

# New International Requirements for Exports and Imports of Plastic Scrap

Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Meeting

February 18, 2020

# Main message on plastic scrap exports

- Starting on January 1, 2021 it will become illegal under a treaty for the U.S. to export most plastic scrap (i.e., plastic recyclables) to many countries including major countries the U.S. currently exports to such as Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia.
- Worldwide materials markets effect the Chicago area
- Reducing contamination is key
- Green procurement can build markets for recovered materials

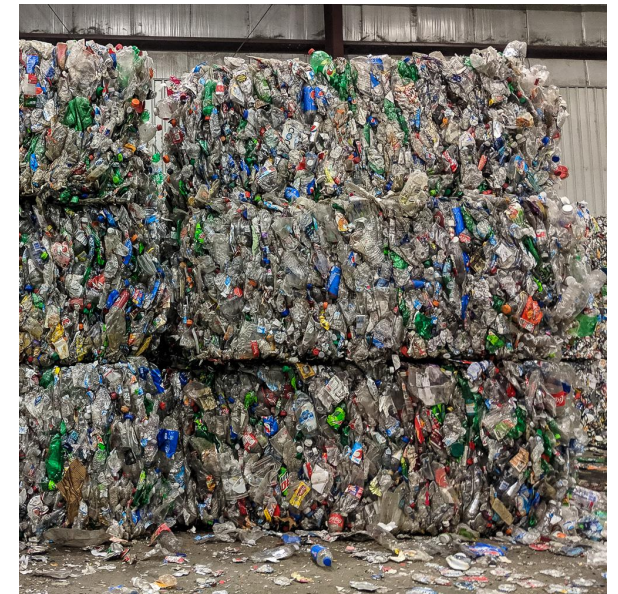
# Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste and their Disposal

- A legally binding international treaty establishing prior informed consent for transboundary shipments of waste within its scope.
- Entered into force in 1992; 187 Parties.
