Meat Institute

State Legislative Engagement Toolkit

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

Sample Letter for State Senators and Representatives
Sample Messaging Points and Implementation Resources



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Confidentiality: MEMBER RESOURCE – Intended for Meat Institute member company use.

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Executive User Guide

This toolkit is designed to support constructive engagement on state-level Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) requirements before passage, during rulemaking, and throughout implementation. It is intended for packaging, regulatory, sustainability, technical, communications, legal, and government affairs professionals within meat and poultry companies. Use the table below to find the sections most relevant to your role.

IF YOU ARE...	USE THESE SECTIONS	PRIMARY PURPOSE
Engaging state legislators before or during bill consideration	Finding Your Elected Officials; Sample Legislative Letter; Meat Industry Messaging; Common Questions from Legislators	Shape statutory language, explain local impacts, and promote practical policy guardrails.
Participating in state agency rulemaking or implementation	State Agency Engagement Toolkit; Sample Agency Letter; Sample Comments; Stakeholder Talking Points; Technical Questions	Inform rules, reporting systems, fee structures, definitions, guidance, and compliance expectations.
Preparing company-specific outreach	Roles and Responsibilities; Technical Proof Points; State-Specific Adaptation Notes; Before You Send Checklist	Coordinate internal input and ensure external materials are accurate, localized, complete, and approved.
Supporting communications or government relations teams	Meat Industry Messaging; Appendix A; Common Questions from Legislators	Adapt consistent messages for meetings, testimony, letters, public comments, and follow-up materials.

Member Introduction

This toolkit helps Meat Institute member companies engage constructively with policymakers, state agencies, producer responsibility organizations (PROs), and other stakeholders regarding EPR legislation and implementation. It is intended for cross-functional use by teams that must balance compliance, food safety, packaging performance, operations, sustainability, communications, and external advocacy.

Members should personalize all communications with company-specific information, including facilities, employment, products made locally, sustainability investments, packaging experience, and real-world operational impacts. Personal stories and local employment impacts are often more influential than generic messaging because they help policymakers understand how proposed requirements affect businesses and workers in their own districts.

Member Guidance: Coordinate with the Meat Institute before sending materials when significant amendments, state-specific policy issues, or sensitive company-specific claims are involved.

Purpose

This resource is intended to help members engage constructively as EPR legislation is introduced, amended, enacted, implemented, or reviewed. It provides customizable letters, talking points, technical prompts, internal preparation tools, and rapid-response answers for common policymaker questions.

Because EPR programs differ significantly by state, members should adapt all materials to the specific bill, rulemaking, reporting framework, fee methodology, covered material definitions, exemptions, and implementation timeline under consideration.

What is EPR?

Extended Producer Responsibility is a policy framework under which producers may be assigned financial, administrative, reporting, or operational responsibilities related to the end-of-life management of covered products or packaging.

States consider packaging EPR laws to improve recycling outcomes, increase recovery of valuable materials, reduce waste, support collection and processing infrastructure, and create more consistent funding for recycling systems. Typical producer obligations may include registering with a state program or PRO, reporting packaging data, paying fees, participating in stewardship plans, and supporting program performance goals.

The number of states considering or implementing packaging EPR programs has increased, making it important for nationally distributed food manufacturers to monitor policy development and implementation requirements across multiple jurisdictions. In 2026, one in five Americans is living in a state with an EPR program.

Why it Matters to Meat and Poultry Companies

Meat and poultry packaging is selected to meet food safety, shelf-life, cold-chain, transportation, durability, labeling, and consumer-use requirements. These requirements can make packaging changes more complex than they may appear in general packaging policy discussions.

Key considerations include food safety performance, prevention of food waste, refrigeration and freezing demands, limited availability of qualified alternative materials, multi-material package structures, national supply chains, state-by-state differences in definitions and reporting, administrative burdens, and cost impacts throughout the supply chain.

