

# Plastic Waste Recycling: An In-Depth Survey

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## 1. Introduction

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Plastic waste has become a pervasive environmental challenge, with billions of tons accumulating in landfills and natural environments. Despite growing awareness and efforts, the global recycling rate for plastic remains remarkably low. According to various sources, including the US EPA and OECD, only about 9% of all plastic waste generated globally is recycled. A significant portion, around 70%, ends up in landfills or is incinerated, with some estimates suggesting that up to 22% is openly burned or sent to unsanitary landfills.

This low recycling rate is attributed to several factors, including the complex nature of plastic waste, the diversity of plastic types, and the economic and logistical challenges associated with collection, sorting, and processing. The problem is further exacerbated by the continuous increase in plastic production and consumption.

This survey aims to provide an in-depth review of plastic waste recycling, focusing on current technologies, challenges, and future directions. It will delve into the various methods employed for plastic recycling, assess their effectiveness and limitations, and explore innovative approaches and policy frameworks that could pave the way for a more sustainable future in plastic waste management.

## 2. Recycling Technologies and Methods

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Plastic waste recycling encompasses various technologies, broadly categorized into mechanical and chemical recycling. Each method has its advantages and limitations, and their applicability often depends on the type and purity of the plastic waste.

### 2.1 Mechanical Recycling

Mechanical recycling is the most established and widely used method for processing plastic waste. It involves physical processes to convert plastic waste into secondary raw materials or products without significantly altering the material's chemical structure [1, 2]. The process typically includes several key steps:

- 1. Collection and Sorting:** Plastic waste is collected from various sources and then sorted based on polymer type (e.g., PET, HDPE, PP, LDPE, PS, PVC), color, and contamination levels. Efficient sorting is crucial for the quality of the recycled product [3].
- 2. Washing and Drying:** Sorted plastics are washed to remove impurities such as labels, food residues, and dirt. This step is vital for preventing degradation during subsequent processing and ensuring the quality of the recycled material.
- 3. Shredding and Grinding:** The cleaned plastic is then shredded or ground into smaller flakes or granules, which facilitates further processing.
- 4. Melting and Reprocessing:** The plastic flakes are melted and then extruded into pellets or directly molded into new products. This step often involves processes like compounding, where additives can be incorporated to enhance the properties of the recycled material.

**Advantages of Mechanical Recycling:** \* **Cost-effective:** Compared to chemical recycling, mechanical recycling generally requires less energy and is more economically viable for large volumes of relatively clean and sorted plastic waste. \* **Established Infrastructure:** The technology and infrastructure for mechanical recycling are well-developed and widely available globally. \* **Reduced Environmental Impact:** It typically has a lower carbon footprint than producing virgin plastics.

**Limitations and Challenges of Mechanical Recycling:**

- \* **Material Degradation:** Each recycling cycle can lead to a degradation of the polymer's mechanical and physical properties due to thermal and shear stresses during processing. This limits the number of times plastic can be mechanically recycled and often results in 'downcycling' to lower-value products [4].
- \* **Contamination:** Impurities and mixed plastic types can significantly reduce the quality of the recycled material and make processing difficult. Even small amounts of contaminants can compromise the integrity of the final product.
- \* **Limited Applicability:** Mechanical recycling is most effective for single-polymer, relatively clean waste streams. It is less suitable for mixed, contaminated, or multi-layered plastics, which constitute a significant portion of plastic waste [5].
- \* **Microplastic Generation:** Studies indicate that mechanical recycling processes can contribute to the generation and discharge of microplastics [6, 7].

Despite these limitations, advancements in sorting technologies, such as near-infrared (NIR) spectroscopy and artificial intelligence, are improving the efficiency and purity of mechanically recycled plastics. Mechanical recycling remains a cornerstone of plastic waste management, particularly for common plastics like PET and HDPE.

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## 2.2 Chemical Recycling

Chemical recycling, also known as advanced recycling, involves breaking down plastic waste into its constituent monomers or other valuable chemicals, which can then be used to produce new plastics or other products. Unlike mechanical recycling, chemical recycling alters the chemical structure of the polymers, allowing for the processing of mixed, contaminated, and multi-layered plastic waste that is difficult or impossible to mechanically recycle [8, 9].