- The treaty's main objective is to control and ensure environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes subject to transboundary movement.
- U.S. is a Signatory, but not a Party.
- As a non-Party, the U.S. has limited influence over international decisions that impact many countries including the United States.



## New Basel requirements for exports of plastic scrap

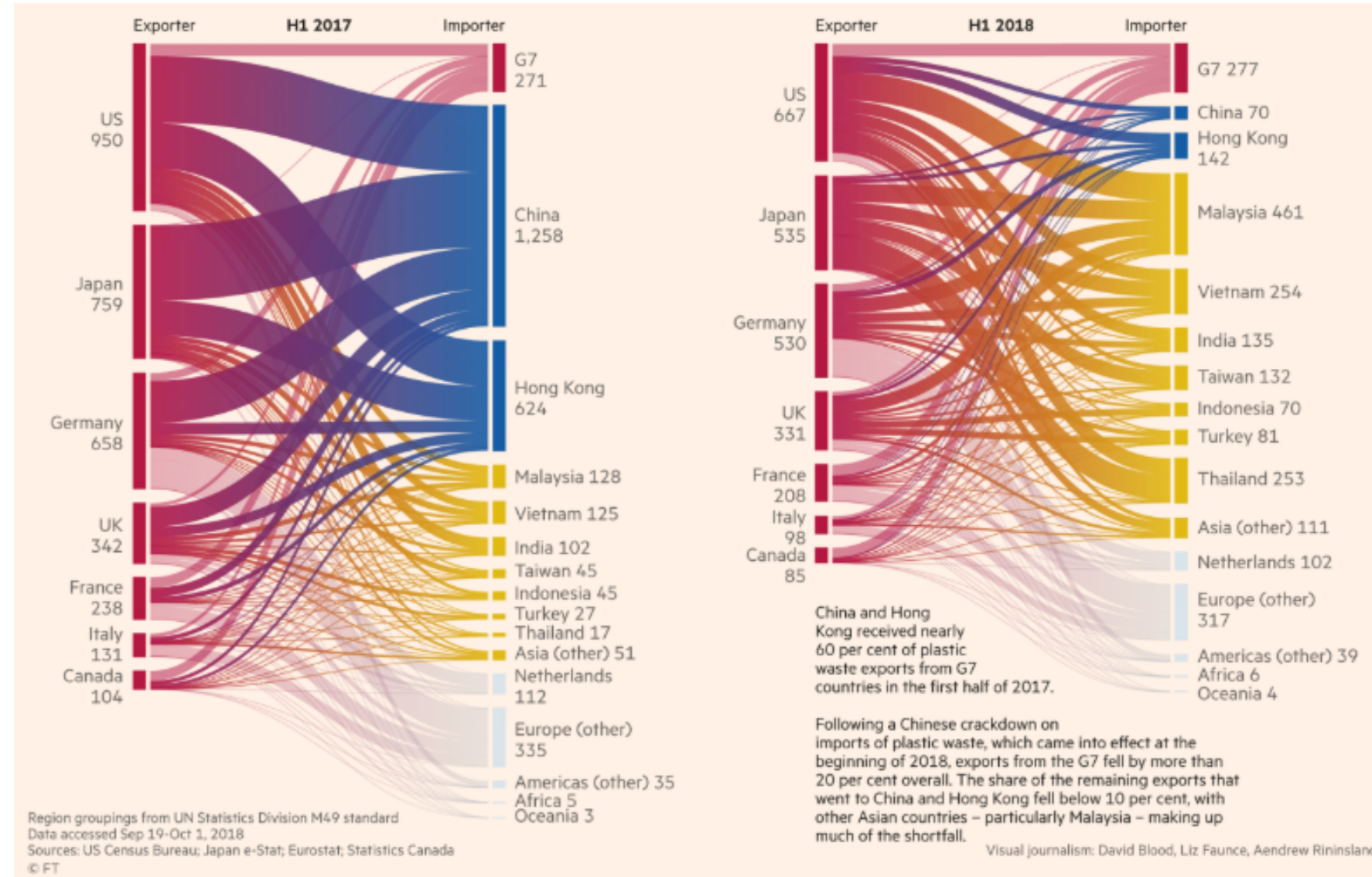
- At the May 2019 Basel Convention meeting, Basel Parties decided to newly classify most plastic scrap as subject to Basel Convention prior informed consent (PIC) requirements for export, effective January 1, 2021.
- Because of the Basel Party/Non-Party trade prohibition, Basel Parties will not be allowed to trade most plastic scrap with the United States, except under a separate bilateral or multilateral agreement.
  - Trade to OECD countries is also TBD
- The amendments were originally proposed by Norway to address marine plastic litter.



