

Impact can be measured in many ways when it comes to sustainability. One small change that's making a big impact at our stores is our recent switch from cardboard to recycled plastic containers (RPCs) to transport our produce all the way from farm to shelf.

Our switch to using RPCs to transport produce has reduced the risk of damaging it and diverts millions of pounds of non-recyclable cardboard from landfills annually. Even our customers are noticing the difference.

"The change to using recyclable plastic containers (RPCs) may seem minor but it is one of the most recognizable steps we've taken to be more sustainable," said Mike Gray, Manager of Distribution Services for Meijer. "Our team members use the RPCs every day and customers see the containers being used as stores restock. So, it's small change that attracts attention in a big way."

Mike said choosing an alternate way to handle select items of produce is a company-wide initiative that has steadily rolled out state-by-state to all Meijer stores and distribution centers during the last year. It involves the RPCs being used at every touch point from farm to store, then returned, cleaned, sanitized and re-used.

While transitioning the way Meijer team members receive and transport vegetables like spinach, kale, collards, mustard and turnips to 258 stores required a lot of coordination within the company, it also required introducing new procedures for transportation and re-use of the containers throughout our supply chain, as well as farms and suppliers. But our efforts are not going unnoticed.

In October, we were one of six companies recognized by the West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum. Organizers at the annual event presented us with the Circular Economy Leadership Award for our ongoing initiatives to promote waste diversion and encourage development of a circular economy in West Michigan.

In addition to the RPC Initiative, other notable sustainable steps we've taken include offering designated areas in our stores where customers can drop off [recyclables](#). The easy-to-find location can be found in the entryways, featuring a selection of collection bins with electronic trackers that update customers on total pounds collected.

"We are proud to be honored with an award, but we really value the level of engagement we've seen from team members as new sustainability procedures have been introduced over the last 5 years," said Cory Hopkins, Produce Business Manager for Meijer. "We strive to be good stewards so our team members understand why we are making changes quickly become the best tool we have in taking positive steps where possible to support a more circular economy."

After the early success of the RPCs initiative, Cory's team continues to look for new ways to address waste diversion.

"Years from now, we believe these changes will be more than best practices," he said. "We hope the small steps we take today will become habits that benefit the communities where we have stores."

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Additional assets available online: [\(2\)](#)

<https://meijercommunity.com/One-Small-Change-We-Made-to-Divert-Millions-of-Pounds-from-Landfills-This-Year>