

In November 2023, the U.S. Plastics Pact — an alliance of NGOs, brands, and manufacturers committed to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s vision of a circular economy for plastics — released approved Principles for Certification of Post-Consumer Recycled Content for companies reporting to their 2025 Roadmap. Target 4 of the Roadmap is to achieve an average of 30% PCR or Responsible Bio-Based Content in Packaging, and the Pact is advising Activators to begin utilizing third-party certifications to validate reporting and increase traceability to the value chain.

The Certification Principles (aka “The Principles”) do not specifically endorse any particular standard – but they do provide a method for companies to evaluate the certification landscape. There is a wide variance in the structure, methods, governance and technical requirements of different standards. To cut through the clutter, the Principles have established an unbiased, consensus driven mechanism for evaluating third party standards. They remove confusion, help guide companies to adopt standards, and enable them to prioritize the use of different chain of custody methods for reporting progress..

The Recycled Material Standard is the most comprehensive and best-aligned certification program for US Plastics Pact reporting.

The Recycled Material Standard (RMS) was developed to provide a flexible, system-level solution that certifies the use of PCR without sacrificing responsibility.

This guide has been created to highlight how well RMS aligns with the USPP CP and to highlight the ways in which the RMS provides companies the tools to validate their reporting and expand their use of recycled material to reach their 30% target. The Principles provide guidance on general requirements, mass balance accounting, and the use of book & claim systems



Target 4 of 2025 Roadmap

30%

**Post-Consumer
Recycled Content
or Bio-Based
Content in
Packaging**

when used for USPP reporting. The RMS is the only certification program that provides all USPP approved accounting methods for both mechanical and chemical recycling processes – supported by a system-level chain of custody. This guide illustrates how the RMS addresses each of these important aspects of a certification program.



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RECYCLED MATERIAL
STANDARD ALIGNMENT
WITH U.S. PLASTICS
PACT CERTIFICATION
PRINCIPLES

In line with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's vision of a circular economy for plastics, the U.S. Plastics Pact brings together businesses, not-for-profit organizations, research institutions, government agencies, and other stakeholders to work toward scalable solutions tailored to the unique needs and challenges within the U.S. landscape, through vital knowledge sharing and coordinated action.

To support companies in meeting this need, the Pact recently issued PCR Certification Principles – to help eliminate ambiguity and to highlight key requirements that are pertinent to the plastics recycling value chain. This is a critical step in support of a vision where all recycled material claims (whether post-consumer or pre-consumer) will be substantiated by third-party chain of custody certification.

Overarching Principles		
The Highest Standard	✓	The RMS fully embodies the Pact's basic principles- requiring legal compliance, a science based approach, and adaptability to geographic differences
Competent Certification Bodies	✓	Audits are conducted by accredited certification bodies that must uphold the principles of impartiality, consistency and confidentiality
Chain of Custody	✓	The RMS relies on a continuous, system level chain of custody - ensuring the preservation and accuracy of claims as materials move through the entire plastics supply chain.
Transparent Management	✓	RMS is developed and managed as a Voluntary Consensus Standard - with multi-stakeholder transparent decision making, conflict resolution, and continuous improvement processes
Mass Balance + Book & Claim	✓	RMS matches the Pact's requirements for fuel exclusion in Mass Balance and is the only Chain of Custody standard to support Book & Claim accounting (through the ARC Certificate program)

While often associated with chemical recycling, the **mass balance** accounting method can also be applied to mechanical recycling. This approach tracks the use of materials beyond a single batch, over a longer time frame, and allows manufacturers the flexibility to allocate recycled material claims to products – as long as the claims do not exceed the amount of processed material. The outputs must balance with the inputs after accounting for losses. This is a holistic, system-based approach where the market receives the full amount of recycled material, however the actual physical content in a given batch may not be known.

Mass Balance		
ISO 22905 Compliant	✓	The RMS uses ISO 22095 methods for Chain of Custody Certification, ensuring no double counting of claims. Mass Balance is tracked by resin-specific product groups.
Fuel Exclusion	✓	The RMS relies on proportional allocation. The standard allows for non-proportional allocation for chemical recycling processes as long as all fuel output is treated as a system loss.
Up-Front Accounting	✓	Only output quantities are tracked in RMS, accounting for yield losses in processing. Material tracking is defined over a specified time period and reconciliation is done on a quarterly basis. Credit balances require rationale for going below zero.
ISO Compliant Third-Party Certification	✓	Certification audits are provided by third-party independent certification bodies, using ISO 14021 definitions of Post-Consumer and Post-Industrial Recycled Material

Book & Claim certificates are plastic credits created from processing of recycled materials. This new method of recycled accounting allows recyclers to transfer recycled material claims completely independent from any material. Strong certification systems enable trust and prevention of double counting.

RMS is the only Chain of Custody certification that also provides for transfer of B&C certificates (referred to as ARCs).

Book & Claim		
No offsetting or neutrality	✓	RMS Guidelines strictly prohibit any claim of plastic-neutrality or offsetting plastic production related to ARC transactions.
Additionality Requirements	✓	ARCs are able to be generated based on additional expansions of recycling processing. Multiple additionality tests are required, including newness, quality improvement, financial incentive, and production efficiency increases.
Based in Actual Processing	✓	ARCs are tied to the RMS Chain of Custody and can be generated based on physical processing of material into resin or flake.
Strict Requirements	✓	ARCs meet strict requirements to prevent compromises: yield losses are tracked, credits have a vintage year and expiration date, and sales of material tied to ARCs must communicate no claim of recycled content.

The Recycled Material Standard provides the most options to build your PCR portfolio – all under a single certification program.

Start your Path to Certification today and go beyond 2025 targets!

