

# SUSTAINABLE TIMES



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## PACKAGING INNOVATION

Redesigning packaging for sustainability keeps opening doors to creative advances in materials, techniques, and production methods. The key challenge is to find better alternatives that still match current packaging's shelf life, performance, and manufacturing quality. In some cases, the switch results in only minor changes and can be made easily, with many products already successfully launched using these solutions. However, certain packaging types have unique requirements that make this transition difficult. For these situations, new materials, improved processes, upgraded equipment, or less demanding specifications may be necessary.

APC has made progress in a few challenging development areas that are worth noting.

PACKAGING INNOVATION |  
PG 1-2

CA SB343 "TRUTH IN  
LABELING" LAW | PG 3

EXTENDED PRODUCER  
RESPONSIBILITY (EPR) | PG  
3-4

IMPORTANT UPCOMING  
DATES (2026) | PG 4

OUR MISSION | PG 5

SUSTAINABLE TIMES

## PACKAGING INNOVATION CONT.

### HIGH-BARRIER SPICE AND SEASONING POUCHES

- Spices, seasonings, and dry mixes are typically stored for extended periods, with an expectation of maintained freshness, making barrier performance crucial. These products are frequently packed in containers holding multiple packets, often utilizing multilayer structures that incorporate paper and are designed for easy opening and tearing. Packaging lines for these items commonly operate at speeds of 1,000 packages per minute or higher. A primary drawback is that such packaging is generally single-use due to the varied materials employed, necessitating disposal as waste after use. The overarching objective is to transition to recyclable compositions that maintain equivalent performance.
- In response, APC has developed an innovative 2-ply construction that utilizes significantly less material compared to current solutions and demonstrates strong performance on horizontal form fill seal (HFFS) equipment. This alternative provides robust barrier properties, effective sealing, and reliable tear performance, with paper comprising the majority of the structure. The package design continues to undergo evaluation for broader packaging applications and is currently being tested on additional equipment. From a sustainability perspective, the material offers a reduced carbon footprint, improved life cycle benefits, and is specifically engineered for recyclability within the curbside mixed paper waste stream.



### SNACK PACKAGING

- Chip bags and similar snack packaging are typically made on vertical form-fill-seal (VFFS) machines, using materials designed for excellent barrier properties, strong seals, and durability through shipping. These packages can feature a back lap seal, which means the inner surface must bond to the outer surface—a design that requires material compatibility. This lap seal reduces material use, increasing profit per package. However, most current snack packaging cannot be recycled and ends up as waste after use.
- APC has achieved advancements in this product area and has successfully tested an all-polyethylene laminate targeted for front-of-store drop-off recycling, using VFFS equipment with a lap seal. This unique lamination was specifically created to offer a suitable process window, enabling the package's inner seal to bond with the outer surface while offering the required barrier properties and package performance.



## CA SB343 “TRUTH IN LABELING” LAW

California SB343, also known as the “Truth in Labeling” law, was designed to reduce misleading packaging labels and set strict standards for what can be labeled as recyclable. As part of this legislation, a study was conducted to determine which materials are considered recyclable in California. The study required that, to qualify as recyclable, a material must be collected by systems serving at least 60% of the population and sorted into appropriate streams by at least 60% of facilities across the state.

A key outcome of this research was the establishment of new requirements regarding the use of the chasing arrows symbol, which is often part of resin identification codes. Packaging that does not



meet the MCS recycling criteria can no longer display the chasing arrows on products manufactured after October 4, 2026. This change also affected the How2Recycle label system for certain film and paper products, shifting their designation from “widely recyclable” to “check locally.”

## EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY (EPR)

Extended producer responsibility (EPR) laws are expanding, with Maryland, Maine, and Washington requiring producer registration or reporting in 2026. Policies differ by state, especially California’s SB 54, which mandates plastic reduction, recyclable or compostable packaging redesign, and increased reuse/refill. Unlike other states, California requires these changes by law.

