola and Nestlé Waters North America have said they would support state laws to make producers financially responsible for collecting and recycling post-consumer beverage packaging.

A new report from shareholder advocacy group **As You Sow**, which has worked on this issue for years, said that: "The Coca-Cola Company, historically opposed to container deposit systems, indicated it is now "neutral" on a deposit system administered by an independent third party, an apparent softening of its position."

Commitment to increasing sustainability throughout the full lifecycle of products is crucial to any significant progress. SustainableBusiness.com reports that Amy Galland, Ph.D., **As You Sow's** Research Director and author of the study, said, "Several leading beverage companies continue to make steady incremental progress on source reduction but have not demonstrated strong commitments to using recycled content - a significant driver in reducing the environmental impact of packaging."

The report, "Waste & Opportunity: U.S. Beverage Container Recycling Scorecard and Report," discusses corporate efforts to promote extended producer responsibility (EPR) laws—similar to existing laws in Canada and Europe—in order to raise recycling rates.

From **As You Sow**:

"The major development since our last survey has been the willingness of leading beverage companies to consider new legislative mandates requiring them to take responsibility for their post-consumer packaging," said Conrad MacKerron, Senior Director of **As You Sow's** Corporate Social Responsibility Program. "Many beverage and consumer packaged goods companies pay fees in other countries to finance recovery of their packaging. It's significant that companies are finally acknowledging the need to take responsibility in the U.S. as well."

**As You Sow** also has a beverage scorecard that evaluates new and ongoing efforts by beverage producers to: reduce source materials, create recyclable product packaging, and increase container recovery rates.

Warning: no company received an A. There are a few Bs and Cs, and there are a whole lot of Fs. The industry has work to do.