



# Pushing the boundaries of EPR policy for textiles: Chile factsheet



## EPR Status

EPR for textiles	Other EPR schemes
 <p>Under development – intention to establish EPR for textiles under existing EPR Law</p>	 <p><i>Established EPR schemes: packaging and packing materials, tyres</i></p> <p><i>Regulatory process for EPR scheme in progress: Lubricating oils, electrical and electronic products (EEE), batteries<sup>1</sup></i></p>

## Separate collection & sorting of discarded textiles

Separate collection rate	Sorting capacity for imported used textiles
<p>There is currently no formal separate collection of textiles at the municipal level in Chile. Waste (including from textiles) is mainly disposed of in landfills and formal dumps, in accordance with current regulations.<sup>2</sup> However, there are several emerging voluntary initiatives primarily driven by retail campaigns and entrepreneurial efforts.</p>	<p>Used textiles imported to Chile usually arrive in unsorted bales, and enter the country through three ports: Iquique Free Trade Zone (ZOFRI), San Antonio, and Talcahuano. Manual sorting activities occur within these port zones. Often, the first step involves sorting by formally established businesses, sorting clothing bales into three quality grades. This is followed by a more informal chain of further sorting operations.</p>

## Destinations of used textiles imported into Chile

Volume of used textiles imports into Chile (2021)	126kT <sup>3</sup>
<b>Reusable textiles<sup>4</sup> - imported into the Iquique Free Trade Zone (ZOFRI) only<sup>5</sup></b>	
Reusable textiles re-exported internationally <i>Relative to the quantity of textiles considered reusable after sorting</i>	5% <sup>6</sup>
Reusable textiles sold on the national market <i>Relative to the quantity of textiles considered reusable after sorting</i>	21% <sup>7</sup>
Reusable textiles that remain in the port area and may end up resold by local merchants or wasted <i>Relative to the quantity of textiles considered reusable after sorting</i>	73% <sup>8</sup>
<b>Non-reusable<sup>9</sup> and waste<sup>10</sup> textiles - imported into Chile</b>	
Recycling and downcycling <i>Relative to the quantity of used textiles imported into Chile</i>	Downcycling: 2% <sup>11</sup>
Landfill and incineration	There is insufficient infrastructure in Chile for the controlled landfill and/or incineration of unwanted used textiles resulting in large volumes of used clothing ending up in dumps in the desert. <sup>12</sup>

## EPR for textiles in Chile

The Extended Producer Responsibility Law was implemented in Chile in 2016 and currently covers six product categories. Plans are underway to add textiles to the product scope. “We plan to begin the regulatory process for EPR for textiles in 2025, with the aim to have targets in place for 2029,” explains Tomás Saieg, Chief, Circular Economy Office at the Chilean Ministry of Environment.



### We believe EPR can boost reuse activity across Chile

Tomás Saieg

Chilean policymakers acknowledge the benefits EPR policy can offer. Speaking of the opportunity, Saieg says: “in addition to the traditional focus of EPR on improved waste management through separate collection and sorting, we believe a key benefit is to drive reuse activities in Chile, by including tailors and small upcycling firms as EPR fund recipients. For the non-reusable textiles, we believe EPR should enable the development of a recycling industry in the country, ultimately reducing the pressure on our landfills.” This pressure has been increasing. Recent reports have described the emergence of clandestine landfills and uncontrolled

incineration in the North of Chile, citing textile waste (resulting from used textile imports) as a key driver.<sup>13</sup>

The implementation of EPR policy can bring social benefits as well, particularly for informal workers. “As we have already seen in Chile in the packaging sector, EPR can deliver significant social impacts by formalising informal jobs,” explains Saieg. “Currently, informal workers and waste pickers can register and formally take part in the EPR scheme under the 2021 EPR Decree for Packaging. PROs are legally obliged to provide training and financial support to promote the inclusion of informal waste pickers and recyclers, enabling them to access formal work opportunities as collectors and recyclers.”

### Towards a circular economy for textiles

While EPR in its conventional form can quickly help to boost recycling and reuse rates, ultimately interventions are needed to slow the flow of textile products placed on the market. “We can’t keep producing the amounts of textiles we are producing and hope to recycle our way out of it,” says Saieg. “Chile has a very high consumption of textiles, estimated at 31 kilogrammes per capita, and it is essential to shift this culture to one that is more mindful and more embracing of circular business models. EPR may not be the only appropriate policy for this but in the broader scheme of things, EPR is part of the solution.”



