

CODE OF CONDUCT

Principles of good business practice for the marketing and selling of bio-based and degradable plastics

As a condition of membership, Group members have agreed to adhere to the following principles in their sales, marketing and technical support functions;

1. Definitions

In their marketing literature and sales dialogue with customers, Members will support the following agreed working definitions; *subject to further guidance from UK and International standards organisations.*

1.1 Plastics, fossil based

Carbon based polymers derived from oil, coal or natural gas.

1.2 Bioplastics

Collective term used to describe two different concepts at the same time, often leading to confusion. The two concepts can be differentiated through:

- functionality, e.g. biodegradable and/or compostable
- materials source, i.e. renewable resource based or biomass-based plastics

Bioplastics are now understood to be either or both;

1.2.1 Plastics, bio-based

A form of plastics derived from natural resources such as wood (cellulose), vegetable oils, sugar or starch converted to biodegradable or non-biodegradable products.

1.2.2 Plastics, biodegradable

Plastics derived from either renewable or fossil materials which have the ability to biodegrade.

1.3 Degradation

Change in initial properties due to chemical cleavage of the macromolecules forming a polymeric item, regardless of the mechanism of chain cleavage

1.4 Biodegradation

Degradation of a polymeric item due, at least in part, to cell-mediated phenomena. As a result of the action of micro-organisms the material is ultimately converted to water, carbon dioxide, biomass and possibly methane.

1.5 Composting

Aerobic process designed to produce compost

1.6 Plastics, compostable

Property of a material to be fragmented and ultimately biodegraded in a composting process and converted to carbon dioxide, water and biomass; No toxic side effects; Conforms to international composting standards such as, EN 13432.

2. Supporting Standards

Member firms agree to support the formal standards developed for the sector both nationally and internationally. Some of the most significant at the time of writing are listed in Annex I.

3. Responsibilities of companies claiming compliance within these guidelines

3.1 Nominated personnel

Companies will nominate a senior executive who will be responsible for ensuring the observation of these guidelines within the company and who will endeavour to attend relevant BPF meetings where appropriate.

4. Marketing

Member firms agree to adhere to the principles of the Green Claims Code at all times.

4.1 Advertisements

Companies' advertisements and promotional literature should not contain any descriptions, claims or illustrations which directly or by implication are misleading about the product or about its suitability for the purpose recommended, and should comply strictly with the British Code of Advertising Practice and the British Code of Promotional Practice.

In addition to the general law, advertisements must be LEGAL, DECENT, HONEST and TRUTHFUL.

This applies to;

- websites
- market support literature
- articles in journals
- press releases
- adverts
- advertorials
- sales presentations
- conference and seminar presentations

4.2 False Claims

Making false claims are not only poor business practice but are also illegal and actionable. Such actions are more likely to result in the loss of your reputation and civil or criminal action than they are to produce profitable business.

DO NOT

- ✘ Make any statements or claims for yourself, your company or your products that cannot be sustained or are clearly false
- ✘ Purport to be part of, or involved in any company or group of companies or trade body to which you are not associated

5. Group Responsibilities

- 5.1 Members agree to responsibly promote their products based on their intrinsic technical merits and NOT by unfairly discrediting other products, plastics or other materials.
- 5.2 Members agree not to irresponsibly create or promote inaccurate claims, without sound scientific founding or justification, which may be deemed as scaremongering.
- 5.3 Members agree to play a constructive part in developing agreed industry-based positions and in developing credible marketing strategies such as a webpage for the BPF's website.

6. Confidentiality

Members agree to maintain the confidentiality of Group discussions and not to use any piece of information gleaned in a Group meeting for their own commercial advantage.

Annex I

Supporting Standards

Member firms agree to support the formal standards developed for the sector both nationally and internationally and any test methods currently under development. Some of the most important are listed below.

EN13432

Specification for packaging recoverable through composting and biodegradation, test scheme and evaluation criteria for the final acceptance of packaging

ASTM D6400

Standard Specification for Compostable Plastics

ASTM D6954

Standard Guide for Exposing and Testing Plastics that Degrade in the Environment by a Combination of Oxidation and Biodegradation

EN ISO 14855-1

Determination of the ultimate aerobic biodegradability of plastic materials under controlled composting conditions - Method by analysis of evolved carbon dioxide

EN ISO 14853:2005

(Plastics) Determination of the ultimate anaerobic biodegradation of plastic materials in an aqueous system - Method by measurement of biogas production

EN ISO 15985:2004

(Plastics) Determination of the ultimate anaerobic biodegradation and disintegration under high-solids anaerobic-digestion conditions - Method by analysis of released biogas

EN ISO 17556:2003

(Plastics) Determination of the ultimate aerobic biodegradability in soil by measuring the oxygen demand in a respirometer or the amount of carbon dioxide evolved

EN ISO 14851 – 14852

Determination of the ultimate aerobic biodegradability of plastic materials in an aqueous medium

EN ISO 14853

(Plastics) Determination of the ultimate anaerobic biodegradation of plastic materials in an aqueous system - Method by measurement of biogas production

Author: Sarah Plant
Compiled by the British Plastics Federation
July 2008