

Abstract

Waste management is becoming a hot topic in policy circles. Municipal governments, which are largely responsible for building and maintaining waste disposal networks, are keen to find ways of minimising the cost of disposing of waste and the sheer amount of waste society produces.

Unfortunately, market and corporatist approaches do not take waste management into consideration, rather leaving waste management to local authorities, and without government coercion will usually not concern themselves with environmentally-friendly product design, waste minimisation or the reuse, re-manufacturing or recycling of the product at the end of its life cycle.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) provides a framework for involving the producers of goods in the full life cycle of their products, particularly the end of it. As the name suggests, it is about the extension of responsibility for waste management to the producer, which is in effect an internalisation of the costs of waste management and disposal to the production level.

This thesis undertakes a theoretical analysis of Extended Producer Responsibility and subsequently performs a comparison of two case studies to ascertain the viability of the program in practice. The first case study concerns the Dutch Packaging Covenants of 1991-2005, which utilise a form of EPR called negotiated agreements, while the second case study examines Maine's Product Stewardship Framework, which was the first comprehensive EPR law of its kind.

The thesis finds that the more comprehensively EPR is put into practice, the more effectively it functions. Despite its relative effectiveness, EPR has not been extensively implemented; as a program it has great potential, but is limited by political reluctance to implement large-scale waste management programs and industry opposition to product end-of-life cost internalisation.