**We cannot recycle our way out of Chile’s high per-capita textile consumption. While EPR may not be the only solution, it is an important part of the broader effort to shift towards a circular economy for textiles.**

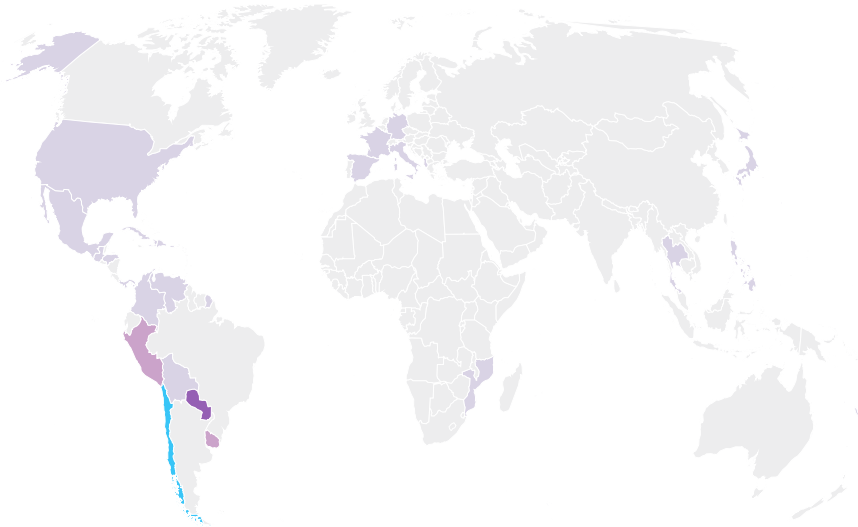
Tomás Saieg



## The role of Chile in the used textiles trade

Chile is a net importer of used textiles, and in 2021 was the 10th largest importer, accounting for 3% of global imports. In that year, 61% of Chile's imports came from just three countries: the USA (44%), China (10%), and Pakistan (8%).<sup>14</sup>

### Global distribution of exports from Chile

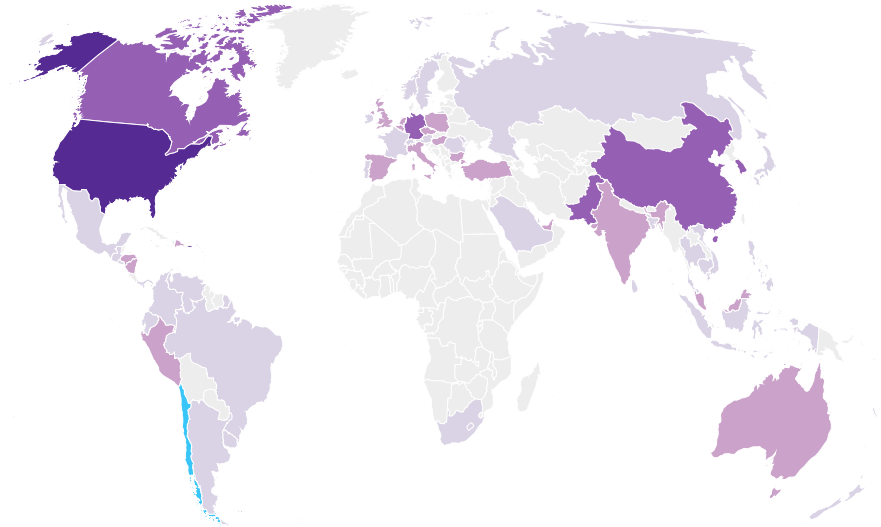


**Annual used textile exports (2021): 16kT<sup>15</sup>**



Quantity of used textiles (kT)

### Global distribution of imports to Chile



**Annual used textile imports (2021): 126kT<sup>16</sup>**



Quantity of used textiles (kT)

# Acknowledgements

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## Endnotes

- 1 Ministerio del Medio Ambiente, *Ley marco 20.920 para la gestión de residuos* (2024)
- 2 Based on Ellen MacArthur Foundation's interview with Cadenas de Valor Sustentables (CAV+S) (2024)
- 3 Based on analysis of the UN Comtrade data (HS-6309). See Ellen MacArthur Foundation, *Pushing the boundaries of EPR policy for textiles* (2024), Appendix D
- 4 Textiles that, after sorting, are considered suitable for reuse and can be sold to reuse markets, either nationally or internationally.
- 5 This section only focuses on reusable textiles imported into ZOFRI, however ZOFRI is not the only port in which textiles suitable for reuse are imported; others include the ports of San Antonio and Talcahuano.
- 6 UNECE-UNECLAC, *Reversing direction in the used clothing crisis: Global, European and Chilean perspectives* (2024), p.4
- 7 ibid.
- 8 ibid.
- 9 Textiles that, after sorting, are considered unsuitable for reuse due to them being worn out, damaged, or stained, but can be sold as feedstock for downcycling into lower-value applications, such as insulation material, wiping cloths, or mattress stuffing. Feedstock for textile-to-textile recycling has not been included as this process is not yet available at scale and there is currently no cost and revenue data available for this fraction.
- 10 Textiles that, after sorting, are considered unsuitable for reuse, recycling, and downcycling. These textiles are sent to disposal through landfill or incineration.
- 11 UNECE-UNECLAC, *Reversing direction in the used clothing crisis: Global, European and Chilean perspectives* (2024), p.17
- 12 UNECE-UNECLAC, *Reversing direction in the used clothing crisis: Global, European and Chilean perspectives* (2024), p.34
- 13 Leiva, R., Barros, M. & Sundt, S. *Caracterización del mercado de textiles y sus residuos, y del manejo de residuos textiles a nivel nacional* (2024)
- 14 Based on analysis of the UN Comtrade data (HS-6309). See Ellen MacArthur Foundation, *Pushing the boundaries of EPR policy for textiles* (2024), Appendix D
- 15 ibid.
- 16 ibid.



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