

PRESS RELEASE

NEW CIRCULAR ECONOMY ACTION PLAN: NO CIRCULAR ECONOMY WITHOUT BIOECONOMY

Berlin, 13 March 2020 – “European Bioplastics (EUBP) welcomes the new Circular Economy Action Plan (nCEAP). It’s an ambitious step forward to transform Europe into a circular economy”, says François de Bie, Chairman of European Bioplastics. “As EUBP, we especially endorse the European Commission’s (EC) commitment to support the ‘sustainable and circular bio-based sector through the implementation of the Bioeconomy Action Plan’”, adds de Bie. “We have long been criticizing the rather artificial separation of the circular economy and the bio-based economy. These two, however, are very much interlinked, and we are happy to see that this seems to have finally been understood”, he comments on the nCEAP published by the EC on 11 March 2020.

As to on-going and planned initiatives regarding plastics, notably with a focus on packaging, EUBP would, however, prefer a more differentiated approach from the Commission. “While we certainly support measures to reduce (over)packaging and packaging waste as well as the drive to design packaging for re-use and recyclability, a mere focus on mechanical recycling and on introducing quotas for the use of recyclates is jumping to short”, says François de Bie. “This is particularly the case when it comes to food contact materials.” According to EUBP, the announced establishment of rules for the safe recycling of plastic materials into food contact materials other than PET will not solve the health and safety issues associated with the use of recyclates. This applies in particular to the short to medium term. “There is a good reason why, today, recyclates other than PET are not admitted as food contact materials, as, currently, there is no way to guarantee the elimination of potentially hazardous legacy materials. Therefore, we strongly encourage the EC to support the use of sustainably sourced bio-based virgin material for packaging requiring food contact approval. This should be reflected in, for example, the guidance on eco-modulation of EPR fees. In general, recycling of plastic packaging needs to be understood in line with the WFD Art. 3 as mechanical, chemical or organic recycling.”

The EC’s commitment to assess biodegradable and compostable plastics in order to determine which applications may be beneficial to the environment, is very much supported by EUBP. “We are convinced that a thorough assessment of EN 13432 certified biodegradable and compostable plastics packaging will eventually reach the conclusion that there are quite a few applications where compostability makes perfect sense”, says de Bie. Packaging, which 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 bioplastics help divert organic waste from landfills. The remedy can only be to allow such packaging to be composted together with the separately collected biowaste. Compost from separately collected bio-waste is an extremely valuable soil improver and nutrient supplier. It plays an important role in a circular economy by closing the organic cycle. We therefore welcome the mandatory separate biowaste collection by 2023“, states François de Bie.

The recently published action plan aims at accelerating the transformational change required by the European Green Deal. “We see ourselves in a crucial role to help achieving the deal and the nCEAP as one of its key deliverables. The bioplastics industry is looking forward and willing to provide strong support”, concludes François de Bie.

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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