## Background

- In 2016, China imported about half of all plastic scrap intended for recycling globally (7.35 of 14.1 million MT).
- Export flows changed when China implemented strict import restrictions on recyclables, including plastic, in 2017.
- Concerns about capacity of 'new' importing countries to properly dispose of residual waste.

Exports of plastic scrap from G7 countries (000's metric tonnes)





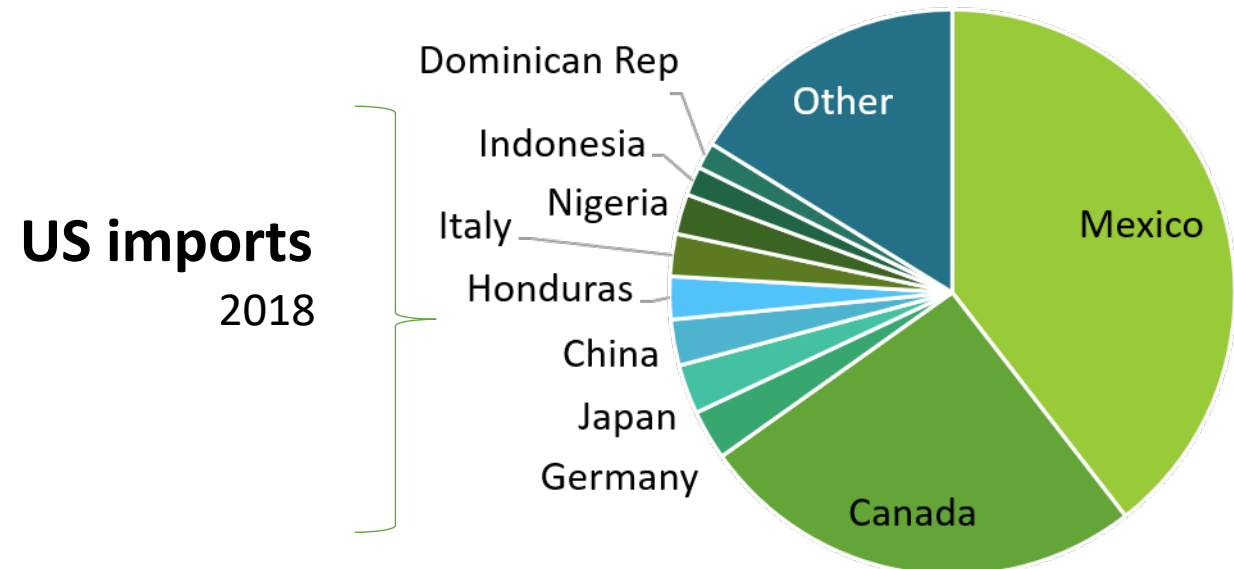
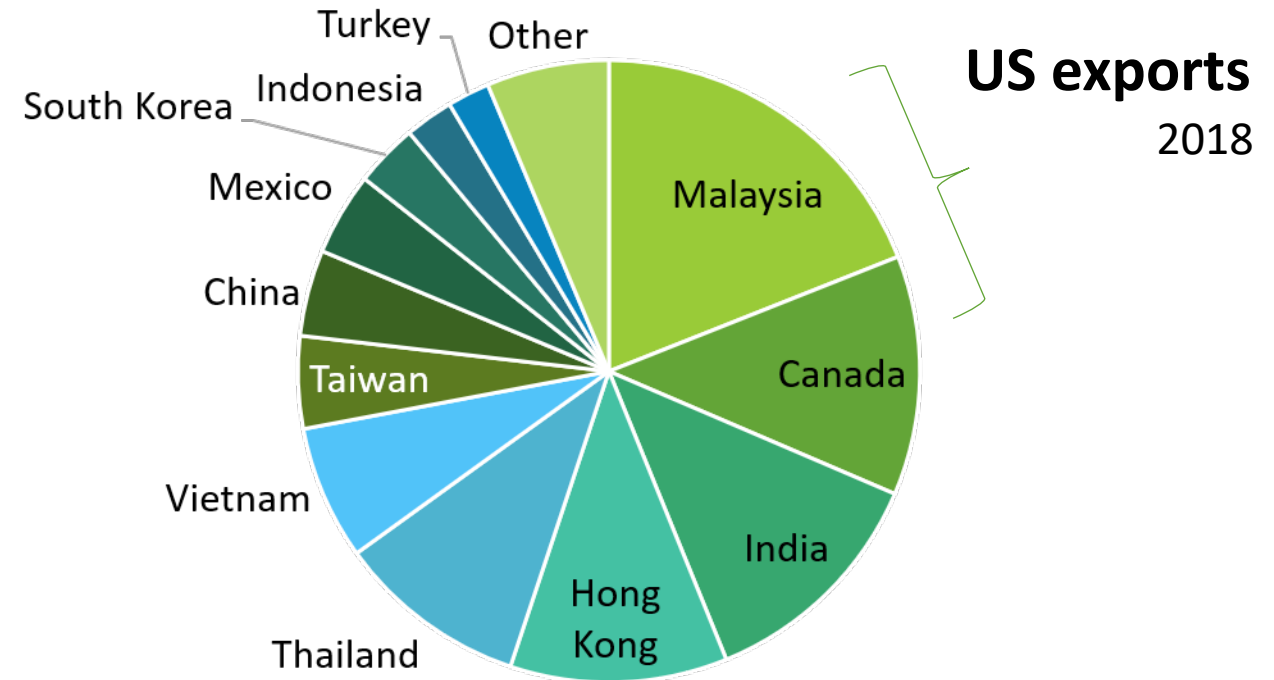
## New Basel requirements for exports of plastic scrap

- To be considered “exempt”, shipments of plastic scrap must meet a very narrow and strict set of criteria that can be difficult and costly.
- Exports will need to be pre-sorted and generally consist of a single non-halogenated polymer and be free from other scrap and contamination.
- Exports of mixed plastics of certain polymers (polyethylene, polypropylene and PET) will be exempt under certain circumstances, as well as shipments of certain thermoset resins and fluorinated polymers.
- Plastic scrap considered hazardous under the Basel Convention will be also be controlled.
- May details are still to be worked out.