How to Use this Letter

Send customized versions to state senators and representatives when EPR legislation is introduced, amended, or scheduled for hearing or vote. Personalize the opening paragraph, include company information, note facilities and employees in the legislator's district, identify products made locally, and explain which packaging systems are relevant to the policy discussion.

Modify talking points to reflect company priorities and the specific legislation under consideration. Offer to serve as a technical resource and keep the tone respectful, collaborative, and solutions-oriented.

Finding Your Elected Officials

The sample letter may be adapted for state legislators as well as members of Congress. Members should prioritize policymakers representing districts where company facilities, employees, suppliers, customers, or significant operations are located.

State Legislators

Identify and contact both your State Senator and your State Representative or Delegate, where applicable. These resources allow users to locate legislators based on a home or business address:

- National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) – Find Your Legislators
- Congress.gov State Legislature Directory

Federal Representatives

Members may also wish to share concerns with their federal delegation, particularly when discussing federal recycling policy, interstate commerce, national packaging policy, or the practical implications of inconsistent state requirements.

- U.S. House of Representatives – Find Your Representative
- U.S. Senate – Find Your Senators

Suggested Outreach

- State Senator
- State Representative or Delegate
- U.S. Representative
- Both U.S. Senators

Optional Member Tip: Legislators are often most interested in how proposed legislation affects businesses and workers in their own districts. Whenever possible, personalize your letter with information about local employment, economic impact, community involvement, and sustainability investments.

Recommended Timing for Outreach

- When EPR legislation is introduced
- Prior to committee hearings
- Before committee votes
- Before floor votes
- During rulemaking after enactment
- During interim studies or stakeholder working groups
- When meeting legislators in district offices
- During legislative fly-ins or association advocacy events

Roles and Responsibilities for Member Company Teams

EPR advocacy and implementation are cross-functional. Use the table below to gather accurate information and approvals before external outreach.

FUNCTION	RECOMMENDED CONTRIBUTION
Packaging / Technical	Material specifications; package formats; food safety and shelf-life requirements; testing and validation needs; equipment compatibility; alternative qualification timelines.
Regulatory / Compliance	State requirements; covered material definitions; producer obligations; reporting deadlines; documentation requirements; rulemaking status.
Government Affairs	Bill tracking; policymaker outreach; committee timing; coalition coordination; legislative strategy; Meat Institute coordination.
Communications	Message adaptation; plain-language framing; approval routing; consistency with company public statements.
Legal	Review of claims, antitrust considerations, confidentiality, compliance risk, and accuracy of statements about costs, recyclability, alternatives, and impacts.
Sustainability	Company initiatives; packaging optimization; recycling or waste-reduction investments; environmental goals; data related to material reduction or recovery.

State-Specific Adaptation Notes

Before using any letter, comments, or talking points, confirm the state-specific context. EPR laws vary widely and may use different definitions, covered material categories, exemptions, reporting systems, producer responsibility structures, fee methodologies, PRO requirements, rulemaking processes, and compliance dates.

- Confirm the exact bill number, statute, proposed rule, guidance document, or PRO requirement.
- Identify whether the state is in the legislative, rulemaking, implementation, or enforcement phase.
- Review producer definitions, exemptions, covered packaging categories, data requirements, and fee-setting approach.
- Adapt comments to the agency, legislator, or PRO audience rather than using one message for all audiences.
- Remove or revise any claim that does not apply to the company, facility, product, or packaging format at issue.

Technical Proof Points Members Can Customize

Use this section to collect company-specific evidence that technical, packaging, regulatory, sustainability, and operations teams can provide government affairs and communications teams.

