Consensus on product descriptions for biodegradable materials in Switzerland Version: 12.04.2013

Introduction

This consensus relates to biodegradable materials.

The consensus has been developed as part of the Round Table on Biodegradable Materials and is supported by the following organisations: FOEN, BioApply, Biomasse Schweiz, Coop, Innorecycling AG, InnoPlastics AG, Kompostforum Schweiz, Swiss Plastics Association, Organisation Kommunale Infrastruktur des Städteverbandes, Manor, Migros, Novamont S.p.A, Pacovis AG, Permapack AG, PetroplastVinora AG, Plastiroll OY, PET Recycling Schweiz, Städteverband, Stiftung Praktischer Umweltschutz Schweiz, Swiss Recycling, Association of Swiss Composting and Methanisation Plants.

The recommendation is aimed at manufacturers, importers, logisticians, sellers of products/packaging made from biodegradable materials and all parties involved in the waste chain.

Disposal via wastewater treatment plant is not covered by this consensus.

The Swiss Technical Ordinance on Waste (TOW) is currently being revised (revised edition expected for 2013-2014). This will include a positive list for acceptance in the green waste chain. As soon as this has been defined, the consensus will be adapted accordingly. The Federal authorities published an input list on 22.10.2012. This only features biodegradable goods under 'sorted disposable tableware' as a non-permitted material. The list is only a recommendation following clarification with the responsible parties.

Recommended description for each product type

Adherence to standard EN 13432 does not automatically indicate suitability for recycling within the green waste chain. Communicability, confusion (incorrect sorting) and recognisability at the plant are also important criteria. At certain plant types, biodegradable materials cannot be processed, going against this recommendation (field edge composting, unsupervised receiving points).

Biodegradable materials are contaminants in the recycling of plastic materials. If they are not accepted in the green waste chain in accordance with the following recommendations, they will be allocated for incineration.

Essentially we recommend placing the focus on the origins of 'renewable raw materials' and not on the recycling process. The Round Table on Biodegradable Materials does not express a view on ecological issues.

Product type	Targeted use	Reason/comments	Product description
Bags for collecting green waste e.g. 'Compobag'	**Green waste chain**	As collection packaging for green waste Only with grid print	White grid print, both sides, incl. EN 13432 and the words 'green waste OK' or similar; maximum advertising space: 30%
* Flexible packaging of organic products such as fruit & vegetable packaging (bag)	**Green waste chain**	As additional collection packaging for green waste Only with grid print	White grid print, both sides, incl. EN 13432 and the words 'green waste OK' or similar; maximum advertising space: 30%; if in doubt, contact the evaluation committee
Carrier bags and bags which can be re-used as Compobags	**Green waste chain**	As additional collection packaging for green waste Only with grid print	White grid print, both sides, incl. EN 13432 and the words 'green waste OK' or similar; maximum advertising space: 30%; if in doubt, contact the evaluation committee
* Crockery, drinks containers, cutlery *in closed batches; incl. sugar cane products*	**Green waste chain**	Only in closed (predefined) batches and with the agreement of the recycling plant. The batches must be controllable; e.g. events	If necessary EN 13432 and the words 'green waste OK' or 'From renewable raw materials' or similar