Several chemical recycling technologies are currently being developed and implemented:

1. **Pyrolysis:** This process involves heating plastic waste in the absence of oxygen to break it down into pyrolysis oil, gas, and char. The pyrolysis oil can be further refined into fuels or chemical feedstocks for new plastic production [10]. Pyrolysis is particularly suitable for mixed plastic waste and can handle a wide range of polymers.
2. **Gasification:** In gasification, plastic waste is converted into a synthesis gas (syngas) at high temperatures with a controlled amount of oxygen or steam. Syngas is a mixture of hydrogen and carbon monoxide, which can be used to produce various chemicals, fuels, or energy [11].
3. **Depolymerization (Solvolysis):** This method specifically targets certain polymers, such as PET and nylon, by using solvents (e.g., glycolysis, methanolysis, hydrolysis) to break them down into their original monomers. These monomers can then be purified and repolymerized into virgin-quality plastics [12]. This process is highly effective for specific plastic types and yields high-quality recycled materials.
4. **Hydrothermal Liquefaction:** This process uses high-temperature and high-pressure water to convert plastic waste into bio-oil, which can be used as fuel or chemical feedstock [13].

**Advantages of Chemical Recycling:**

- \* **Handles Mixed and Contaminated Waste:** Chemical recycling can process plastic waste streams that are unsuitable for mechanical recycling, including mixed plastics, multi-layered packaging, and

contaminated materials [8]. \* **Produces Virgin-Quality Materials:** The output of chemical recycling processes can be monomers or feedstocks that are indistinguishable from virgin materials, allowing for true circularity and avoiding downcycling [9]. \* **Broader Applicability:** It offers a solution for a wider range of plastic waste types, potentially increasing the overall plastic recycling rate.

**Limitations and Challenges of Chemical Recycling:** \* **Energy Intensive:** Many chemical recycling processes require significant energy input, which can impact their environmental footprint if not powered by renewable energy sources [14]. \* **Economic Viability:** The capital and operational costs of chemical recycling facilities can be high, making them less economically competitive than mechanical recycling in some cases. The fluctuating prices of virgin plastics and recycled feedstocks also pose challenges. \* **Environmental Concerns:** Critics argue that some chemical recycling processes, particularly those involving high heat, can generate hazardous byproducts or lead to emissions if not properly managed [15]. There are ongoing debates about whether certain chemical recycling methods are truly recycling or closer to incineration. \* **Scalability:** While promising, many chemical recycling technologies are still in the pilot or demonstration phase and face challenges in scaling up to commercial levels.

Despite the challenges, chemical recycling is seen as a crucial complementary technology to mechanical recycling, offering a pathway to a more circular economy for plastics by enabling the recycling of difficult-to-treat plastic waste streams.

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## 2.3 Other Emerging Recycling Technologies

Beyond traditional mechanical and chemical methods, several innovative and emerging technologies are being developed to address the complexities of plastic waste recycling, offering new pathways for a circular plastics economy.

1. **Enzymatic Recycling (Biorecycling):** This technology utilizes specific enzymes to break down plastic polymers into their original monomers or oligomers under mild conditions. For example, enzymes like PETase and MHETase have shown promise in depolymerizing polyethylene terephthalate (PET) into its building blocks, terephthalic acid (TPA) and ethylene glycol (EG) [16].
  - **Advantages:** Operates at lower temperatures and pressures compared to thermochemical methods, potentially reducing energy consumption. It can handle contaminated and mixed plastic waste streams, and the resulting monomers are of high purity, suitable for repolymerization into virgin-quality plastics.
  - **Limitations:** Still largely in the research and development phase, with challenges in enzyme stability, reaction rates, and scalability for industrial applications. The cost of enzyme production and recovery also needs to be optimized.
2. **Solvent-Based Recycling (Dissolution):** This method involves selectively dissolving target plastics in a solvent, separating them from impurities and other plastic types, and then precipitating the purified polymer. This process

aims to recover high-quality polymers without significant degradation. Technologies like PureCycle Technologies' process for polypropylene (PP) are examples of this approach [17].

- **Advantages:** Can effectively remove contaminants and separate different plastic types, yielding high-purity recycled polymers. It can extend the lifespan of plastics by avoiding thermal degradation associated with mechanical recycling.
- **Limitations:** Requires careful selection of solvents, which can be costly, energy-intensive to recover, and may pose environmental or health concerns if not managed properly. The process is often specific to certain polymer types.