- Shelf-life extension: [Describe how current packaging helps maintain product quality for a specific period or distribution channel.]
- Food safety validation: [Describe tests, standards, internal validation, or regulatory requirements relevant to packaging performance.]
- Packaging format requirements: [Identify packaging formats such as vacuum packaging, modified atmosphere packaging, trays, films, labels, bags, liners, corrugate, or other materials.]
- Cold-chain performance: [Describe refrigeration, freezing, condensation, durability, seal integrity, or transport requirements.]
- Food waste reduction: [Provide examples of spoilage reduction, product protection, returns reduction, or shelf-life benefits.]
- Supplier qualification timelines: [Estimate time needed to identify, test, approve, and source alternative materials.]
- Equipment compatibility: [Describe whether current packaging equipment can run alternative materials without modification.]
- Recyclability constraints: [Explain collection, sorting, processing, contamination, food-contact, or end-market limitations.]
- Cost or operational impacts: [Describe potential changes to production speed, material cost, freight efficiency, product loss, reporting systems, or administrative workload.]

SAMPLE LEGISLATIVE LETTER

[Company Letterhead]

[Date]

The Honorable [Legislator Name]

[Address]

Dear Senator/Representative [Last Name]:

On behalf of [Company Name], I appreciate your interest in improving recycling systems and reducing packaging waste. Our company shares these goals and supports policies that improve environmental outcomes while protecting food safety, affordability, and a reliable food supply.

[Company Name] operates [number] facility/facilities in [state or district], including [facility location(s)], and employs [number] people. We produce [brief description of products] for consumers, retailers, foodservice customers, and communities across [state/region]. [Optional: Include annual economic contribution, local supplier relationships, or community investments.]

As a meat and poultry company, we rely on packaging that preserves freshness, prevents contamination, extends shelf life, and supports transportation through refrigerated and frozen supply chains. Our packaging systems include [examples of packaging formats or materials], which are selected to meet [food safety/shelf-life/cold-chain/distribution/retail/customer] requirements.

As EPR legislation such as [State Bill Number] is considered, we respectfully encourage approaches that recognize the unique characteristics of meat and poultry packaging. Policies should support waste reduction and recycling improvements while preserving access to packaging materials that maintain product safety, quality, and availability.

Specifically, we respectfully request that packaging in direct contact with raw meat and poultry products be excluded from program requirements, given its essential role in food safety. We recognize that secondary and tertiary packaging, such as [cartons, corrugate, or pallet wrap], may remain within the program's scope, and we are committed to working constructively with you and other stakeholders on practical approaches for those materials. We welcome the opportunity to participate in the discussion and implementation process.

We encourage practical implementation timelines, harmonized reporting requirements, transparency in fee methodologies, meaningful stakeholder engagement, and accountability for program performance. We also encourage flexibility where recyclable or reusable alternatives are not currently available, qualified, or suitable for specific food-contact applications.

Because meat and poultry companies operate across state lines, consistency among state programs is important. Differing definitions, reporting obligations, labeling standards, and fee structures can increase costs and complexity without necessarily improving environmental outcomes. Greater harmonization can improve compliance, support interstate commerce, and allow resources to be focused on measurable recycling outcomes rather than duplicative administration.

We also encourage policymakers to consider the role packaging plays in preventing food waste. Extending shelf life can reduce environmental impacts associated with wasted food and contribute to a more efficient food system. A transition timeline of [timeframe] may be needed to test, validate, qualify, and scale any packaging alternatives, including supplier qualification, equipment trials, food safety review, and customer acceptance.

[Optional company-specific sentence: Describe sustainability investments, packaging optimization efforts, recycling partnerships, source-reduction work, facility-level impacts, or operational considerations in the state.]

Our company supports continued collaboration among producers, recyclers, policymakers, consumers, and other stakeholders. Data-driven decision-making and realistic implementation expectations can help ensure programs achieve environmental objectives while protecting food safety, affordability, and supply chain reliability.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration. We welcome the opportunity to serve as a resource and provide technical information regarding packaging, food safety, supply chains, and implementation considerations. We look forward to continuing the dialogue.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

[Company Name]

[Contact Information]

State Agency Engagement Toolkit — EPR Implementation and Rulemaking

For states that have moved from policy development into implementation, rulemaking, or program design, member company engagement should shift from urging policymakers to consider key issues before passage to helping agencies design effective programs. The implementation phase is the time to inform reporting systems, fee structures, regulatory definitions, compliance timelines, guidance, and practical expectations.

