

PRESS RELEASE

BIOPLASTIC MATERIALS' VALUE PROPOSITIONS WELL REFLECTED IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S REPORT ON PLASTICS STRATEGY

EP report ties in with provisions for feedstock differentiation and use of biodegradable and compostable plastics recently adopted in Waste Directive and Packaging Directive

Berlin, 13 September 2018 – The European Parliament's report on the European Strategy for Plastics adopted today by the plenary testifies to the increasing acknowledgement and endorsement of the value propositions of bioplastics. Rapporteur Mark Demesmaeker highlights the potential role of bio-based plastics and of biodegradable plastics in establishing a strong circular EU bioeconomy.

'We welcome the emphasis on the potential of bio-based plastics for feedstock differentiation in plastics production as well as the acknowledgment of the transformative role of innovative bio-based plastics already in the market', comments Hasso von Pogrell, Managing Director of European Bioplastics (EUBP). 'Equally important to us is the express call of the Parliament for defining clear criteria for the use of biodegradable and compostable plastics. With regard to food packaging applications, this will boost organic recycling and thus help realise a circular economy across Europe. In this context, it is also very encouraging that the Parliament is taking a clear position against oxo-degradable plastics', von Pogrell states further.

Bioplastics offer two paradigmatic developments at opposite ends of products' life cycles. On the one hand, bio-based plastics enable feedstock diversification and the gradual transition away from fossil and towards renewable feedstocks. This is an essential value proposition in the EU's bid to gain independence from fossil resource imports and to significantly reduce CO₂ emissions.

The other key innovation proposed by the bioplastics industry is biodegradability and compostability according to existing harmonized standard on industrial composting (EN 13432), that is, the conversion of plastic materials to water, biomass, and CO₂ through microbial metabolisation. Applied to food contact applications such as biowaste collection bags or food packaging, biodegradability and compostability enables the optimisation of separate bio-waste collection for organic recycling, thus preserving valuable secondary resources and establishing an important aspect of the circular economy. In other environments, biodegradability can help to reduce plastic waste accumulation, for example in modern agriculture through the use of mulch films that are biodegradable in soil according to the standard EN 17033. In addition to this, there could also be selected future applications in marine contexts where items such as fishing gear are prone to being lost at sea unintentionally.

The report of the European Parliament on the Plastics Strategy ties in with earlier initiatives of the European Commission and statements of the Parliament with regard to provisions recently adopted in the Circular Economy Package as well as the Waste Framework Directive, the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive.

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‘We see a more differentiated understanding evolving in the European institutions of what bioplastics are and how they can contribute to the circular bioeconomy’, assesses von Pogrell. ‘Especially for the property of biodegradability and compostability, it is important to clarify what is expected in which specific environment, to see for which products the property is meaningful and if standards exist or still need to be elaborated’. With an eye to the draft Directive on marine litter and single-use plastics, von Pogrell notes that ‘biodegradability may be of relevance in marine environments in specific circumstances and for specific applications, but it clearly is no general remedy to the problem of littering or a reason for the excessive production of single-use items’. EUBP calls for a differentiated approach to marine biodegradability and urges the Commission and Parliament to further assess this specific point.

EUBP is looking forward to closely working together with the EU institutions and all relevant stakeholders in the current and upcoming discussions on single-use plastics and the soon to be published update of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy.

Download EUBP Position on Plastics Strategy: http://docs.european-bioplastics.org/publications/pp/EUBP_PP_Plastics_Strategy.pdf

Download EUBP Position on Single-use Plastics: http://docs.european-bioplastics.org/publications/pp/EUBP_PP_Biodegradable_plastics_&_single_use_plastics_June2018.pdf

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.