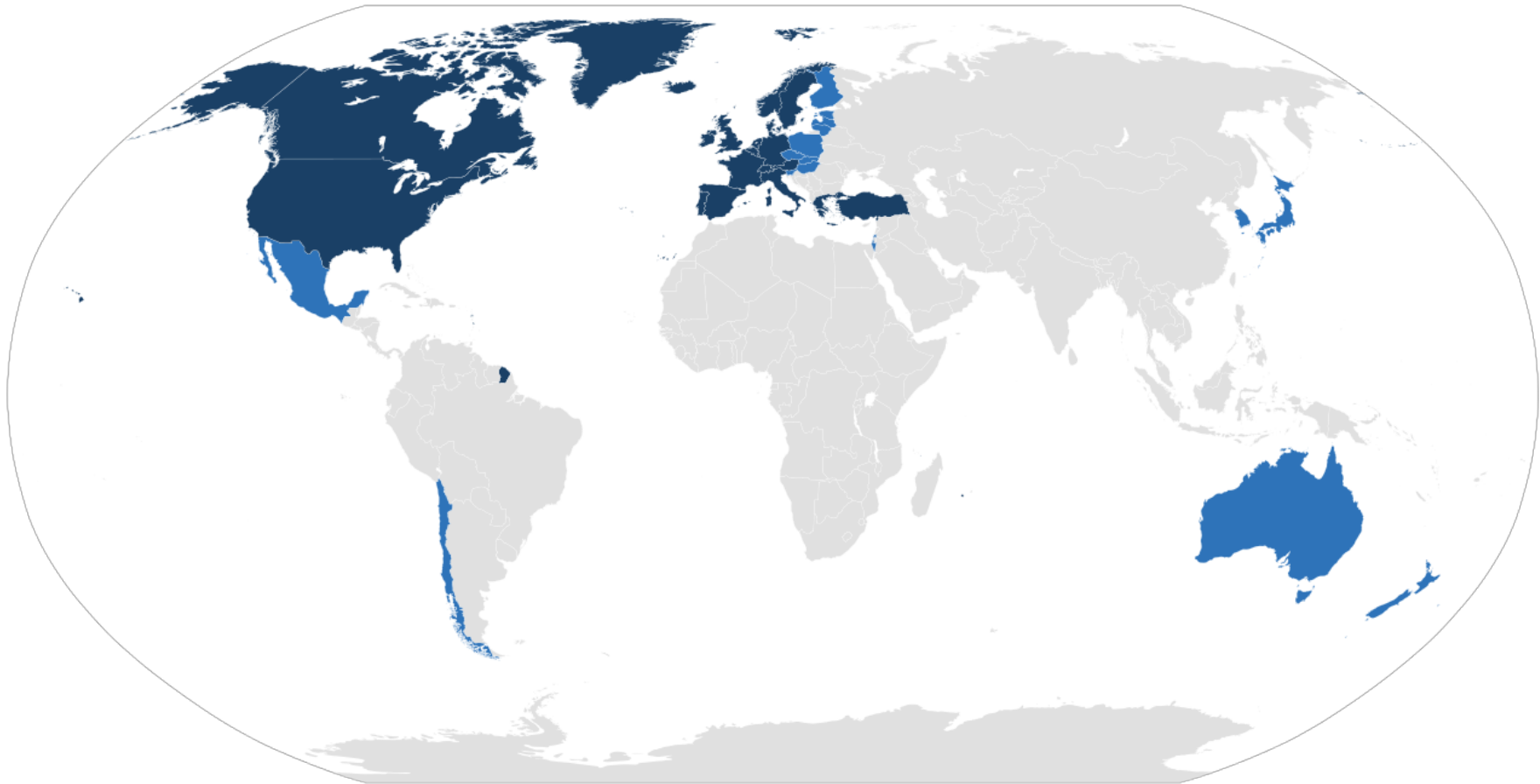
## Potential impacts for the U.S.

- Would effectively stop U.S. trade in plastic scrap to non-OECD countries.
  - Most US exports of plastic scrap are to non-OECD Basel Party countries, primarily in Asia.
- In 2018, the U.S. exported about 1.07 million metric tonnes of plastic scrap worth over \$445 million.
- The same year, the U.S. imported 442,000 metric tonnes of plastic scrap valued at more than \$245 million.



# Who are the OECD Member States?

Organization for  
Economic  
Cooperation and  
Development





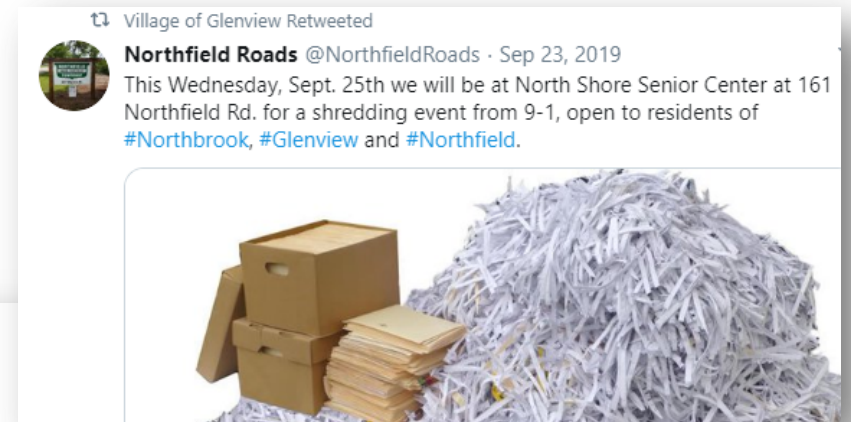
## Potential impacts for the U.S.