Legislative advocacy and agency implementation require different messages. Legislators generally need concise local impacts, high-level policy principles, and statutory guardrails. Agencies generally need technical implementation details, data feasibility information, definitions, timelines, and examples showing how packaging supports food safety, shelf life, affordability, and supply chain reliability.

Toolkit Components

- Sample letter to state agency officials
- Sample comments for proposed rules
- Sample stakeholder meeting talking points
- Suggested technical questions for agencies
- Checklist of information members may want to provide

SAMPLE LETTER TO STATE AGENCY OFFICIALS

[Company Letterhead]

[Date]

[Agency Director/Program Administrator Name]

[State Agency Name]

[Agency Address]

Re: Comments on Implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility Requirements for Packaging

Dear [Agency Director/Program Administrator Last Name]:

On behalf of [Company Name], thank you for your work implementing [State]'s Extended Producer Responsibility program for packaging. We appreciate the agency's commitment to improving packaging recovery, recycling outcomes, and environmental performance. The meat and poultry industry shares these goals and supports implementation approaches that protect food safety, affordability, and supply chain reliability.

Packaging decisions in this sector require balancing food safety, shelf-life performance, cold-chain requirements, durability, transportation needs, consumer expectations, equipment compatibility, and environmental objectives. Alternative packaging materials should be evaluated based on full performance characteristics, including food-contact suitability, shelf-life performance, durability, recyclability, and lifecycle impacts.

As the agency develops regulations, reporting requirements, fee structures, and compliance systems, we respectfully encourage realistic compliance timelines, clear guidance, recognition of food packaging requirements, transparent fee structures, consistent reporting definitions, meaningful stakeholder engagement, and flexibility for applications where suitable alternatives are not currently available.

Specifically, we respectfully request that primary packaging in direct contact with raw meat and poultry products be excluded from program requirements, given its essential role in food safety. We recognize that secondary and tertiary packaging, such as [cartons, corrugate, or pallet wrap], may remain within the program's scope, and we are committed to working constructively with the agency on practical approaches for those materials. We welcome the opportunity to participate in the rulemaking and implementation process, serving as a technical resource regarding packaging performance, food safety, supply chain operations, sustainability investments, and practical compliance considerations specific to meat and poultry products.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

[Company Name]

[Contact Information]

Sample Comments for Proposed Rules

- Support clear, consistent definitions for covered materials, producers, reporting categories, and exemptions.
- Recommend realistic implementation timelines that allow companies to collect data, validate systems, and coordinate across operations.
- Encourage fee structures that are transparent, predictable, and tied to program performance and environmental outcomes.
- Request recognition of food safety and product protection requirements for meat and poultry packaging.
- Encourage lifecycle-based evaluation of packaging changes, including impacts on food waste, transportation efficiency, recyclability, and consumer access.
- Support continued stakeholder engagement before finalizing rules, guidance, reporting templates, and fee methodologies.

Sample Stakeholder Meeting Talking Points

- We share the state's goal of improving recycling outcomes and reducing waste.
- Meat and poultry packaging is part of the food safety system and must meet stringent performance requirements.
- Implementation decisions should protect food safety, affordability, nutrition access, and reliable supply chains.
- Clear definitions and harmonized reporting systems will improve compliance and program effectiveness.
- Transition timelines should reflect the time needed for testing, validation, equipment changes, supplier qualification, and regulatory review.
- The industry can provide practical technical information to support effective rulemaking and program design.

Suggested Technical Questions for Agencies

- How will the agency define covered packaging, producer responsibility, and reporting categories for meat packaging as a subset of food packaging?
- How will packaging subject to food safety, labeling, or performance requirements be considered in fee-setting or compliance decisions?
- What data fields, reporting formats, and documentation will be required from producers?
- How will the agency evaluate recyclability, reuse, source reduction, and lifecycle environmental impacts?
- How will fee structures account for materials necessary for food safety that may have limited alternatives?
- What stakeholder engagement opportunities will be available before final rules, guidance, and reporting systems are adopted?
- How will the state coordinate with other EPR states to reduce conflicting definitions and duplicative reporting burdens?

