

RECYCLING: MYTHS VS. FACTS

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MYTH

Recycling in the United States is in trouble.

FACT

In thousands of communities nationwide, curbside recycling is collected on a regular basis. The demand for recycled commodities is increasing as e-commerce demands continues to be strong, the economy recovers and companies make bigger commitments to use recycled content in their products and containers.

MYTH

Foreign countries have stopped accepting any recyclables or scrap from the United States.

FACT

Although China imposed import bans on many materials, the US continues to export these valuable commodities to other countries. **In 2020, the U.S. exported 15.9 million tons of paper and 1.37 billion pounds of scrap plastic.** Exports of scrap and recyclables increased in early 2021.

MYTH

The contamination rate for recyclables in the United States is 30 percent.

FACT

Contamination rates vary widely by community. **According to recent reports issued by The Recycling Partnership, the national average contamination rate is 17 percent.** Contamination rates are declining as local governments and recycling companies educate citizens about what can be recycled in their communities.

MYTH

Recycling isn't worth the effort anymore.

FACT

The market for materials may vary, but recycling always has major benefits. These include preserving landfill space, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, saving energy, reducing water use, protecting natural resources, creating new products, and supporting tens of thousands of local jobs. Recycling is an essential public service that citizens expect and are willing to pay for.

MYTH

No one knows how to fix the challenges facing recycling.

FACT

Solutions are being implemented. Public education and enforcement of local rules motivate people to recycle right. Recycling facilities are updating equipment and adding new technologies to keep up with changing material streams. New domestic facilities are opening and existing ones are expanding, providing more demand for recyclables. EPA has developed a National Recycling Strategy and has issued an ambitious goal of diverting 50% of waste from disposal by 2030.