

Oxo-Biodegradable Plastics Association

A not-for-profit organisation Limited by Guarantee.
EU registration No: 370641927438-79



OPA AT BRUSSELS CONFERENCE ON PLASTICS

The OPA was represented by its Chairman, Michael Stephen, at the “Reinventing Plastics – Closing the Circle” conference https://ec.europa.eu/info/plastics-conference_en arranged by the Commission of the European Union in Brussels on 26th September 2017.

He noted that the one subject not discussed was “What to do about the thousands of tons of conventional plastic which get into the open environment (despite the best efforts of the EU and its member-states and NGOs) from which they cannot realistically be collected. He describes this as “a black hole” in the Commission’s plastics strategy.

He welcomed the statement by First Vice-President of the Commission, Frans Timmermans, that “the solutions are out there, and we must meet the technological challenge.” The OPA decided to accept this challenge more than ten years ago, and oxo-biodegradable plastic technology is now available in almost all countries of the world. The governments of the UAE and Saudi Arabia have seen the black hole in their own strategy and have filled it by making oxo-biodegradable plastic mandatory.

The OPA noted the statement by Internal Market Commissioner Elzbieta Bienkowska, that “The most important subject is microplastics.”

Michael Stephen explained at the conference that Microplastics are created by ordinary plastic items which get into the open environment where they become embrittled. They then break up into tiny pieces of plastic which lie or float around on land and in the oceans for many decades before becoming biodegradable. “We must therefore stop using ordinary plastic as a matter of urgency unless it is made with oxo-biodegradable technology.”

This technology enables the plastic items to perform in the same way as ordinary plastic, but makes them convert rapidly and safely into biodegradable materials if they get into the open environment. They are then consumed by naturally-occurring bacteria and fungi. For more detail see www.biodeg.org In an ideal world no plastic items would get into the open environment, but we are not in an ideal world even in Europe, and will not be for very many years.

Oxo-biodegradable plastic items can be made from recyclate, and can themselves be recycled if collected before being discarded into the open environment. See <http://www.biodeg.org/recycling.html> They cost little or no more than ordinary plastic and can be made by existing factories with no loss of jobs.

By contrast, plastic made with cornstarch or PLA is not only incompatible with recycling, and 400% more expensive than ordinary plastic, but it does not deal with plastic waste in the environment. This is because it is tested to biodegrade in municipal composting, not in the open environment. It does not even convert into compost, as EN13432 requires it to convert rapidly into CO₂ gas. What is the point of it? Why use land and water resources to produce plastic, when plastic resin is so inexpensive and readily available? Oil is extracted from the ground to make fuels, and plastic is made from an unavoidable by-product of the refining process. The same amount of oil would be extracted if plastic did not exist.

For more information e-mail info@biodeg.org

28th September 2017

W: www.biodeg.org / E: info@biodeg.org
86-90 Paul Street, London EC2A 4NE
Registered in England No: 8107377