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Product type	Targeted use	Reason/comments	Product description
* Packaging *in closed batches*	**Green waste chain**	Only in closed (predefined) batches and with the agreement of the recycling plant. The batches must be controllable; e.g. expired vegetables/fruits with packaging or production waste	If necessary EN 13432 and the words 'green waste OK' or 'From renewable raw materials' or similar
Cover films from production plants *in closed batches*	**Green waste chain**	Agreement between plant producer and recycling plant; from private households not suitable for green waste chain (danger of confusion with non-compostable products)	If necessary EN 13432 and the words 'green waste OK' or 'From renewable raw materials' or similar
Compostable coffee capsules	**Green waste chain**	Only in closed (predefined) batches and with the agreement of the recycling plant. The batches must be controllable; e.g. events	If necessary EN 13432 and the words 'green waste OK' or 'From renewable raw materials' or similar
Products/packaging from 100% fibre products such as palm leaves or coconut fibres etc. where starting product is identi-fiable	**Green waste chain**	Suitable for home compost and the green waste chain	Suitability dependent on material
Oxo-biodegradable plastics	**Municipal Solid Waste Incinera-tion (MSWI)**	No decomposition, only breaking up into smaller pieces	No reference to degradability
Crockery, drinks containers, cutlery	**MSWI**	Risk of mix-up with non-compostable products	If necessary, 'From renewable raw materials' or similar and rubbish bag logo
Various types of packaging, e.g. bowls	**MSWI**	Risk of mix-up with non-compostable products	If necessary, 'From renewable raw materials' or similar and rubbish bag logo
Garden products such as flower pots	**MSWI**	Risk of mix-up with non-compostable products; exception: closed (predefined) batches from commerce/industry with prior agreement of recycling plant	If necessary, 'From renewable raw materials' or similar and rubbish bag logo
Additional products e.g. bot-tles**, nappies, dog's muck col-lecting bags	**MSWI or mate-rials recycling**	Risk of mix-up with non-compostable products, often not whole product compostable in accordance with EN 13432, additional hygiene and zinc issues with nappies; for bottles see supplement**	If necessary, 'From renewable raw materials' or similar and rubbish bag logo or recycling symbol
Bags/carrier bags made from non-degradable polymers (e.g. PE)	**MSWI or mate-rials recycling**	Also applies to products made from renewable raw materi-als. Their properties cannot be distinguished from products made from fossil fuels	

* Leftover food with animal waste may be subject to the Ordinance on the elimination of animal by-products (VTNP) and can only be accepted by plants which have been approved by a cantonal vet.

**Drinks bottles made from PET or Bio-PET (see terms) must be separately collected by PET-Recycling Schweiz; all additional bottles made from PLA are allocated for Municipal Solid Waste Incineration; PE-packaging for dairy products is collected separately at Coop and Migros.

Detailed regulations / terms / abbreviations

What	Details
Bio-PET or Bio-PE	Standard plastics made partly or entirely from renewable raw materials which can be recycled in the same way as existing fossil fuels e.g. material recycling for PET drinks bottles
Bioplastics	Plastics made from renewable raw materials and/or bio-degradable
EN 13432	European standard which describes the testing methods for proving compostability (bio-degradability, disintegration, compost quality; there is no standard for the fermentation process)
Grid print	Description for packaging/products which can be recycled as part of the green waste chain: • Whole packaging/product (printed on front & back sides, one side) with grid print • Transparency of bags (not opaque, for visual content checks) • Lines crossed at 90 degree angle, line thickness 2-5 mm, line colour white/ green or free colour choice; lines clearly visible • Max. distance between lines of 4 cm • Grid print as lines or as written text (e.g. using the word 'kompostierbar', 'biodégradable' (compostable, biodegradable)) • Logo/lettering/advertising can take up max. 30% of overall space The Evaluation Bioplastics Committee should be contacted in cases of doubt.
MSWI	Municipal Solid Waste Incineration
PLA	Polylactic acid, a biopolymer often made from corn
TVA	Technical Ordinance on Waste, SR 814.600; currently under revision
VTNP	Ordinance on the elimination of animal by-products, SR 916.441.22
BAW	Biodegradable materials (German abbreviation)

There are several composting labels in accordance with EN 13432; Dincertco (www.dincertco.de) and Vinçotte (www.vincotte.be) are 2 examples which are widely used in Europe. For the rubbish bag pictogram and more, see www.swissrecycling.ch/dienstleistungen.

Evaluation of Bioplastics Committee

If you require a more in-depth recommendation, you can order a product evaluation (CHF 2,500 for standard evaluations based on existing EN 13432). Evaluation is carried out by a small committee (incl. non-disclosure agreement). No evaluations are currently being carried out because the federal authorities are planning to issue a list of permitted input materials by decree. Exception: assessment of the planned layout of products for CHF 1,200 (see table of product types).

Members of the evaluation committee include:

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- Swiss Recycling, umbrella organisation for recycling systems, Patrik Geisselhardt, Tel. +41 44 342 20 00, info@swissrecycling.ch

Should you have any further questions, the committee is happy to help. Please visit our website first: www.evaluation-bioplastics.ch.