**3. Advanced Physical Recycling:** While mechanical recycling is a physical process, advanced physical recycling techniques focus on improving the efficiency and quality of separation and reprocessing. This includes enhanced sorting technologies (e.g., advanced sensor-based sorting, AI-driven robotics) and innovative melt filtration systems that can remove microscopic impurities, leading to higher-quality recycled content [18].

- **Advantages:** Improves the quality and purity of mechanically recycled plastics, expanding their potential applications. It can complement existing mechanical recycling infrastructure.
- **Limitations:** Still faces challenges with highly mixed or degraded plastic waste. The effectiveness is highly dependent on the initial sorting and collection infrastructure.

These emerging technologies, particularly enzymatic and solvent-based recycling, offer promising avenues for addressing difficult-to-recycle plastics and achieving a more truly circular economy for polymers. While still facing hurdles in terms of scalability and economic viability, ongoing research and investment are driving their development towards commercialization.

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### 3. Challenges and Limitations

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Despite the advancements in recycling technologies, plastic waste recycling faces significant challenges that hinder its widespread adoption and effectiveness. These challenges can be broadly categorized into technical, economic, logistical, and environmental issues.

#### 3.1 Technical Challenges

Technical hurdles are among the most critical barriers to increasing plastic recycling rates and improving the quality of recycled materials. These include issues related to the diversity of plastic types, sorting complexities, contamination, and material degradation during recycling processes.

- 1. Diversity and Complexity of Plastic Types:** The vast array of plastic polymers, each with unique chemical compositions and properties, makes recycling a complex endeavor. Different plastics (e.g., PET, HDPE, PVC, LDPE, PP, PS) are often incompatible and cannot be processed together without compromising the quality of the recycled product. Furthermore, many products are made from multi-layered or composite plastics, which are extremely difficult to separate into their individual polymer components [19]. This inherent material diversity necessitates highly sophisticated sorting and processing capabilities.
- 2. Sorting Challenges:** Effective sorting is fundamental to high-quality plastic recycling. However, current sorting technologies struggle with the sheer volume and heterogeneity of plastic waste. Manual sorting is labor-intensive and inefficient, while automated sorting systems, though improving, face limitations in accurately identifying and separating all plastic types, especially those with similar densities or appearances [20]. The presence of non-plastic materials (e.g., paper labels, food residues, metals) further complicates sorting and increases contamination [21].

3. **Contamination:** Contamination is a pervasive problem in plastic recycling. Even small amounts of impurities, such as food waste, dirt, or other plastic types, can significantly degrade the quality and performance of recycled plastics. Contaminants can lead to defects in the final product, reduce mechanical properties, and limit the applications for which the recycled material can be used. This often results in 'downcycling,' where recycled plastic is used in lower-value applications, rather than being reintegrated into products of similar quality [22].
4. **Material Degradation:** During mechanical recycling, plastics are subjected to heat and shear forces, which can cause polymer chains to break down, leading to a reduction in molecular weight and deterioration of mechanical properties (e.g., tensile strength, impact resistance). This degradation limits the number of times a plastic can be mechanically recycled before it becomes unusable or only suitable for very low-grade applications. While chemical recycling aims to overcome this by breaking plastics down to monomers, even these processes can face challenges in maintaining material integrity and purity [23].
5. **Additives and Dyes:** Plastics often contain various additives (e.g., flame retardants, plasticizers, UV stabilizers, colorants) to enhance their properties or appearance. These additives can complicate the recycling process, as they may not be compatible with the recycling stream or could leach out during processing, potentially posing environmental or health risks. Dyes and pigments also make it difficult to produce uniformly colored recycled products, limiting their market value.

These technical challenges underscore the need for continued research and development in advanced sorting technologies, innovative recycling processes, and improved plastic design for recyclability.

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### 3.2 Economic and Logistical Challenges

The economic viability and logistical complexities of plastic recycling significantly impact its overall effectiveness and scalability. These challenges often intertwine, creating a difficult landscape for widespread adoption.

