

## PRESS RELEASE

### EUBP RAISES CONCERNS OVER BIASED EASAC REPORT ON BIO-BASED AND BIODEGRADABLE PLASTICS

**Berlin, 18 March 2020 – “If we wanted to condense the gist of the report, we could say that EASAC discourages all the innovations that appear in the industrial sector currently dominated by fossil-based plastics”, says François de Bie, Chairman of European Bioplastics (EUBP) in response to the report ‘Packaging plastic in the circular economy’ recently published by the European Academies’ Science Advisory Council (EASAC).**

According to EUBP, the statements on bio-based and biodegradable plastics by EASAC implicitly lead to some very questionable recommendations to EU institutions and citizens. The report doubts that bio-based plastics are better for the environment, although it has been proven by third party researchers and many peer reviewed Life Cycle Assessments that bioplastics made from sustainably grown biomass carry multiple environmental benefits over their fossil counterparts. “The European Green Deal itself underlines that fossil subsidies are to be challenged and alternative resources shall be considered. In the material sector there is a need to change to low emissions and renewable, bio-based carbon materials. Bio-based plastics respond to this need and are already available in the market”, states de Bie.

Raising mainly emotional and not science-based arguments, the report is also critical about biodegradable plastics. It’s posting the idea that biodegradability and durability are properties that cannot coexist, making biodegradable plastic an ‘elusive’ target. This claim is disavowed by many products that are present on the market today. The report also questions how ‘soon’ and ‘well’ biodegradable plastics degrade. “This does not reflect the reality, especially in the case of some applications which can potentially end up in the organic waste, as a recent independent study by Wageningen University & Research (WUR)\* clearly showed. The tested EN 13432 certified degradable and compostable plastic products, such as organic waste collection bags, plant pots, tea bags or coffee capsules, broke down in a full-scale industrial organic waste treatment facility within a maximum of 22 days”, François de Bie comments on the EASAC study.

Packaging that is prone to be highly contaminated with food waste will not be mechanically recycled. Instead, in most cases, it will be incinerated, or even worse, landfilled. “Compostable plastics, e.g. compostable shopping bags which can be reused to collect organic waste, help divert organic waste from landfills and thus increase the amount of extra organic waste collected. Biodegradable and compostable plastics play an important role in a circular economy by closing the organic cycle”. Besides the WUR study, the not-for-profit organisation WRAP, which leads the UK Plastics Pact\*\*, recently also suggested key applications and opportunities\*\*\* for compostable plastic packaging. These include food caddy liners and other bags as well as fruit and vegetable stickers, tea bags, coffee pods and ready meal trays for ‘closed loop’ situations, e.g. festivals.

The study also refers to possible confusion of consumers caused by the term ‘biodegradable’. “To the best of our knowledge, none of the expressed criticism that biodegradability will increase litter is backed up with any actual evidence. The much cited UNEP report is such a case in point”, François de Bie criticises. Thus, it seems to EUBP that any attempt to solve the gigantic environmental problems caused by fossil-based plastics is hastily dismissed by EASAC. On the other hand, EASAC seems to ignore twenty years of research, market applications and recycling practices of these materials, always developed in compliance with the current EU legal provisions. “The report constitutes a missed opportunity for a meaningful evaluation of the role of bio-based as well as biodegradable and compostable plastics in a sustainable circular economy. It is liable to dash any hopes that the European Commission will rely on more in depth scientific reports when drafting its policy framework for bio-based and biodegradable and compostable plastics. Against this background, we kindly invite all policy makers and other stakeholders to re-discuss the findings of this report with us”, de Bie concludes.

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- \* <https://edepot.wur.nl/514397>
- \*\* <https://www.wrap.org.uk/content/the-uk-plastics-pact>
- \*\*\* <https://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Citizen-attitudes-survey-food-waste-and-packaging.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](http://www.european-bioplastics.org).*

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