

# Ditch the Plastic Bag Ban and Inn-Probio

Michael Stephen, an international expert on bioplastics, shares his thoughts and opinion on important issues impacting the bioplastics industry. Today, Michael writes about ditching the plastic bag ban and Inn-probio.



Michael Stephen

## Ditch the plastic bag ban

On 22nd March the London Sunday Telegraph wrote ([Article](#)) :

“The advance of coronavirus leaves many contemporary obsessions looking extraordinarily decadent. The war on coronavirus has made the war on plastic redundant. Reusable coffee cups were judged a health risk by cafés, which required customers to return to the old disposable ones. In the United States, new regulations restricting the use of plastic bags are being suspended, and one mayor has even called for a ban on the American equivalent of “bags for life”, given that (unwashed) they could end up spreading this virus.

Similar measures could follow in the UK, with supermarkets reportedly urging the Government to scrap the bag tax. Old, pointless regulations are being discarded .....

The same points were being made on Fox News television in the USA on 18th March ([article](#))

And in the State of Maine USA ([article](#))

And in Albuquerque New Mexico ([article](#))

The New Hampshire Governor has urged shoppers in the state to leave their reusable bags at home,

And in New York State “Republican Minority Leader Frank Mauriello (R-Colonie) urged Governor Cuomo to pause the statewide ban on the use of plastic grocery bags. He says “lifting the ban could help save lives and prevent additional coronavirus cases in our communities.”([article](#)) New York State will not now enforce its plastic bag ban, which went into effect on March 1.

And in Forbes Magazine on 17th March ([article](#)) “Grocery store employees are on the front lines in the fight against the spread of the coronavirus. These critical and vulnerable workers shouldn’t be forced to handle reusable shopping bags that scientific researchers have found can act as Petri dishes for bacteria and carriers of harmful pathogens. Yet that is the result of well-meaning but misguided laws on the statute books across the U.S.

The eight states where lawmakers have imposed plastic bag prohibitions are California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, New York, Oregon and Vermont. Hundreds of cities, towns, and counties have also imposed a bag ban or tax. All of these laws seek to force or encourage the use of reusable shopping bags, which pose a public health risk at any time and especially during the current pandemic.

There is mounting evidence that reusable bags are dangerously effective when it comes to spreading bacteria and disease. There is also proof that reusable shopping bags are ineffective when it comes to reducing litter and benefiting the environment.

Governors and state lawmakers can continue to help fight the spread of the virus by taking action to suspend or repeal the many bag bans and taxes across the U.S. that now pose an even greater public health risk than in the past.”

Essential as lightweight single-use plastic bags are, the problem still remains that if they get into the open environment they can create microplastics and lie or float around for decades. This problem can be solved by insisting that the bags are made with oxo-biodegradable technology see [article](#).

## **Inn-Probio**

13 January 2016 ([article](#))

An organisation called InnProBio, which is paid by the EU, has produced what it calls “New factsheets “to provide clarity on bio-based products.” If “Fact-sheet” 1 is at all representative they ought to be called “Assertion-sheets” which is not an acceptable use of public funds. They certainly don’t provide clarity.

They assert that bio-based products can:

- “Reduce the economy’s dependence on fossil feedstocks.” This is doubtful when you consider that these products often contain a high proportion of petroleum-based material, and that significant amounts of fossil-fuels are consumed in the agricultural production, transport, and polymerisation process.
- Make a positive contribution to meeting the EU’s climate goals. – This is hard to understand, when you consider that EN13432 requires 90% of the material to convert rapidly into CO2 gas.
- Relieve pressure on ecosystems through feedstock diversification. – Not sure what this means, but there is no real pressure on petroleum resources.
- Help create green jobs in the EU, particularly in rural areas. – What is a “green job” and would they not simply displace jobs in the conventional plastics industry? If rural areas need subsidy bio-based plastics are not a particularly good use of public money.
- Help drive European innovation. – The EU should be supporting much more useful innovations such as oxo-biodegradable plastics.

## Michael Stephen

Michael Stephen is a lawyer and was a member of the United Kingdom Parliament, where he served on the Environment Select Committee.

When he left Parliament Symphony Environmental Technologies Plc. attracted his attention because of his interest in the environment.

He is now Deputy Chairman of Symphony, which is listed on the AIM market of the London Stock Exchange, and is the founder and Chairman of the Oxo-biodegradable Plastics Association.

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## Interview with Michael Stephen

- [Questions and Answers on OXO-Biodegradability](#)

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