Meat Industry Messaging on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

The following messages are intended as suggested industry positions to help promote consistent, constructive communication across the meat and poultry industry. Members should tailor these messages to their company operations, the specific state program, the stage of the policy process, and the audience they are addressing.

Shared Commitment to Sustainability

Key Message: Meat and poultry companies support environmental progress and improved recycling outcomes when EPR programs are practical, measurable, and compatible with food safety, affordability, and supply chain reliability.

Supporting Talking Points:

- The industry shares the goal of reducing waste and improving packaging recovery.
- Meat and poultry companies have invested continuously in packaging optimization for decades to protect product quality, improve supply chain logistics, and operate efficiently in a thin-margin industry. These long-standing efforts have already reduced material use and improved transportation efficiency, and they continue to support company and industry sustainability initiatives.
- EPR programs should focus on measurable environmental outcomes rather than prescriptive requirements that may not work for food packaging.
- Constructive engagement can help policymakers design programs that improve recycling while avoiding unintended consequences.

Example: "We support policies that improve recycling outcomes and reduce packaging waste, provided they are implemented in a way that protects food safety, consumer access, and reliable food distribution."

Food Safety Must Remain the Highest Priority

Key Message: Packaging for meat and poultry is part of the food safety system and must continue to meet strict performance requirements.

Supporting Talking Points:

- Meat and poultry packaging helps prevent contamination, preserve product integrity, and maintain freshness.
- Packaging materials are selected based on food-contact safety, seal integrity, barrier performance, durability, and cold-chain needs.
- Policies that require rapid or inflexible packaging changes could create unintended food safety or quality risks.
- Food packaging decisions should be based on performance, testing, validation, and regulatory requirements.

Example: "For meat and poultry products, packaging is not simply a container; it is part of the system that helps keep food safe from production through purchase and preparation."

Food Safety and Regulatory Oversight of Meat and Poultry Products

Key Message: Meat and poultry products are among the most highly regulated foods in the marketplace. Facilities producing these products operate under continuous inspection by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS) or an equivalent state meat and poultry inspection program, ensuring that products meet rigorous food safety standards from processing through distribution.

Supporting Talking Points:

- Meat and poultry establishments operate under strict regulatory oversight designed to protect public health.
- Federally inspected facilities are regulated by USDA-FSIS, while qualifying state-inspected facilities operate under state programs that are required to be equivalent to federal inspection standards.
- Packaging systems are an important component of the food safety controls used to maintain product integrity after processing.
- Packaging decisions are evaluated based on prevention of contamination, sanitary conditions, temperature control, product protection during storage and transportation, shelf-life requirements, and consumer handling expectations.
- Changes to packaging materials require careful evaluation, testing, validation, and consideration of food safety impacts before implementation.

Suggested Legislative/Agency Letter Language: "The meat and poultry industry operates within one of the most rigorous food safety regulatory frameworks in the United States. Products are produced under continuous inspection by USDA-FSIS or state meat and poultry inspection programs recognized as equivalent to federal standards. Packaging is an integral component of this food safety system, helping maintain product integrity, prevent contamination, preserve freshness, and support safe distribution from processing facilities to consumers."

Additional Implementation Messaging: "As states implement packaging EPR programs, we encourage agencies to recognize that food packaging is not interchangeable across applications. Packaging used for meat and poultry products has been developed and validated to meet specific food safety, preservation, and performance requirements. Regulatory approaches should account for these requirements while supporting continued innovation and improved environmental outcomes."

Food Packaging Is Not One-Size-Fits-All

Legislators and state agency staff may benefit from understanding the difference between ordinary consumer packaging and packaging used in regulated food production. This framing reinforces food safety considerations without appearing to oppose EPR objectives.

