



EU, Covid Lockdowns, WRAP, British Standards Institution and Polymateria (FREE)

Michael Stephen, an international expert on bioplastics, shares his thoughts and opinion on important issues impacting the bioplastics industry. Today, Michael writes about the European Union, the Covid lockdowns, potential manipulation of British biodegradation standards and Polymateria. This is a free Article.



European Union

As reported in Bioplastics News ([First Bioplastic Lawsuit Against EU](#)) OPA-member Symphony Environmental, have sued the EU for damages which could amount to tens of millions of Euros, alleging that Article 5 of the SUP Directive was enacted without due process and that it is disproportionate and discriminatory. It's not before time that someone exposed the attempts of lobbyists to manipulate EU legislation to serve their clients' commercial interests, to the great detriment of the environment and the public interest.

Covid

It is now clear that "lockdowns" are not working, and it is time to start destroying the viruses, and the best way to do this is to modify the surfaces with which they come into contact so that the surfaces are lethal to viruses but safe for humans and animals.

This can be done cheaply, easily, and permanently for plastic and rubber surfaces, (see <https://www.symphonyenvironmental.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Antimicrobial-Optimised.pdf>) and governments should start urgently using their emergency powers to require all new plastic and rubber surfaces to be antimicrobial. What are they waiting for? How many more deaths do they need?

Anomaly?

I noticed a statement by WRAP on 21st December saying that the British Standards Institution (BSI) specification for measuring the biodegradability of polyolefins (PAS 9017) had a “small but significant anomaly in the normal high standards of the BSI consultation process”. WRAP was a member of the Committee which approved this Specification, but says the committee is now due to meet again in January “to examine a recommendation that the standard tests for micro-plastics during the breakdown process, not just at the end”.

This is not an anomaly, because none of the Standards for plastics have ever tested for anything before completion of the prescribed testing programme. This is true of the Standards for “compostable” plastics (EN13432, ASTM D6400, Australian 4736) and also the Standards for oxo-biodegradable plastics (BS8472, ASTM D6954; French AFNOR T51-808, and many others).

What has happened here is that WRAP has come under pressure, with perhaps a direct or indirect threat to its finances, from the anti-oxo lobby, who have belatedly realised that this is a Standard for oxo-biodegradable plastic, which can be complied with by products already offered by reputable companies in the oxo-biodegradable industry.

Dr. Dannielle Green of Anglia Ruskin University, who was involved in the validation of the new Standard said “The standards landscape needs to be ever evolving, with standards themselves like living entities, being updated every few years to reflect the growing science and to increase their relevance to the real environment. The standard is a step in the right direction, and the interdisciplinary collaborative approach used by BSI is exemplary.”

The anti-oxo lobby is as usual lobbying to further its own commercial interests, and if the Committee is true to the high standards that BSI has set over many years it will have no difficulty rejecting this absurd “recommendation.”

Polymateria

There is a startup company called Polymateria which seems to be spending a lot on money on PR and high-profile executives, and is getting a lot of publicity. They claim to have developed a process, called “biotransformation” to produce plastic products which “decompose harmlessly when littered. It involves mixing “bio-transformation chemicals” with normal plastics to create packaging, bubble wrap, fruit nets, plastic bags and the like.”

As Chairman of the Oxo-biodegradable Plastics Association I welcome this publicity as this is exactly what oxo-biodegradable plastic does, and has been marketed for this purpose by OPA members for more than 20 years. We don't mind another company entering the market, as we are not anti-competitive.

We welcome the statement from ULMA Packaging UK that “Giving manufacturers and retailers, and by extension consumers, additional choices when it comes to sustainable packaging must be seen as a positive stepIf these materials can offer the stability, functionality, processability and shelf-life

demanded by both food manufacturing companies and customers, this could be a very exciting development for the industry.”

OPA scientists have studied Polymateria’s patent application, and have advised that “biotransformation” is essentially a process of oxo-biodegradation, which was patented by Professor Gerald Scott and others in the 1970s. Polymateria have made some minor modifications to make it newly patentable.

I can understand why Polymateria don’t want to call their product oxo-biodegradable, because there has been so much negative propaganda against it. OPA members could also change the name, but we don’t think it would fool anybody, and we will continue to defend the technology on its merits.

Some of the anti-oxo propaganda has been quite nonsensical – for example by alleging that it does not biodegrade in landfill when they know perfectly well that it is not designed to do so – this is because it is not necessary, and because anything which biodegrades in landfill will generate methane. Oxo-biodegradable plastic is designed to deal with plastic which is polluting the open environment – not plastic which has been taken to landfill.

