



# Coronavirus, Plastic Litter, Bahrain and Polymateria

Michael Stephen, an international expert on bioplastics, shares his thoughts and opinion on important issues impacting the bioplastics industry. Today, Michael writes about Coronavirus, Plastic Litter, Bahrain and Polymateria



## CORONAVIRUS

On 23rd July Symphony Environmental Technologies announced that Eurofins Laboratories had tested their d2p masterbatch incorporated in a polyolefin film, against the bovine form of Coronavirus in accordance with ISO 21702-2019, and found a virus reduction of 99.84% in 24 hours. This announcement caused an immediate 90% increase in the value of the company.

Symphony's boss, Michael Laurier, said "In the challenging times that we live in today, a wide range of products – from plastic packaging to Personal Protective Equipment, made with our d2p technology will provide an extra level of protection against bacteria and fungi, and now Coronavirus. As d2p is embedded in the plastic it will not wear off and will last for the lifetime of the plastic product. This welcome and important news comes in addition to the approval by the FDA in the United States in February of our d2p antibacterial technology for bread packaging."

According to a press release last month by the UK Government, some two billion items of single-use plastic PPE have now been delivered to the frontline since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in the UK alone. PPE can quickly become contaminated once taken out of its sterile packaging which is why it is recommended not to touch the coverage area of face masks. Furthermore, the recycling and collection of these items pose serious transmission risks. d2p can reduce these risks.

## PLASTIC LITTER

An article in Euronews last month reported a surge of marine plastic waste from discarded gloves, masks, and other items of PPE. A study in the journal Science, – Evaluating scenarios toward zero plastic

pollution, claims that 1.3 billion tonnes of plastic pollution could be heading into the environment by 2040.

The authors said: “with long degradation times, even a 78% reduction from Business-as-usual pollution rates results in a massive accumulation of plastic waste in the environment.

There has never been a time when oxo-biodegradable technology has been more necessary.

## **BAHRAIN**

On 25th July Bahrain extended the list of plastic products which have been required since 25th July 2019 to be made with biodegradable technology. These are shopping bags, garbage sacks, and laundry bags.

When introducing the legislation in 2019 the Supreme Council for the Environment affirmed that switching to degradable plastic would not affect production lines, and noted that Bahrain had benefited from Saudi Arabia’s expertise in this field.

This important legislation has now been extended to include polyethylene and polypropylene sheets on rolls, such as table covers, despite the efforts of the EU to persuade Bahrain to scrap the legislation altogether. It is now clear that governments outside the EU are not willing to follow the EU on this issue, as the EU position has no support from EU’s own scientific experts, the European Chemicals Agency.

This latest action by Bahrain adds to the growing number of governments becoming aware that biodegradability is the only way to resolve this problem of plastic waste which escapes into the open environment. The other solutions such as recycling and composting will not do the job because they depend on being able to collect the plastic and send it for processing.

Also, COVID-19 has made governments increasingly aware of the importance of single use plastics, which cannot any longer be banned, but can nevertheless escape into the open environment. It has also made them aware that plastic should now be made with anti-microbial technology for protection against bacteria and viruses. All this can be done at little or no extra cost and without disrupting supply-chains.

## **POLYMATERIA**

Interesting to read in the Sunday Times (26.7.20) that a startup company called Polymateria, chaired by the former boss of Marks & Spencer, is marketing an additive that will cause a plastic bottle to biodegrade in the open environment within 336 days into carbon dioxide, water and biomass, and a plastic film to do the same in 226 days. Interesting also to see that WRAP is excited about it.

I wish them well, as this type of technology is the only way to protect the planet from the mounting burden of plastic waste which has escaped into the open environment.

However, there is nothing revolutionary about Polymateria's technology. It is substantially oxo-biodegradable technology, which Symphony Environmental put on the market under their d2w brand at least 15 years ago.

I can understand why Polymateria do not want to call their technology oxo-biodegradable, because so much nonsense has been written and spoken at conferences about oxo-biodegradable plastic over the years. Mainly by rival companies and organisations funded by them, trying to increase their own profits by denigrating the technology, but caring nothing for the environment.

However, Polymateria may be caught by the ill-advised legislation passed last year by the EU without any justification from the EU's own scientific experts. They will need to use some of the money they have raised, and get their ex M&S boss working, on lobbying against it.

## 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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