1. **Low Value of Recycled Plastics and Volatile Markets:** The economic incentive for recycling plastics is often undermined by the relatively low cost of virgin plastics, especially when oil prices are low. Recycled plastics frequently trade at a discount compared to their virgin counterparts, making it challenging for recyclers to operate profitably [24]. The market for recycled content is also volatile, with prices fluctuating based on supply, demand, and global economic conditions, making long-term investment and planning difficult.
2. **High Collection and Sorting Costs:** Collecting diverse and dispersed plastic waste streams from households and industries is a labor-intensive and costly endeavor. Furthermore, the need for meticulous sorting to separate different polymer types and remove contaminants adds significant expense to the recycling process. The infrastructure required for efficient collection, transportation, and sorting (e.g., material recovery facilities, specialized equipment) demands substantial investment [25].
3. **Lack of Infrastructure and Investment:** Many regions lack adequate infrastructure for plastic waste collection, sorting, and processing. This includes insufficient recycling facilities, limited access to advanced sorting technologies, and a fragmented collection system. The absence of robust infrastructure creates bottlenecks in the recycling value chain, preventing large volumes of plastic waste from being effectively recycled [26].

4. **Logistical Complexities of Mixed Waste:** The diverse nature of plastic waste, often mixed with other materials and contaminants, presents significant logistical challenges. Transporting bulky, low-density plastic waste is inefficient and costly. Moreover, ensuring the purity of collected plastic streams for recycling requires sophisticated logistics and quality control measures throughout the supply chain.
5. **Policy and Regulatory Gaps:** Inconsistent or insufficient policies and regulations across different regions can hinder the development of a robust recycling economy. Lack of mandatory recycled content targets, inadequate landfill taxes, or limited producer responsibility schemes can reduce the economic attractiveness of recycling and fail to incentivize the use of recycled materials over virgin plastics.
6. **Consumer Participation and Awareness:** While not strictly economic or logistical, consumer behavior plays a crucial role. Lack of public awareness regarding proper sorting, confusion over what can be recycled, and insufficient participation in recycling programs lead to high contamination rates in collected waste, increasing processing costs and reducing the quality of recycled output.

Addressing these economic and logistical challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, including policy interventions, investment in infrastructure, market development for recycled products, and enhanced public education.

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### 3.3 Environmental Challenges

While plastic recycling aims to mitigate environmental pollution, the recycling processes themselves can pose certain environmental challenges, which need careful consideration and management.

1. **Microplastic Generation:** The mechanical recycling process, particularly the shredding, grinding, and washing steps, can generate microplastics (plastic particles smaller than 5 mm). These microplastics can be released into wastewater and air during recycling operations, potentially contributing to environmental contamination [27, 28]. The long-term environmental and health impacts of these microplastic emissions from recycling facilities are still being studied.
2. **Toxic Emissions and Byproducts:** Some recycling processes, especially certain chemical recycling methods that involve high temperatures (e.g., pyrolysis, gasification), can produce hazardous air emissions and byproducts if not properly controlled. Concerns have been raised about the potential release of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), dioxins, furans, and other toxic substances during these processes [29, 30]. The management and disposal of these hazardous byproducts are critical to ensure that recycling does not simply shift pollution from one form to another.
3. **Contamination of Recycled Products with Legacy Additives:** Recycled plastics can sometimes contain legacy additives, such as brominated flame retardants (BFRs) or phthalates, which were present in the original plastic products. These substances can be persistent organic pollutants (POPs) or endocrine disruptors, and their presence in recycled materials raises concerns about the safety and suitability of these materials for certain applications, particularly for food contact or children's products [31]. This issue highlights the need for better control over the chemical composition of plastics entering the recycling stream and for robust screening processes for recycled content.
4. **Energy Consumption and Carbon Footprint:** While recycling generally has a lower carbon footprint than producing virgin plastics, the energy consumption of recycling processes can still be significant. This is particularly true for some chemical recycling methods that require high temperatures and pressures. The environmental benefit of recycling is maximized when renewable energy sources are used to power these processes and when the transportation distances for plastic waste are minimized.

Addressing these environmental challenges requires continuous innovation in recycling technologies to minimize emissions, strict regulatory oversight, and a comprehensive life-cycle assessment approach to ensure that recycling truly

contributes to a more sustainable future.

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## 4. Future Trends and Innovations

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The future of plastic waste recycling lies in a multi-pronged approach that combines technological advancements with systemic changes in material design, policy, and economic models. Several key trends and innovations are emerging to address the current limitations and move towards a more circular plastics economy.

