

MANAGING EPR IN 2026

CONTROLLING COSTS WITHOUT SLOWING THE LINE

As more states introduce Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs, bakeries are facing new obstacles tied directly to the packaging they place in the market.

EPR is moving from a watch list topic to an operational reality. While it is still relatively new in the US, Canada and Europe have used similar frameworks for years. Those markets have shown that the biggest challenges often lie in data management, reporting accuracy and upstream packaging design decisions.

Sustainability is now an operations issue

The immediate concern is administrative: identifying which packaging components are in scope, gathering accurate placed-on-market data, and coordinating internally across procurement, operations, finance and sustainability teams. Simplifying packaging structures, reducing unnecessary material, and standardizing formats can significantly ease reporting burdens while helping manage long-term cost exposure.

Controlling weight and complexity

Because EPR obligations are closely tied to the amount and type of packaging introduced to the market, right-sizing and downgauging remain some

of the most effective levers available. Modern extrusion and resin technologies allow bakeries to reduce material usage while maintaining machinability and performance. Downgauging delivers multiple benefits at once: lower material consumption, reduced waste and a smaller footprint to manage under EPR programs.

Design decisions influence EPR costs

Beyond weight alone, EPR frameworks are evolving to encourage better packaging design. While program details vary by jurisdiction, the direction is consistent: Packaging designed with recovery in mind is better positioned for the future.

For bakeries, this reinforces the value of simpler, mono-material structures that align with established recycling pathways and avoid unnecessary complexity. Materials that are easier to recycle often carry lower fees.

Data clarity starts with the right packaging partner

EPR compliance depends on accurate data, and many companies discover that packaging information is fragmented across SKUs, suppliers and legacy specifications. Working with a packaging partner that understands both materials science and regulatory expectations can help streamline documentation, reduce SKU complexity and support more efficient internal reporting processes.

EPR Readiness Checklist

- ✓ Inventory packaging formats + components
- ✓ Confirm material structures and weights
- ✓ Identify “easy wins” (right-sizing, downgauging, unnecessary components)

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