- Anticipate significant adverse impacts on US recycling programs that could benefit from the revenue generated by higher value plastic scrap exports.
- Will likely result in reduced US exports for plastic recycling and increased disposal in domestic landfills.
- May lead to increased investments in US plastic processing capacity.
- Anticipate confusion by US industry on technical issues and procedural requirements; need to develop outreach materials.
- EPA anticipates receiving import/export notifications for plastic scrap, even though the amendments do not change US export and import waste requirements.



# Promote Proper Recycling in Municipal Communications

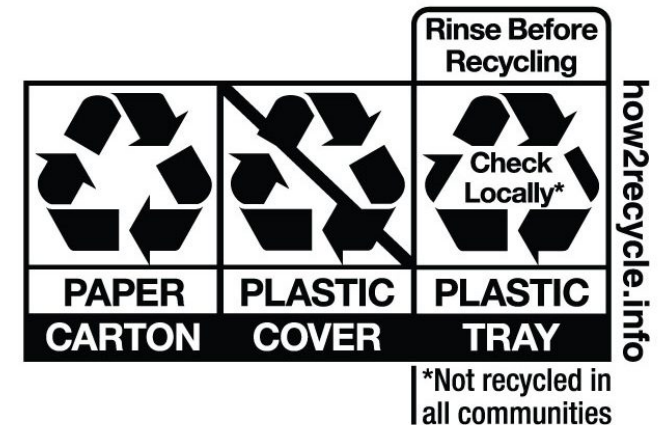
- Newsletters and social media
- Potential information sources
  - Illinois Contamination Taskforce materials
  - Solid waste agencies
  - Haulers
  - Recycling advocacy groups (verify with above)
- Show how you're 'going green' on projects



# Highlight Other Recycling Information Sources



RecycleMorePlastic.org



# What Can Communities and Local Governments Do?

- Buy green resources -
  - EPA:
    - [Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines](#)
    - [Greener Products Compilation](#)
  - General Services Administration:
    - [Sustainable Facilities Tool](#)
- RCRA's §6002 'buy recycled' requirements





# RESOURCE RECYCLING

Your trusted source for recycling news and analysis

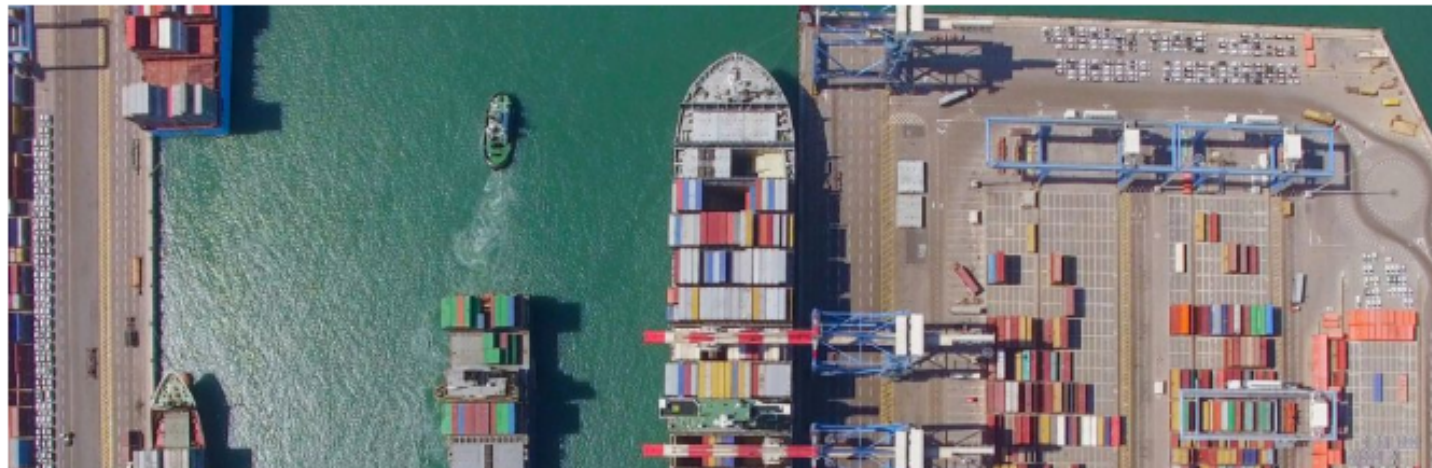


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## Paper and plastic export numbers take historic dive

Posted on February 6, 2020

by [Colin Staub](#)



Questions?

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