### 4.1 New Materials and Design for Recyclability

A fundamental shift is occurring in how plastics are designed, moving from a linear ‘take-make-dispose’ model to one that prioritizes recyclability and circularity from inception. This involves developing new materials and implementing design principles that facilitate easier and more efficient recycling.

1. **Design for Recyclability (DfR):** DfR principles aim to simplify the recycling process by considering the end-of-life of a product during its design phase. Key aspects of DfR include [32, 33]:
  - **Material Simplification:** Reducing the number of different plastic types used in a single product or packaging to avoid incompatibility issues during recycling. Preferring mono-material designs over multi-layered or mixed-material constructions.
  - **Elimination of Problematic Materials:** Avoiding the use of plastics that are difficult to recycle (e.g., PVC, certain black plastics) or additives that hinder recycling (e.g., certain pigments, fillers).
  - **Improved Separability:** Designing products where different components can be easily separated for recycling (e.g., easy-to-remove labels, caps, and closures).
  - **Use of Recycled Content:** Designing products that can incorporate a higher percentage of recycled content without compromising performance, thereby stimulating demand for recycled materials.
2. **Development of Novel Recyclable Polymers:** Researchers are actively developing new types of polymers that are inherently easier to recycle or can be repeatedly recycled without significant degradation. This includes:
  - **Chemically Recyclable Polymers:** Polymers designed to be easily depolymerized back into their monomers through chemical processes, allowing for infinite recycling loops and virgin-quality output. Examples include certain polyesters and polycarbonates that can be broken down via solvolysis [34].
  - **Biodegradable and Compostable Polymers:** While not directly recyclable in the traditional sense, these materials offer an alternative end-of-life pathway for applications where collection for recycling is challenging. However, their proper disposal in industrial composting facilities is crucial to avoid environmental issues [35].
  - **Self-Healing and Reprocessable Polymers:** Materials that can repair themselves or be easily reprocessed multiple times, extending their lifespan and reducing waste generation.
3. **Smart Packaging and Digital Watermarks:** Innovations in packaging design, such as digital watermarks or QR codes, can embed information about the plastic type and composition. This allows for more accurate and efficient

automated sorting at recycling facilities, improving the purity of recycled streams [36].

These advancements in material science and design thinking are critical for creating a future where plastic products are not only functional but also seamlessly integrated into a circular economy.

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## 4.2 Policy and Regulatory Advancements

Supportive government policies and robust regulatory frameworks are essential for driving the transition to a circular economy for plastics. Several key policy advancements are being implemented or considered globally to address plastic waste and promote recycling.

- 1. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):** EPR is a policy approach that makes producers financially and/or physically responsible for the end-of-life management of their products and packaging. By shifting the responsibility from municipalities to producers, EPR schemes incentivize companies to design products that are more easily recyclable, use more recycled content, and reduce overall packaging waste [37, 38]. EPR programs can take various forms, including deposit-return schemes, product take-back mandates, and fees that fund collection and recycling infrastructure.
- 2. Recycled Content Mandates:** Governments are increasingly setting mandatory targets for the minimum percentage of recycled content in new products, particularly plastic packaging. These mandates create a stable demand for recycled plastics, which in turn stimulates investment in recycling infrastructure and technologies. For example, the European Union has set a target of 25% recycled content in PET beverage bottles by 2025 and 30% in all plastic beverage bottles by 2030 [39].
- 3. Bans and Restrictions on Single-Use Plastics:** Many countries and regions have implemented bans or restrictions on certain single-use plastic items, such as plastic bags, straws, and cutlery. These measures aim to reduce the overall consumption of disposable plastics and encourage the use of reusable alternatives, thereby reducing the volume of plastic waste that needs to be managed.
- 4. Standardization and Labeling:** Clear and consistent labeling on plastic products is crucial for helping consumers correctly sort their waste for recycling. Efforts are underway to standardize recycling labels and symbols to reduce confusion and improve the quality of collected materials. Additionally, standards for recycled plastic quality can help build trust and facilitate the trade of recycled materials.
- 5. International Agreements and Treaties:** Recognizing the global nature of the plastic pollution crisis, international efforts are underway to establish a legally binding treaty on plastic pollution. Such a treaty could set global targets for reducing plastic production, promoting recycling, and harmonizing regulations across countries, creating a more coordinated and effective global response.

