



# THINKING ABOUT USING GRAIN BAGS FOR PULSE CROPS? FIND OUT ABOUT RECYCLING OPTIONS FOR USED AG PLASTIC

By Agriculture Plastic Recycling Group



*Grain bags need to be tightly rolled when returned for recycling to be more efficient for transportation to a recycling facility.*

Grain bags are a common sight on the prairies in fall and winter. They serve as a popular temporary storage solution for cereal and oil grain growers. As this trend expands, some pulse growers may be considering adding grain bags to store harvested pulse crops.

Pulse farmers leaning in this direction, as well as all farmers who already use grain bags will want to know how to manage disposal of the used plastic when this multi-layered, heavy gauge agricultural plastic is no longer needed on the farm. The average size grain bag, for example, weighs about 225 kgs.

Contemporary environmental and sustainability best practices advise against disposal at landfill sites. And burning the plastic behind the farm gate releases harmful toxins that can impact human health and the environment.

Fortunately, there is a pilot program in Alberta which provides many convenient locations where farmers can return used, empty, rolled grain bags. The used bags are transported to one of two Alberta ag plastic recycling facilities where the plastic is processed and becomes feedstock to make new products, including other ag plastic film products.

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The pilot has dozens of collection sites throughout Alberta where farmers can take rolled grain bags and used baler twine for recycling with no cost to drop them off.

Details on collection site locations and how to prepare baler twine for recycling can be found at [AlbertaAgPlastics.ca](http://AlbertaAgPlastics.ca).

**Preparing Grain Bags for Recycling**

Grain bags that are returned loosely rolled require more space, are time consuming, difficult to manage with equipment, and they weigh very little, which is inefficient for transportation to a recycling facility. Taking these three steps can help ensure used grain bags will be accepted and recycled:

**1. Remove debris**

Grain bags need to be free of as

much foreign material (spoilage, dirt, rocks, etc.) as possible. Using a proper grain bag roller will help achieve that objective.

**2. Roll**

Grain bags need to be rolled tightly in order to maximize transport efficiency. They can be rolled with a standalone mechanical grain bag roller or old hay baler (most grain bag extractors roll the bags too loosely), and then secured tightly with twine. In Alberta, grain bag rollers are available for use in some municipalities. Contact your local collection site to inquire if a grain bag roller is available.

**3. Return**

Contact your local pilot collection site prior to dropping off material if unloading assistance is required

or if you are unsure if you have prepared the roll properly. Collection sites cannot accept unrolled, extractor rolled, or hand-rolled grain bags.

The ‘Alberta Ag Plastic. Recycle it!’ pilot project is led by the multi-stakeholder Agricultural Plastics Recycling Group with funds granted by the Government of Alberta and administered by Alberta Beef Producers. The ‘Alberta Ag Plastic. Recycle it!’ pilot program for grain bags and baler twine is operated by Cleanfarms, a national, non-profit industry stewardship organization that designs and develops recycling and disposal solutions for farmers to manage used agricultural plastics and other ag packaging waste to help keep farms and farm communities clean.



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