Consumer Packaging Consideration	Meat & Poultry Packaging Consideration
Waste reduction	Waste reduction + food safety
Material recovery	Recovery + contamination prevention
Product containment	Product protection + shelf life
Consumer convenience	Consumer safety + regulatory compliance
Material substitution	Validated performance requirements

Preventing Food Waste is an Environmental Benefit

Key Message: Packaging that extends shelf life and protects food can reduce food waste, which is a major environmental consideration.

Supporting Talking Points:

- Meat and poultry products require packaging that helps maintain quality throughout distribution, retail, and consumer handling.
- Packaging that prevents spoilage can reduce wasted food, wasted resources, and avoidable costs.
- EPR policies should consider the full environmental role of packaging, including its contribution to food waste prevention.
- Packaging changes should be evaluated for both recycling potential and impact on product loss.

Example: "A package that helps prevent spoilage can deliver environmental value by reducing food waste, even when the package itself presents recycling challenges."

Encourage Innovation Rather Than Material Mandates

Key Message: EPR programs should encourage innovation and performance improvements rather than mandate specific materials before suitable alternatives are available.

Supporting Talking Points:

- Packaging materials must meet food safety, shelf-life, transportation, and equipment requirements.
- Some alternatives may not yet provide the same performance for meat and poultry products.
- Innovation works best when companies have flexibility to test, validate, and scale solutions.
- Programs should reward measurable improvement while allowing different pathways to compliance.

Example: "The most effective policy approach is one that encourages better outcomes while giving companies the flexibility to identify packaging solutions that actually work for food safety and supply chain performance."

Support Harmonization Across States

Key Message: Consistent definitions, reporting requirements, timelines, and fee structures across states will improve compliance and program effectiveness.

Supporting Talking Points:

- Meat and poultry companies often distribute products across multiple states.
- Conflicting state requirements can increase complexity without improving environmental outcomes.
- Harmonization can reduce duplicative reporting, improve data quality, and support more efficient compliance systems.
- States should coordinate where possible on definitions, reporting templates, producer obligations, and implementation timelines.

Example: "Greater consistency among state EPR programs will help companies comply more effectively and allow resources to be focused on environmental results rather than duplicative administration."

Implementation Should Be Practical

Key Message: EPR programs need realistic timelines, clear guidance, transparent fees, and meaningful stakeholder engagement to succeed.

Supporting Talking Points:

- Companies need adequate time to understand requirements, coordinate internally, and prepare compliant submissions.
- Agencies should provide clear guidance before enforcement deadlines.
- Fee-setting should be transparent, predictable, and connected to program performance.
- Ongoing stakeholder engagement can identify problems early and improve implementation.

Example: "A well-designed implementation process will help companies comply accurately and allow agencies to build programs that work in practice, not just on paper."

Recognize the Unique Needs of Fresh Food Packaging

Key Message: Food packaging, particularly for meat and poultry, has unique performance requirements that should be recognized in EPR policy and implementation.

Supporting Talking Points:

- Packaging must protect food safety, quality, freshness, and shelf life.
- Some food packaging formats are designed for specific product, processing, distribution, and cold-chain conditions.
- Food-contact requirements can limit available packaging alternatives.
- EPR programs should avoid treating all packaging categories as interchangeable.

Example: "Meat and poultry packaging has to meet demanding food safety and performance requirements, so policies should account for those realities when setting expectations."

Encourage Investment in Recycling Infrastructure

Key Message: EPR programs should direct resources toward recycling systems, collection, processing capacity, and market development that improve real-world recovery.

Supporting Talking Points:

- Better recycling outcomes depend on infrastructure, consumer participation, collection access, sorting capability, and end-market demand.
- Fees should support measurable improvements in recovery and recycling performance.
- Infrastructure investments should be transparent and tied to program goals.
- Policymakers should consider whether materials can be effectively collected and processed in existing systems.

Example: "EPR should help build the systems needed to recover more material, not simply shift costs without improving recycling performance."

Keep Food Affordable

Key Message: EPR policies should be designed to improve environmental outcomes without unnecessarily increasing costs for consumers.