	2023	Jan 1 2027	Jan 1 2030	Jan 1 2032
<b>Source Reduction Plastic and Components</b>	Baseline	10%	20%	25%
<b>Reuse / Refill</b>		>2%	>4%	>10%

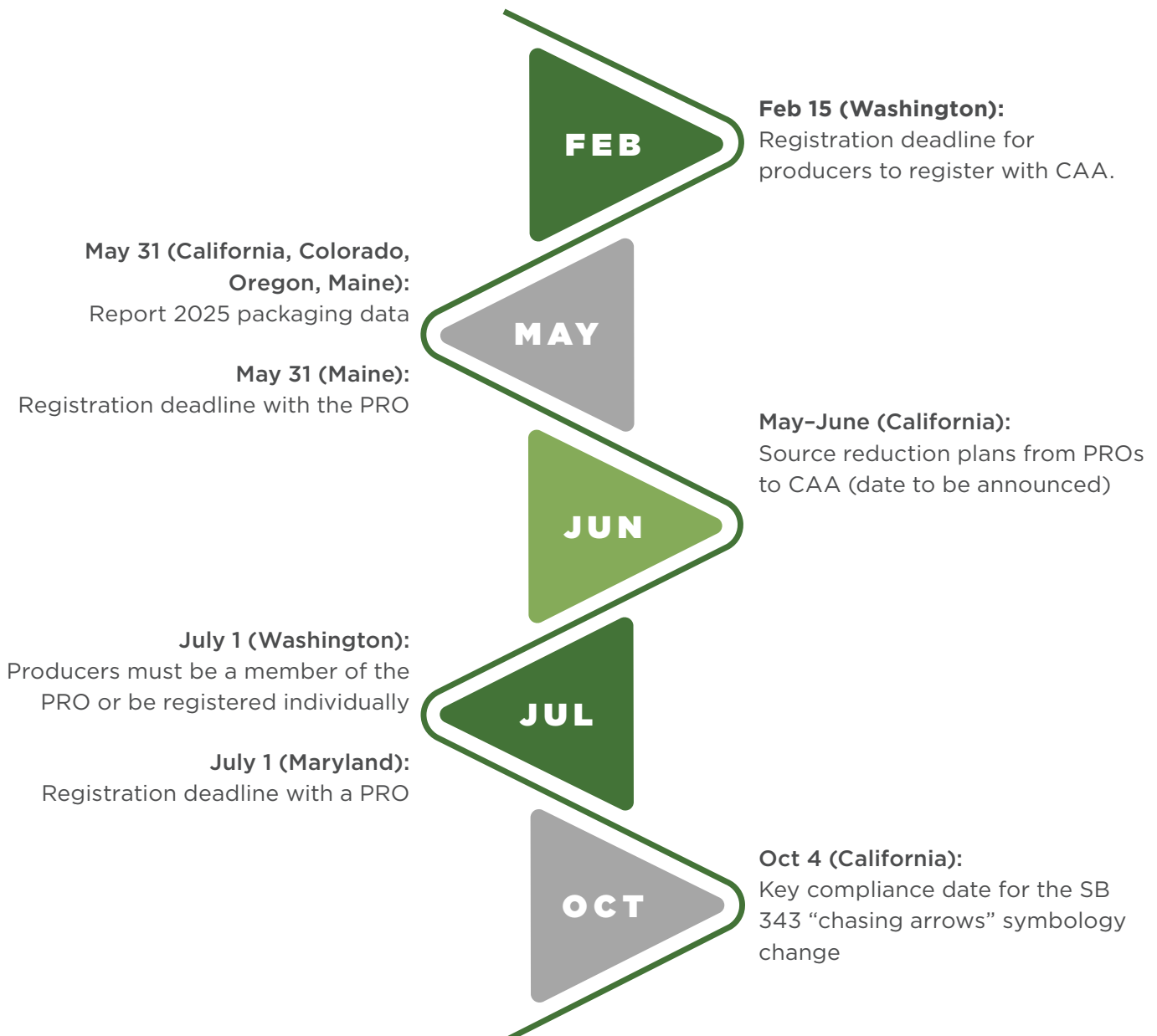
*Figure 1: CA EPR Source Reduction and Refill Requirements*

## EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY (EPR) CONT.

Producers have raised concerns about meeting the aggressive source reduction requirements. The Circular Action Alliance (CAA), California’s producer responsibility organization, will coordinate program compliance: producers must submit individual plans, which CAA will consolidate for CalRecycle approval. Producers’ progress may vary, and a credit-trading mechanism is under consideration. Some reductions are expected from the food service sector, not solely packaging.

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## IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES (2026)



## OUR MISSION

Sustainable Times is a quarterly newsletter compiled by American Packaging Corporation that is designed to educate, provide industry highlights and keep you informed of sustainable solutions being developed by APC. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your sales representative or Jeff Travis at [jtravis@americanpackaging.com](mailto:jtravis@americanpackaging.com).

