



OXO-BIODEGRADABLE PLASTICS ASSOCIATION

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INITIAL RESPONSE FROM OPA ON REPORT FROM MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

We are amazed by this report published 3rd March suggesting that biodegradation-promoting additives for polymers do not significantly increase biodegradation in compost, anaerobic digestion and soil burial environments. The OPA has asked its technical experts to analyse the report, and a detailed statement will be made, but it is clear that the tests performed at MSU are largely irrelevant.

There is no point in testing an oxo-biodegradable plastic bag in anaerobic conditions because, as the name implies, it needs oxygen to degrade. It is not designed to degrade in landfill because degradation in anaerobic conditions creates methane – a dangerous greenhouse gas. For the same reason there is no point in testing by burying it in the soil.

So far as compost is concerned, oxo-biodegradable plastics are not marketed for degradation in compost – their purpose is to deal with plastic litter which escapes into the open environment from which it cannot realistically be collected, and the scientific evidence published over the last 15 years shows its efficacy for that purpose – see <http://www.biodeg.org/bibliography.html>

Another fundamental point is that oxo-biodegradable plastic bags are designed to have a service life within which they will NOT degrade, and there is therefore no point in testing a bag which has not yet reached the end of its service life.