Public and private stakeholders across the United States are struggling to create a self-supporting waste management strategy that results in higher rates of material recovery. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 51% of packaging is recycled* -- the second highest rate of all product categories measured. Yet, packaging still makes up an estimated 23% of disposed municipal solid waste, providing significant opportunity to increase recovery.

As a result, the reduction of packaging waste has been at the forefront of the dialogue on financing and increasing recovery of discards in the U.S. Ongoing debates regarding how to balance these financing issues and increase material recovery have resulted in the promotion of, and advocacy for, specific strategies adopted elsewhere across the globe. Yet, when counterparts in Europe, Canada, and Australia are examined, these strategies depend upon the utilization of a multiple-system or “toolbox” approach. No single strategy operates independently of others. Each serves to create a mutually reinforcing system of recovery that addresses multiple priorities.

The full white paper, which is available at www.ameripen.org, seeks to identify strategies and financing mechanisms used across the globe that are the most effective and efficient in recovering packaging waste and addressing financing challenges of collection, sorting, and transportation. In order to do so, the paper:

• Identifies the range of strategies applied to packaging waste reduction and overall solid waste reduction amongst a variety of developed nations;

• Describes the relative effectiveness of the strategies for their impact on recovery and behavior change potential, strengths and challenges, and financial stability;

• Identifies best practices, or combinations thereof, that demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness in recovery of packaging waste.

The initial intent in undertaking this research was to identify a defined set of financial metrics that would help examine and analyze strategies for direct comparison on overall recovery and financing success. However, it was quickly learned that the underlying cultural, geographic, and political landscapes within the countries studied, and in some cases within states or provinces within a country, make these types of comparisons problematic. Additionally, drawing lines between strategies was difficult, as all operate within a specific cultural, geographic, and political system and do not act independently. We now believe any assessment of strategies for adoption within the U.S. requires a comprehensive understanding of specific waste management systems, an understanding of the interplay and interrelationships of these various approaches, and an assessment of their application against our unique challenges and opportunities.

In undertaking this study, AMERIPEN engaged a range of stakeholders involved in packaging waste concerns across the globe. These included industry peers, non-profit organizations, recycling and waste vendors, local and state officials, and packaging waste recovery experts. The goal was an objective and unbiased report based upon facts and provable findings.

Thanks to this effort, it appears that there is significant opportunity to expand certain best practices that are currently under-utilized and highly fragmented. The strategies that hold the most promise for adoption in the U.S. include unit-based pricing/pay as you throw (PAYT) initiatives, disposal bans, and recycling mandates that can collectively help shift consumer practices away from waste disposal and towards recycling and other recovery strategies.

As the report demonstrates, these are effective tools with proven results that -- when implemented together -- can better utilize our existing infrastructure. Additionally, voluntary financing mechanisms designed to grow recycling infrastructure should be explored as a way to drive infrastructure support and innovation. These include industry-funded project grants, similar to those utilized in Australia and Ontario, Canada.
To learn more...

You can download and read the complete report, **AMERIPEN Analysis of Strategies and Platforms to Increase the Recovery of Used Packaging** at www.ameripen.org.