



## **New Plant Aims to Reduce Waste with Help From Ag Industry**

A new facility for recycling plastic used in the agricultural industry is set to open later this year in Salinas. The Encore Recycling facility will take plastic used by the agricultural industry and turn it into reusable bags for use in grocery stores.

Command Packaging has invested \$8 million in the new Encore Recycling facility that is set to open this October in Salinas, California. Located in one of California's major agricultural regions, the plant will take plastic used by California's growers and recycle the material to make reusable plastic grocery bags. Command Packaging's CEO, Pete Grande, said the plant will be a big step forward in creating a closed loop system that significantly reduces waste.

"The original idea was to take agricultural film and plastic and recycle it into plastic products for the agricultural industry, and so creating a closed loop environment for growers," said Grande. "But we're going to make reusable grocery bags right now because we feel it's a big issue." High profile bans on plastic bags have been enacted in several cities across the US, and the issue has drawn much attention. While taking measures to reduce the amount of waste generated from plastic bags is good for the environment, the toll on grocery stores and consumers is not insignificant. Grande believes that introducing convenient, reusable bags will work well for people on either side of the plastic bag ban issue.

"Grocery stores want customers who don't feel inconvenienced or who feel they're being charged extra, and everyone wants to feel they're doing something good for the environment," explained Grande. "So we have a model that recycles plastic into reusable bags that don't affect the flow of customers at the checkout line and which are cost-effective for stores." The bags are comparable in price to paper bags customers can buy in stores where plastic bag bans are in place, and their reusable nature makes them better for consumers and for stores. It's a way to bridge both sides of the plastic bag debate while taking a large chunk out of the hundreds of millions of pounds of plastic that's used every year in California's agricultural industry.

"The facility will be able to take up to 100 million pounds of plastic a year, plastic which growers are happy to get rid of, and turn it into reusable bags," said Grande. "This state-of-the-art recycling facility will help us with our model that's right for the environment, good for the bottom line and won't hurt consumers."