

PRESS RELEASE

EUBP WELCOMES WORLD'S FIRST PLASTICS STRATEGY IN EUROPE

But European Commission misses chance to fully embrace circular benefits of bio-based plastics and biodegradable plastics

Berlin, 17 January 2018 – The European Strategy for Plastics, published on Tuesday by the European Commission, sets clear goals to curb plastic waste, increase resource efficiency, and to create value and job growth in Europe, but falls short on presenting a comprehensive approach by limiting the focus of the strategy on mechanical recycling. Concrete steps towards reducing the dependency on fossil feedstock by linking the circular economy with the bioeconomy and supporting innovative bio-based plastics solutions have been further postponed. Moreover, the contributions of biodegradable plastics to a circular economy are recognised but concrete measures are still missing.

“Plastics made from renewable raw materials are a sustainable alternative for many plastic products”, says François de Bie, Chairman of European Bioplastics (EUBP), the association of the bioplastics industry in Europe, and adds: “For some applications, recycled plastics are not always suitable due to lower quality or for safety reasons. While the increase of recycled content in plastics is important to reduce virgin fossil feedstock, alternative sustainable feedstocks such as bio-based feedstocks need to be encouraged as well in order to defossilise the plastics economy.” Replacing a significant proportion of the conventional fossil feedstock by plant-based alternatives would reduce greenhouse emissions and help to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement. At the same time, the mobilisation of EU-grown biomass for the production of bio-based plastics would provide impulses for jobs and growth in the bioeconomy sector and the opportunity to EU farmers to valorise side streams and by-products and to tap additional revenue streams.

EUBP welcomes the importance the Commission has given to biodegradable and compostable plastics and their role in separate collection systems for organic waste in order to improve clean waste streams and recycling quality. The benefits and circular use of biodegradable plastics have to be foremost considered in this context of organic recycling. EUBP looks forward to collaborating with the Commission on identifying applications and measures to stimulate innovation and drive market development in this field. “In addition to organic recycling, biodegradable plastics have the potential to offer benefits with respect to reducing the impact of some applications on the marine environment. In a next step, appropriate materials, applications, standards, and environmental claims and communication have to be specified together with the Commission and other relevant stakeholders in upcoming initiatives as outlined in the strategy”, says de Bie.

“We also appreciate the commitment of the Commission to make a clear distinction between biodegradable plastics and so-called ‘oxo-degradable’ plastics that falsely claim to biodegrade. We therefore strongly welcome the decision of the Commission[1] to restrict the use of oxo-plastics in the EU”, says de Bie. “In this context, we will also work with the Commission on clearer and unambiguous communication and environmental claims and to increase efforts for better consumer information on the correct disposal of the different types of bioplastics.”

[...]

EUBP is looking forward to closely working together with the EU institutions and all relevant stakeholders in the upcoming discussions following the EU Plastics Strategy in order to ensure that the initial acknowledgements of alternative bio-based feedstocks and of biodegradable plastics will be further developed throughout the actions outline in the annex of the strategy.

[1] European Commission, COM(2018) 35, Report on the impact of the use of oxo-degradable plastics, including oxo-degradable plastic carrier bags, on the environment, 16 January 2018.

About European Bioplastics:

European Bioplastics (EUBP) is the European association representing the interests of the bioplastics industry along the entire value chain. Its members produce, refine and distribute bioplastics i.e. plastics that are bio-based, biodegradable, or both. More information is available at www.european-bioplastics.org.

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