

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith /
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Bil drafft Diogelu'r Amgylchedd (Cynhyrchion Plastig Untro) (Cymru)/
Draft Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products)(Wales) Bill
SUP_08
Ymateb gan / Evidence from Bio-based and Biodegradable Industries Association
(BBIA)

To Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee,
Welsh Parliament

thank you providing the opportunity to give our views on the draft
Environment Protection Bill for Wales which incorporates measures to limit the
consumption of single use plastics.

The BBIA represents companies operating in the UK which produce and
distribute compostable materials including those defined under the
certification EN13432 as plastics compostable in industrial composting and
anaerobic digestion.

The use of these materials is particularly appropriate and beneficial when
there are applications that enhance the collection and treatment of food
waste, our single largest MSW stream. By using compostable materials we
ensure that there is no contamination in the final compost and digestate of
plastics as compostable plastics will disappear during composting processes
and, with some further post digester treatment, after anaerobic digestion.

Wales has already established full scale, nationwide food waste collections.
Many local authorities provide for food waste to be collected in compostable
bin liners to avoid plastic contamination.

As we have learned from the Italian experience, which started food waste
collections 20 years ago, the more compostable materials we place into the
hands of citizens, the more and better quality food waste we collect. Indeed
Italy has an average contamination of its food waste collections of no more
than 3.1% and this is because citizens have many different ways of collecting
food waste. In fact, in Italy, all carrier bags are compostable, as are fruit and
vegetable bags used in shops. This law was introduced and applied after 2012
and has two benefits:

1. councils need to give citizens less caddy liners and citizens re-use their
compostable carrier bags as caddy liners which saves the councils money and
2. more food waste is intercepted. Italy intercepts 85% of its food waste.

The Italian model is being copied in Spain, Germany, Austria and around the world, eg in California.

Wales has had the benefit of this model with the Coop only selling lightweight carrier bags to its customers that are compostable. This allows Welsh councils to reduce the use of caddy liners but above all gives Welsh citizens another instrument to collect their food waste. The Coop chose compostable carrier bags after a long and detailed analysis of alternatives, benefits and costs.

Under the provisions of the Bill, the distribution of Coop compostable bags would be banned. We think this is an error for the reasons cited above and ask that compostable carrier bags, certified to the standard BS EN 13432:2000 are exempted from the ban.

We have a second question and that regards the ban on oxodegradable plastics. We fully support this ban. However, the Devil is in the detail. Vendors of the additives which are used to make claims that plastics "oxodegrade" know that bans are being applied across the globe and that the sale of these additives will not be possible, damaging their business model. Much of the USA has banned these additives, as has much of Australia and of course, the whole EU.

But to circumvent the ban the vendors of the additives change the description or name of the chemical powders they sell and have come up with some new names to avoid the ban: these include oxobiodegradable, biotransformational, bioassimilated and so on. All of them are oxodegradable plastics but dressed up in new colours. Among these we signal those plastics sold using a Publicly Available Specification known as PAS9017 which has all the hallmarks of an oxodegradable plastic.

Therefore it is important you get the definition right to avoid these vendors and marketers circumventing your legislation. The best definitions are ones we have seen used in Australia and Washington State, USA.

These are:

(South Australia): See

<https://www.replacethewaste.sa.gov.au/oxo-degradable-plastic-products>

‘a material (however described) made of plastic which includes additives to accelerate the fragmentation of the material into smaller pieces, triggered by ultraviolet radiation or heat exposure, whether or not this is, or may be,

followed by partial or complete breakdown of the material by microbial action’.

(Washington State USA) See

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=70A.455&full=true#70A.455.070>

The approach taken here is that any plastic sold that claims biodegradability must be compostable according to the USA standards ASTM D6400 (equivalent to the UK standard BS EN 13432:2000) and therefore prohibits the use of other marketing claims.

Text

Except as provided in this chapter, no producer may sell, offer for sale, or distribute for use in this state a plastic product that is labeled with the term "biodegradable," "degradable," "decomposable," "oxo-degradable," or any similar form of those terms, or in any way imply that the plastic product will break down, fragment, biodegrade, or decompose in a landfill or other environment.

(2) This section does not apply to biodegradable mulch film that meets the required testing and has the appropriate third-party certifications.

Text finishes

We ask that the Welsh Government applies both the definition as given by the South Australian Government and the prohibition of false marketing claims as given by the Washington State Government of the USA.

We hope this is of benefit to you and to the wider environment in Wales.