

California set for Encore performance

A US manufacturer of reusable shopping and restaurant bags has opened a 200,000sqft agricultural plastics recycling facility - Encore Recycling - in Salinas, California, which will start operations in October.

Command Packaging is claimed to be the first US company to adopt and implement the successful European model of closed-loop recycling. Encore Recycling will partner with growers to collect, wash, and recycle the more than 100 million pounds (45,359 tonnes) of agricultural plastics that is currently being disposed of in California landfills every year. The facility will turn the plastics into reusable bags called smarterbags for the California grocery market.

The facility will create 40 manufacturing jobs in an area of California that has been hard hit by the economic downturn. In 2014, the company will employ more than 100 full time workers and plans to grow to a staff of nearly 500 full-time employees.

“Encore Recycling is leading the way to help California create the standard for a sustainable and closed-loop recycling system throughout the US,” said Pete Grande, chief executive of Command Packaging and Encore Recycling. “Implementing a sustainable recycling model that works for the consumer, the grocery store, and the environment, is a win-win for all. People love plastics. It’s part of our everyday lives. Instead of trying to eliminate it, we need to create a ‘Smarter’ plastics and Encore is doing that.”

Some large multinationals such as Dole, Driscoll, Pacific Gold Farms, Ramco, and Red Blossom Strawberries, as well as many independent growers, are working with Encore Recycling to ensure that their plastics is collected and recycled.

Thomas Flewell of Dole Berry Company said: “Until now, we’ve struggled to find a recycler large enough to handle the discarded farm plastics we use every year in the Salinas Valley.”