These policy and regulatory advancements, when implemented effectively, can create the necessary economic and legal drivers to accelerate the transition to a more sustainable and circular plastics economy.

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### 4.3 Circular Economy Models

The ultimate goal for plastic waste management is to transition from a linear ‘take-make-dispose’ economy to a circular economy, where plastics are kept in use for as long as possible, their value is retained, and waste generation is minimized. This paradigm shift involves a systemic approach that redesigns the entire lifecycle of plastic products.

**1. Principles of a Circular Economy for Plastics:** The circular economy model for plastics is built on three core principles [40]:

- **Eliminate:** Design out waste and pollution. This means preventing plastic waste from being created in the first place through innovative design, material substitution, and business models that reduce the need for single-use plastics.
- **Circulate:** Keep products and materials in use. This involves maximizing the reuse, repair, refurbishment, and recycling of plastic products and materials to retain their value and prevent them from becoming waste.
- **Regenerate:** Regenerate natural systems. This principle focuses on ensuring that any plastic materials that cannot be kept in circulation are safely returned to the environment or used in ways that benefit natural systems, though the primary focus is on keeping materials in the loop.

**2. Closed-Loop Systems:** A key aspect of the circular economy is the establishment of closed-loop recycling systems. In a closed-loop system, plastic waste is collected, processed, and then used to create new products of the same type or quality, effectively closing the material loop. For example, used PET bottles are recycled back into new PET bottles. This contrasts with open-loop recycling (or downcycling), where materials are recycled into lower-value products, eventually leading to their disposal [41]. Achieving true closed-loop systems for a wider range of plastics is a major focus of circular economy initiatives.

**3. New Business Models:** The circular economy encourages the development of innovative business models that promote reuse and reduce reliance on virgin plastics. Examples include:

- **Refill and Reuse Systems:** Companies offering products in reusable packaging that can be refilled by consumers, reducing the need for new packaging.
- **Product-as-a-Service:** Businesses retaining ownership of products and providing them as a service, ensuring that products are designed for durability, repair, and eventual recovery and recycling.
- **Waste-to-Value Initiatives:** Projects that transform plastic waste into valuable resources, such as construction materials, fuels, or chemical feedstocks, thereby creating economic incentives for waste collection and processing.

**4. Digitalization and Traceability:** Digital technologies, such as blockchain and digital product passports, are playing an increasing role in enabling circularity. These technologies can provide transparency and traceability throughout the plastic value chain, from production to recycling, helping to track materials, verify recycled content, and optimize recycling processes.

Transitioning to a circular economy for plastics requires collaboration across the entire value chain, from designers and manufacturers to consumers and recyclers, supported by enabling policies and investments in infrastructure.

**References:** [40] Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Circular economy introduction. [Online]. Available: <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/topics/circular-economy-introduction/overview> [41] Amcor. What is Closed Loop Plastic Recycling. [Online]. Available: <https://www.amcor.com/insights/blogs/what-is-closed-loop-recycling>

## 5. Conclusion

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Plastic waste recycling is a critical component of sustainable waste management and a circular economy. While significant progress has been made in developing various recycling technologies, the field continues to face substantial technical, economic, logistical, and environmental challenges. Mechanical recycling remains the most established method, but its limitations in handling mixed and contaminated waste, along with material degradation, highlight the need for complementary solutions. Chemical recycling offers a promising avenue for processing difficult-to-recycle plastics and producing virgin-quality materials, though its energy intensity and economic viability require further optimization.

Emerging technologies, such as enzymatic recycling and advanced physical separation techniques, are expanding the possibilities for plastic waste valorization. However, the long-term success of plastic recycling hinges not only on technological innovation but also on fundamental shifts in product design, policy frameworks, and economic incentives. Designing plastics for recyclability, implementing robust Extended Producer Responsibility schemes, and fostering a circular economy mindset are crucial steps towards creating a truly sustainable plastics system.

Ultimately, addressing the global plastic waste crisis requires a holistic approach that integrates technological advancements with strong regulatory support, collaborative efforts across the value chain, and increased consumer awareness and participation. By embracing these interconnected strategies, we can move closer to a future where plastic is no longer a waste product but a valuable resource that remains in circulation, minimizing environmental impact and maximizing resource efficiency.