

Press release

nova-Institut GmbH (www.nova-institute.eu)

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European Commission publishes proposal for Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation and suggests framework for biobased, biodegradable and compostable plastics.

Overall, nova-Institute welcomes the proposed policy framework on bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics as well as the revision of the PPW Directive as both contain several measures that are in line with proposals made by nova-Institute before.

The long-awaited proposals for a policy framework for biobased, biodegradable and compostable plastics as well as for the revision of the currently existent Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive, commonly dubbed as PPWD/R, have been published by the European Commission at the end of November 2022. Both proposals to bring substantial changes to the EU policy landscape covering plastics consisting of renewable carbon.

The proposed PPWR has three main objectives. First, to prevent the generation of packaging waste: reduce it in quantity, restrict unnecessary packaging and promote reusable and refillable packaging solutions. Second, to boost high quality ('closed loop') recycling: make all packaging on the EU market recyclable in an economically viable way by 2030. And finally, to reduce the need for primary natural resources and create a well-functioning market for secondary raw materials, increasing the use of recycled plastics in packaging through mandatory targets.

It also acknowledges the value of a material property, that had not seen specific support in the EU policy landscape before: Biodegradation and industrial compostability are at the core of measures targeting very specific packaging applications. Two years after the PPWR officially enters into force the following applications shall be compostable in industrially controlled conditions in bio-waste treatment facilities:

- tea or coffee bags necessary to contain a tea or coffee product and intended to be used and disposed of together with the product
- coffee or tea system single-serve unit necessary to contain a coffee or tea product and intended to be used and disposed of together with the product
- sticky labels for fruit and vegetables
- very lightweight plastic carrier bags

In its project "[BioSinn – Products for which biodegradation makes sense](#)", which was concluded in May 2021, nova-Institute proposed a specific list of applications where, at their respective end of life, biodegradation depicts the best end-of-life-option. The applications included in the newly proposed PPWR are in line with the BioSinn findings by nova and we welcome, that these measures initially proposed in BioSinn are included in the PPWR.

Specific support for biobased, biodegradable and compostable plastics

The Commission's also published a new framework on biobased, biodegradable and compostable plastics which clarifies in what way these plastics can be part of a sustainable future.

Biomass used to produce biobased plastics must be sustainably sourced, with no harm to the environment and in respect of the 'cascading use of biomass' principle: producers should prioritise the use of organic waste and by-products as feedstock. In addition, to fight greenwashing and avoid misleading consumers, producers need to avoid generic claims on plastic products such as 'bioplastics' and 'biobased'. When communicating on biobased content, producers should refer to the exact and measurable share of biobased plastic content in the product (for example: 'the product contains 50% biobased plastic content').

Biodegradable plastics must be approached with caution. They have their place in a sustainable future, but they need to be directed to specific applications where their environmental benefits and value for the circular economy are proven. Biodegradable plastics should by no means provide a licence to litter. Also, they must be labelled to show how long they will take to biodegrade, under which circumstances and in which environment. Products that are likely to be littered including those covered by the Single-Use Plastics Directive cannot be claimed to be or labelled as biodegradable.

Industrially compostable plastics should only be used when they have environmental benefits, they do not negatively affect the quality of the compost and when there is a proper biowaste collection and treatment system in place. Industrially compostable packaging will only be allowed for tea bags, filter coffee pods and pads, fruit and vegetable stickers, and very light plastic bags. The products must always specify that they are certified for industrial composting, in line with EU standards.

Prompted by an earlier draft of the framework nova-Institute and the [Renewable Carbon Initiative's](#) (RCI) Working Group Policy developed a [position paper](#) generally welcoming the framework but also calling for some adjustments to be made in favour of biobased, biodegradable and compostable plastics.

The now officially proposed framework's plans to make certain applications biodegradable in the future are in line with the simultaneously published PPWR proposal and build on the feedback provided by the results of the BioSinn project and the aforementioned position paper by the RCI.

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