

Africa Collect Textiles and Green Forest Solutions - The Need for Global EPR Systems

Key Learnings



ACT's Model for Collection and Valorisation

The operational model is built on creating a structured system from the ground up. This involves establishing diverse collection channels, including door-to-door pickups and public drop-off points, to formalise the retrieval of post-consumer textiles. An incentivisation mechanism for institutions helps drive participation, with funds often redirected to social programmes. Collected items are meticulously sorted; wearable items are redistributed into the local market, while non-wearable materials are channeled into upcycling operations that produce new consumer goods, from homeware to corporate merchandise.

The Critical Need for Extended Producer Responsibility

A primary systemic challenge is the lack of recycling infrastructure, which Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is crucial to fund. Work is underway to define a viable EPR scheme through detailed pilots that analyse the entire value chain: from collection and sorting costs to the complexities of recycling blended materials. The goal is to establish fees that reflect the true cost of management, creating a sustainable funding loop. For a truly circular system, international EPR is necessary to ensure that textiles exported to the market are accompanied by financial responsibility for their end-of-life processing.

Systemic Hurdles and Strategic Direction

The prevalence of fast fashion, characterised by poor-quality and complex material blends, presents a major obstacle to recycling and underscores the need for better initial product design. The strategic path forward involves scaling collection volumes significantly and investing in mechanical recycling capabilities. Concurrently, the focus is on establishing a functional EPR framework locally while contributing to the global conversation on policy and sustainable textile flows.

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