



Global Best Practice Sharing: Swedish Legislation and Framework – How to Foster Circularity

Sweden has long been working toward achieving a high level of circularity in its society. This effort is built on a strong legislative framework and regulations that encourage behaviors and services aimed at reducing and minimizing resources (referred to as "waste" in Australia) from the outset, promoting source separation, and producing high-quality end products that can be recirculated back into the economy.

On October 16th 2024, Fossil Free Sweden held a conference showcasing 23 companies that have developed Fossil Fuel-Free Roadmaps. A major takeaway was the need to mandate recycled content in infrastructure and products, ensuring ongoing demand and reducing reliance on virgin materials. Another important factor emphasized was the need for financial support, both from private equity and government, to help industries transition. It was noted that Europe must collaborate to compete with the United States and China, both of which are advancing rapidly. Similarly, it will be crucial for Australia to work across jurisdictions and support projects that benefit the country as a whole.

A framework is only as effective as the binding legislation and regulatory requirements that guide it. A key factor in Sweden's success is its enforceable regulations, which drive industries toward circularity. As part of the European Union, Sweden is also aligning its regulations with EU frameworks, which involve moving away from the concept of waste and embracing resources instead. The goal is to implement a series of measures to reduce waste, increase resource reuse and product recovery, and improve overall waste management services. Key examples are listed below.

Landfill bans and reusable options

- In 2002, Sweden introduced a **landfill ban** on combustible waste, expanding it in 2005 to include organic waste (food and green waste). This move promoted incineration (EfW) and spurred on organic waste recycling.
- As of January 1st, 2024, fast food cafés/restaurants selling more than 150 plates/cups per day must offer **reusable options** to encourage reuse over single-use items.
- Sweden's **Producer Pay Principle** holds producers responsible for end-of-life management of products like balloons, electrical equipment, batteries, cars, tires, fishing gear, pharmaceuticals, packaging, radioactive products, tobacco (including cigarettes), and wet wipes. Producers must ensure proper recycling or disposal and are also responsible for paying for the LGAs clean-up of litter related to their products in public spaces.
- **Overcapacity:** A new ban will be introduced that prohibits burning (EfW) of any source-separated material streams to prioritize resource recovery before incineration. Lesson learned for Australia is to be careful to not introduce an overcapacity of incineration before fully implementing food waste, soft plastic, and other recyclable collection, risking missed opportunities for resource recovery.



Source Separation instead of Mixed Recycling

- Since January 1st, 2024, recycling food waste in a single stream has become mandatory for both residential and commercial premises. By law, food waste reprocessing must capture both the energy and return phosphorus to farmland. FOGO services are no longer allowed due to low yields and high contamination. Food waste bins with visible contamination are left behind by the collection crews with a note explaining why to the customer. Green waste is similarly collected and composted in a separate stream, with the final product returned to farmland.
- Residents are encouraged to sort waste at the source, kerbside recycling collections include separation into more than one co-mingled fraction, i.e. up to 10 different fractions for different recyclables, such as plastics, glass, paper, cardboard, and metals. Environmental stations offer up to 15 categories, including textiles, ceramics, light bulbs, and batteries. Individual resource recovery targets ensure clean, uncontaminated streams, producing high-quality recycled outputs.
- Construction and demolition waste must be sorted into at least six streams, including cement, wood, minerals (e.g., ceramics, stone), metal, glass, plastics, and plasterboard. Starting in 2025, it will be mandatory to source separate and collect textiles and hazardous waste.

Measuring success and mandatory reporting

Finally, we would like to mention that the introduction of the **CSRD in EU**, which requires all companies to report on their progress related to climate change, includes a comprehensive section on the circular economy and resource efficiency. This framework is thorough, ensuring that companies will continue to take action toward achieving better results in the future. Initially, the focus will be on establishing baseline measurements, but in the coming years, attention will shift toward implementing actions to drive improved outcomes. The journey toward significant circular change has, therefore, begun.

Summary by:

Linda Nordin, Senior Associate Engineer - Waste & Resource Recovery

Linda.Nordin@smec.com

SACC contact:

Camilla Jennings, General Manager Swedish Australian Chamber of Commerce

Email: camilla@swedishchamber.com.au

Mobile: 0411 074 223

About the Swedish Australian Chamber of Commerce

The Swedish Australian Chamber of Commerce (SACC), founded in 1911, actively support and promote bilateral trade and cultural exchange between Sweden and Australia. The SACC provides a platform and a network for corporations and individuals to meet, share ideas and to drive close collaboration between the two countries. SACC cooperate with organisations, companies and professionals with Swedish-Australian business interests, stay informed, make connections, exchange ideas and find synergies, business partners and like-minded business professionals.