Supporting Talking Points:

- Packaging changes, fees, reporting obligations, and compliance systems can affect production and distribution costs.
- Meat and poultry products are important sources of accessible, high-quality protein for many households.
- Programs should avoid unnecessary cost burdens that do not produce meaningful environmental gains.
- Affordability should be considered alongside sustainability, safety, and implementation feasibility.

Example: "Environmental progress and food affordability should not be treated as competing goals; well-designed EPR programs can support both."

Partnership with Policymakers

Key Message: Meat and poultry companies can be constructive partners by providing practical technical expertise and real-world implementation experience.

Supporting Talking Points:

- Meat and poultry companies can help explain how packaging functions in food safety and supply chains.
- Early engagement can prevent unintended consequences and improve program design.
- Agencies, legislators, and the supply chain benefit from early and proactive input from those who will implement the requirements.
- The industry supports ongoing dialogue, transparency, and collaborative problem-solving.

Example: "We want to be a resource to policymakers and agencies as EPR programs are designed that improve environmental outcomes while maintaining a safe, affordable, and reliable food supply."

Common Questions from Legislators

Q: Why can't meat and poultry packaging simply be paper or compostable?

A: The policy point is not to reject alternatives, but to ensure any transition is validated for food safety and product quality. Some applications require moisture resistance, oxygen barriers, seal strength, puncture resistance, cold-chain durability, and food-contact performance that paper or compostable formats may not currently provide for every product.

Member example to add: "[Company] uses [packaging format] for [product] because it must maintain [seal/barrier/cold-chain] performance through [distribution channel]."

Q: Why are multiple plastic layers sometimes used?

A: Different layers can perform different functions, including oxygen barriers, moisture control, structural strength, puncture resistance, printability, and seal integrity. For meat and poultry, those functions can affect shelf life and food safety.

Member example to add: "For [product], the package must withstand [freezing/refrigeration/transport] while maintaining seal integrity until purchase."

Q: Why does national or state-to-state consistency matter?

A: National food manufacturers often distribute the same products across many states. Conflicting definitions, reporting templates, fee structures, and deadlines can require duplicative systems without improving recycling outcomes.

Member example to add: "[Company] ships products from [facility] to [number] states, so inconsistent reporting categories could require multiple data systems for the same package."

Q: Does packaging help reduce environmental impacts?

A: Yes, packaging can help reduce food waste by protecting products, extending shelf life, and preventing damage. Policymakers should evaluate packaging using a full-life-cycle perspective that considers both packaging waste and avoidable food loss.

Member example to add: "[Packaging format] helps maintain product quality for [timeframe], reducing spoilage during distribution and retail handling."

Q: Why do companies need more time to comply?

A: Companies need time to identify covered materials, build data systems, validate reporting, qualify suppliers, test alternatives, coordinate with customers, and train internal teams. Practical timelines improve compliance quality and reduce errors. In addition to the packaging data reporting requirements of EPR regulations, timelines may need to be longer when shifting to alternative materials requires capital investment in new or modified packaging equipment, which must also fit within the existing layout of the facility.

Member example to add: "A transition of [timeframe] may be needed to test, qualify, and scale any alternative packaging while maintaining production continuity."

Q: How can legislators know whether EPR fees are working?

A: Programs should use transparent fee methodologies, clear performance metrics, public reporting, and accountability for recycling outcomes. Fees should support measurable improvements in collection, sorting, processing, and end markets.

Member example to add: "Our company supports fee transparency so producers can understand how fees connect to recovery and recycling improvements."

Appendix A: Optional Talking Points

Food Safety

- Packaging used for meat and poultry must protect food safety, product integrity, and consumer confidence.
- Food-contact packaging changes require careful evaluation, testing, and validation before commercial use.
- **Product prompt:** Identify a specific product and explain the food safety or shelf-life function of its packaging.

