



Whitehall advised to back compostable materials to increase food waste recycling

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- Report finds landslide expert support for compostable packaging to increase food waste recycling and reduce plastic contamination in organic waste streams
- The Government is committed to rolling out separate household food waste collections across the country by 2023 in a bid to up recycling, composting rates and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is set to eliminate food waste from landfill by 2030
- Experts, politicians and campaigners say Whitehall must back compostable materials to reach these targets, increase food waste recycling and prevent the cross-contamination that sends organic waste to landfill and incineration

EXPERTS and parliamentarians have urged the Government to back compostable materials to increase food waste recycling after a landmark report finds overwhelming support for the materials.

The report, produced by Ricardo Energy, quizzed experts across the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Spain on the potential for compostable packaging to increase the amount of food waste captured for recycling and limit plastic contamination in organic waste streams.

Some 72 percent of respondents stated compostable packaging would help increase the amount of food waste captured and would decrease plastic contamination. All respondents agreed that conventional plastic packaging poses a challenge to organic waste streams.

The report also found 82 percent of respondents believe compostable materials would help to reduce plastic contamination across organic waste streams.

The Government is committed to rolling out separate household food waste collections across the country by 2023 in a bid to up recycling, composting rates and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is set to eliminate food waste from landfill by 2030.

Badly contaminated food waste is currently sent to landfill or incineration. In landfill it produces harmful gases including methane which is 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide.¹

But when recycled, food waste can be used for positive purposes, including as a natural fertilizer.

Government official advice on home-composting is minimal and guidance comes predominantly from local councils and waste organisations. Businesses are currently only required to ensure food waste is hygienically disposed of, with no stipulation that it must be recycled.

Responding to the report, experts, politicians and campaigners say strong legislation is needed in support of compostable materials to encourage effective recycling and minimise the cross-contamination that sends food waste to landfill and incineration when the new system comes into effect.

Elliot Colburn, Conservative MP for Carshalton and Wallington said: "This report clearly shows that compostable materials must be embraced as the solution to the contamination and incineration of food waste that could otherwise be recycled. This means having strong legislation in place that puts compostables at the heart of Britain's approach to recycling organic waste."

Ben Lake, Plaid Cymru MP for Ceredigion said: "The Government's commitment to promoting food waste recycling is key if we are to stop sending this waste to landfill and incineration when it could - and should - be recycled. But these targets require contaminating plastic to be taken out of the equation. Compostable materials offer a solution, and it's crucial that the Government recognises this as it considers the legislation needed to reach its 2030 targets."

David Newman, Managing Director of Bio-based and Biodegradable Industries Association (BBIA) said: "Reducing plastic contamination in organic waste streams and promoting food waste recycling must be a government priority if it is to reach its 2030 target for emissions reductions and the 2035 target for recycling; we know compostable materials are the correct way of ensuring food waste is collected and treated without plastic contamination. But we're still behind on the legislation needed to ensure these materials have the support they need."

"It's more important than ever that the Government assesses its position on compostables or it risks missing its much-needed food waste recycling aims."

Sian Sutherland, Co-Founder of A Plastic Planet said: "Contamination of organic waste is yet another invisible way plastic is blighting our planet. We can legally plough over 100,000 tonnes of plastic into our UK soil. We cannot have healthy humans without healthy soil and everything possible must be done to stem this flow of plastic."

"Compostables are not the answer to all our packaging woes but there are many uses that make good sense - compostable fruit and veg bags; tea bags, food contaminated single dose sachets all help bring clean food waste to its rightful end of life as healthy compost and nutrition for our hungry soil. Using a compostable liner in your food waste bin is proven to significantly increase the amount of food waste collected as no-one likes the smelly slop and a compostable liner makes everything easier. We urgently need more clarity and direction on the many good uses of compostables that will have a direct impact on reducing microplastics in our soil."

Daphna Nissenbaum, CEO and co-founder of TIPA said: "This report further highlights the crucial role compostable packaging will play in achieving the Government's ambitious targets for recycling food waste."

"In countries such as Italy where compostable materials are commonplace, we have already seen an uptick in food waste recycling and a reduction in plastic contamination in organic waste streams. This shows compostable materials are a tried-and-tested solution."

¹ UNECE Sustainable Energy, [Methane Management](#)

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The full report is available upon request. Please contact Esme Parkins, esme@higginsonstrategy.com

- The Ricardo report was commissioned by TIPA to conduct a review of the current opportunities and barriers for the use of compostable packaging across the EU through a range of desk-based research and structured interviews.
- It quizzed 17 stakeholders including policy makers, organic recyclers, EPR schemes, compostable material trade associations, organic waste recyclers trade associations and industry experts from five countries: France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom
- Ricardo is a global strategic engineering and environmental consultancy that specialises in the transport, energy and scarce resource sectors
- For more information: <https://ricardo.com/>