If all else fails, the propaganda then resorts to the nonsensical argument against oxo-biodegradable plastic (but for some strange reason not against bio-based plastics) that biodegradability encourages littering. Does anyone really believe that people who deliberately cause litter will first examine the label (if there is one) before deciding to throw a plastic bottle or package out of a car window? No. This is a make-weight argument used by the usual suspects in the anti-oxo lobby, but also by those who are obsessively against plastic of any kind and cannot bring themselves to accept that plastic can be upgraded so that it does not cause the long-term pollution which has enabled them to demonise it in the public mind.

I agree with Polymateria that “The role of innovation is consistently underestimated when solving complex global issues, including climate change and plastic pollution,”

Polymateria also say that “In lab tests [that mimic ambient real-world conditions](#) there’s nothing left of polyethylene waxes in 226 days and the polypropylene waxes disappear in 336 days.” I am reminded that in lab tests conducted by Eurofins Laboratories that mimic ambient real-world conditions, plastic made with Symphony’s d2w masterbatch showed 88.9% biodegradation within 121 days.

Polymateria also say that “The plan is to stamp a “recycle by” date on each piece of plastic to show consumers that they have a deadline to dispose of them responsibly in the recycling system before they start breaking down.” We agree that this is a good idea in principle, but it would depend on how the item had been stored, and the date when it is first taken out of its own packaging and exposed to conditions which would be found in the open environment.

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.

Earlier Postings in this Column

- 1/ 1/ 20 – [Plastiphobia, Microplastics and A Throw-Away Society](#)
- 7/ 1/ 20 – [Recycling, Lab Testing, Bangladesh and the Right Bioplastic](#)
- 14/1/20 – [Plastiphobia and Bioplastics Definitions](#)
- 21/1/20 – [Composting, the European Union and Unemployment](#)
- 30/1/20 – [Plastiphobia, Malaysia and a Case Against Compostables and Paper](#)
- 7/02/20 – [Coronavirus, MPs Letter, Montreal, Australia and the Dominican Republic](#)
- 14/02/20 – [Oman, MacArthur Foundation, Stifling Innovation, South Africa and Compostable Plastics](#)
- 24/02/20 – [Serbia, India, Pakistan and European Bioplastics](#)
- 03/03/20 – [Plastic To Protect Health and Common Sense on Plastic](#)
- 10/03/20 – [Plastiphobia, Singapore, Compostable Plastics, Doorknobs and Carbios](#)
- 17/03/20 – [Greening our Way to Infection, Defra Warns Against Bioplastics and Montreal](#)
- 24/03/20 – [Ditch the Plastic Bag Ban and Inn-Probio](#)
- 01/04/20 – [The Come Back of Plastic Bags, Compostable Plastic Not Wanted and EASAC](#)
- 16/04/20 – [Coronavirus and Agricultural Plastics](#)
- 11/05/20 – [Coronavirus, Peru, Barbados and Recycling](#)
- 18/05/20 – [Say No to Plastiphobia, False Descriptions and the Recycling Myth](#)
- 02/06/20 – [Definitions and More Setbacks for Plastiphobia](#)
- 11/06/20 – [BBIA, Food Waste and Testing of OXO-Biodegradable Plastic](#)
- 19/06/20 – [Oxo Biodegradation, Independent Reports and Precautionary Principle](#)
- 29/06/20 – [Banana Republic, Why Turn Plastic into CO2 and Plastic Waste from Ships](#)
- 13/07/20 – [Running Scared, The Daily Telegraph and Market Report](#)
- 20/07/202 – [Tipa, Plastics Today and The American Genius](#)
- 27/07/20 – [Coronavirus, Plastic Litter, Bahrain and Polymateria](#)
- 17/08/20 – [Plastics Europe, Confusing Issues and Paper](#)
- 25/08/20 – [Professor Emo Chiellini, Plastics Today, Greenwashing and Coronavirus](#)
- 28/09/20 – [Kill the Virus, Marine Degradation, Airports, Brazil Retail, Plastic Growth and Face Mask](#)
- 08/10/20 – [Compostable vs Biodegradable, Covid 19 and New British Bioplastic Standard](#)
- 27/10/20 – [Power of Lobbying, Paper and Cotton Worse than Plastic](#)
- 02/11/20 – [Covid 19 and Five Myths About Plastic](#)
- 09/11/20 – [Support for OXO BIO, Westminster Forum, Euractiv and Covid](#)
- 23/11/20 – [Toxicity of Bio-based and Biodegradable Plastics, and Covid Scaremongering](#)
- 15/12/20 – [Recycling and An Article from Austria](#)
- 21/12/20 – [EU Scientific Advisers, China Chose Wrong Bioplastics and Covid Nonsense](#)

Interview with Michael Stephen

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

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed here by Michael Stephen and other columnists are their own, not those of Bioplasticsnews.com.