



OXO-BIODEGRADABLE PLASTICS ASSOCIATION

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Researchers from leading French university challenge EU on oxo-biodegradable plastics

The EU has been challenged on its lack of understanding of oxo-biodegradable plastic by a scientific team from Blaise Pascal University, one of France's leading research centres for degradable plastics, in a briefing paper they have just published

The team also take issue with "misinformation" on oxo-biodegradable plastics, singling out the "not very expert reports and erroneous information" by which the EU has been misled.

The team focuses on "the principal negative elements (about oxo-biodegradable plastic) which circulate in Europe", describing them as being at "the base of political reactions, which obstruct the development of oxo-biodegradables in Europe."

They also state that the field of oxo-biodegradation is a field with important potential for the protection of the environment.

The team do not pull their punches. This briefing paper analyses the principal "negative" elements" and finds that none of them stand up to scientific examination. They also state that scientific research on oxo-biodegradable materials must be able to continue without meeting non-scientific obstruction and that it is not acceptable to oppose "achieved scientific results with opinions based on little or no fact."

"This briefing paper reaffirms what we have been saying for some time," says Michael Stephen, chairman of the Oxo-Biodegradable Plastics Association. "The bioplastics lobby have been indulging in a well-funded lobbying campaign of institutions like the European Parliament and have presented dubious evidence as well as outright disinformation. They have for example created a fictitious material called "oxo-fragmentable plastic" which is not known to science and for which there is accordingly no official definition."

"Oxo-biodegradable plastic is important for Europe since it is the only plastic offering complete, non-toxic degradability to a pre-set approximate timescale, and effective on land or in water. This form of plastic was developed to solve the problem of plastic waste in the environment, which if not collected would lie or float around for decades. Its biodegradability and its relatively short lifespan ensure that it will not be around for very long. What will European countries do without it? You cannot collect all the plastic waste, but if all the plastic had been made with oxo-biodegradable technology there would be no ocean garbage patches"

With regard to the “negative elements about oxo-biodegradable plastic,” the Blaise Pascal team summarises these as follows and add their own comments:

- *Oxo-biodegradable polymers are only oxo-fragmentable polymers.* This view is incorrect, and is disseminated by several technical centres which are not specialists in this technology.

- *Oxo-biodegradable polyethylene films (thus correspondingly plastic bags) are unsuitable for recycling with polyethylene.* This opinion results from a study commissioned by the European Plastics Converters and carried out while introducing, with low relative content, 4 types of material into a recycling operation. A reading of the report shows that in 3 cases out of 4, the introduced materials were biosourced polyethylene which is not an oxo-biodegradable plastic; in the last case, the material was not certified as oxo-biodegradable - the organization not having competence to do it.

- *The residues of oxo-biodegradable films produced after exposure to light, do not continue to oxidize at ambient temperature in the absence of light - for example in the earth.* This is contrary to what can be proved by determining the energy of activation of thermo-oxidation and by understanding the kinetics which must necessarily intervene.

- *Oxo-biodegradable polyolefins can give rise to toxicities, either due to the organometallic pro-oxidant compounds, or due to organic compounds formed during the oxidizing decomposition of polyolefins.* In fact, among the organometallic compounds used, only that which includes the cobalt cation is presented as an important toxin. However, using Biotest ATP described in AFNOR AC T51-808, we showed that the toxicity of this compound to the bacteria employed appears only with levels at least 10 times higher than those used in formulations of oxo-biodegradable plastic products.

All the molecular organic compounds or oligomers formed during the photochemical degradation of PE and PP have been known for at least 20 years within the Laboratory of Photochemistry of the University Blaise Pascal, and none of these compounds has proved to be toxic (as Biotest ATP shows).

- *It is not advisable to convert bio-sourced PE into oxo-biodegradable PE.* In fact, bio-sourced PE is non-biodegradable and is likely to be a visual pollutant and macrotoxic in the marine environment. It thus appears on the contrary desirable to make them acquire a biodegradable property.

Criticising the EU, the scientists say that “it seems the Commission plans to deal with the problem of plastic waste only by approaches like recycling, composting or incineration. Non- collectable plastic waste is not therefore recognised by the Commission, which imagines the total disappearance of plastic waste on the ground and in the marine environment. They do not have and do not appear to wish to have data on the non-

collectable plastic waste, which exists undoubtedly in all the continental and marine environments.”

NOTE: The above is from a translation of the French text from the National Centre for the Evaluation of Photoprotection (CNEP) at Blaise Pascal University, Clermont Ferrand.
<http://www.cnep-ubp.com/faut-il-que-la-desinformation-sur-les-materiaux-oxobiodegradables-perdure/>

For further information, go to the OPA's website at: www.biodeg.org

Or see attachment, or contact:

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