Recycling Infrastructure

- EPR should support collection, sorting, processing capacity, and end-market development that produce **measurable recycling gains**. Where no end market exists, or none is planned, for a given packaging material, how will the program work with industry to develop one?
- Programs should evaluate whether materials can actually be collected and processed in existing or planned recycling systems.
- **Company prompt:** Note whether relevant packaging materials are accepted or limited in local recycling systems, and ask how the program plans to address materials that have no available end-of-life stream.

Economic Impact

- Local facilities provide jobs, purchase from suppliers, support communities (including food banks), and distribute food across the state or region.
- Packaging policy can affect operations, logistics, product loss, and administrative costs.
- **Company prompt:** Add employee counts, payroll, supplier relationships, local taxes, facility investments, charitable giving, and food security support for the community.

Supply Chain

- Meat and poultry supply chains require packaging that performs through production, refrigeration, freezing, transport, retail display, and consumer handling.
- Program timelines should account for supplier qualification, equipment compatibility, customer requirements, and distribution needs.
- **Company prompt:** Describe or illustrate how products move from the facility to retailers, foodservice, or consumers.

Consumer Costs

- Packaging fees, material changes, reporting systems, and operational adjustments can affect costs throughout the food supply chain.
- Policy design should avoid unnecessary burdens that do not produce measurable environmental benefits. Reducing packaging can lead to more product tears and damage during transport, increasing the amount of wasted food sent to landfill, adding emissions, and leaving less food available for people in need. Switching to new packaging can also increase package weight or size, which can raise transportation emissions or require additional shipments and logistics changes.
- **Company prompt:** Explain how packaging changes could affect product availability, shrink, transportation, or affordability.

Innovation

- Companies need flexibility to evaluate material reduction, design optimization, recyclability improvements, and new packaging technologies.
- Companies need consistent packaging material acceptance across programs to justify investment in packaging innovation, including equipment upgrades and updated food safety protocols, and they need reliable end markets to meet EPR requirements.
- Technology-neutral policies can encourage practical innovation without mandating materials before they are ready.
- **Company prompt:** Add examples of packaging optimization or sustainability investments your company has pursued.

State Consistency

- Consistent definitions, reporting formats, timelines, and fee structures reduce duplicative administration and improve data quality.
- State coordination can help agencies and producers focus resources on environmental performance rather than conflicting compliance systems.
- **Company prompt:** Note how many states your company distributes to or reports in.

Implementation

- Clear guidance, realistic deadlines, transparent fees, and stakeholder engagement are essential for workable programs.
- Agencies should provide opportunities to review draft reporting templates, fee methodologies, and guidance before final deadlines.
- **Company prompt:** Identify specific implementation questions your company needs answered.

Appendix B

Use the following checklists before adapting or sending any toolkit materials, including letters, comments, talking points, meeting materials, or agency submissions. The personalization checklist helps companies identify the local and company-specific information that will make outreach more credible and relevant, while the quality-control checklist should be used as a final review step to confirm accuracy, audience fit, internal coordination, and appropriate tone before materials are shared externally.

Personalization Checklist

- ❑ Company name
- ❑ Facility locations
- ❑ Number of employees
- ❑ Economic contribution
- ❑ Local products
- ❑ Existing sustainability initiatives
- ❑ Recycling or packaging investments
- ❑ Specific concerns with the state legislation
- ❑ Local contact information

Before You Send Quality-Control Checklist

- ❑ Confirm the state bill, rulemaking, program, or PRO citation.
- ❑ Confirm whether the audience is legislative, regulatory, or PRO-specific.
- ❑ Include facility location and number of employees where relevant.
- ❑ Remove unused placeholders and bracketed prompts.
- ❑ Verify claims about packaging, recyclability, alternatives, sustainability investments, and cost impacts.
- ❑ Coordinate with legal, regulatory, communications, sustainability, technical, and government affairs teams as appropriate.
- ❑ Confirm whether coordination with the Meat Institute is needed before submission.
- ❑ Ensure the tone remains constructive, technical, respectful, and solutions-oriented.
- ❑ Confirm contact information and identify the appropriate company follow-up contact.