



EU Scientific Advisers, China Chose Wrong Bioplastics and Covid Nonsense (FREE)

Michael Stephen, an international expert on bioplastics, shares his thoughts and opinion on important issues impacting the bioplastics industry. Today, Michael writes about EU Scientific Advisers, China Chose the wrong type of biodegradable plastics and Covid Nonsense. This is a free Article.



EU Scientific Advisers

I have just read a report dated 14th December 2020 from the EU Group of Chief Scientific Advisors (Scientific Opinion No.10, December 2020). It will take time for the Oxo-biodegradable Plastics Association's scientists to analyse this report but it is likely that their detailed response will be published on the OPA website in January. In the meantime I thought I would comment on some of the recommendations:

2.1 *Adopt a definition of biodegradability as a system property which takes into account material properties and specific environmental conditionswhether or not a plastic item biodegrades depends not only on the properties of the material itself, but also on the specific conditions of the receiving environment in which biodegradation takes place.*

I would agree with that general proposition. Clearly consumers will think that a product sold as biodegradable will biodegrade in the open environment, so plastic products which are designed to biodegrade in special conditions eg in an industrial composting facility should not be described as biodegradable.

2.2 *Limit the use of Biodegradable Plastics (BDPs) in the open environment to specific applications for which reduction, reuse, and recycling are not feasible. We therefore recommend that BDPs are only considered for a narrow range of specific applications for which the potential environmental benefits are clear. These include applications for which (a)collection from the environment is challenging and (b) applications where separation of the plastic from other waste presents a challenge.*

I would agree with that general proposition:

(a) Collection from the environment is very challenging for plastic packaging which has escaped as litter and may be spread over a wide area on land or sea. This is the specific application for which oxo-biodegradable plastic is designed, and where the environmental benefits are clear. The benefit is that it will biodegrade more quickly than ordinary plastic under the same conditions. It is not the application for which bio-based plastics are designed. Also,

(b) even if plastic packaging gets collected, separation of this type of plastic from other waste presents a challenge, and recycling of PE and PP products is often not feasible in economic or environmental terms. It does not make sense to recycle everything. It is not therefore important whether oxo-biodegradable plastic is recyclable or not – although it is – see <https://www.biodeg.org/subjects-of-interest/recycling-2/>.

China Chose The Wrong Type of Biodegradable Plastic

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-55301203>

If they wanted plastic to biodegrade if it gets into the open environment they should have chosen oxo-biodegradable plastic, which is designed to do exactly that, instead of “compostable” plastic which is not.

On 17th December the BBC reported that “a massive increase in biodegradable plastic production in China is outpacing the country’s ability to degrade the materials, China – the world’s largest producer of plastic waste – introduced bans earlier this year on several types of non-degradable single-use plastics, prompting manufacturers to ramp up production of biodegradable versions.”

According to the report “Biodegradable plastics can be broken down by living organisms, but most require specific industrial treatment at high temperatures to be degraded within six months. Left in landfills under normal circumstances, the materials can take much longer to begin to break down and will still release carbon into the atmosphere.

In the absence of controlled composting facilities, most biodegradable plastics end up in landfills, or worse, in rivers and the ocean,” said Greenpeace’s East Asia plastics researcher Dr Molly Zhongnan Jia. Many major Chinese cities have little or no infrastructure in place to cope with the expansion of biodegradable plastics production.

Most compostable plastics cannot be put into ordinary household recycling or degraded in home composting bins – meaning consumers often don’t have any route to get biodegradable packaging to the kinds of industrial facilities capable of processing it.

Another category of plastics made fully or partially from biological resources – often referred to as “bioplastics” – are not necessarily biodegradable, adding to potential confusion for consumers.

Globally, the industrial infrastructure needed to process compostable plastics – from collection through to high-temperature composting – does not exist at the scale needed to match the volume of those plastics being produced.”

Even if it did, the plastic does not convert into compost – it converts into CO₂, so why bother with that type of biodegradable plastic at all?

Why didn't the Chinese consult the Oxo-biodegradable Plastics Association before making massive investments into the wrong type of biodegradable plastic? Perhaps they now need to contact info@biodeg.org

More Covid Nonsense

Before any of our governments make another decision on COVID they must after listening to the scientists, listen to advice from the economists and business-leaders, who understand the damage that anti-COVID measures are inflicting on the country. The balance at present is too much in favour of lives and not enough in favour of livelihoods.

They should stop talking about “cases,” (who may never even become ill) and start enumerating only those in each age group who have been hospitalised and those who have died of COVID (not with COVID). The figures should always be accompanied by figures for respiratory diseases in the same month pre-COVID.

A government must resist the natural inclination to be driven by emotion. The old and sick people will die anyway quite soon. Death is not optional. The attempts to defeat the virus are going on too long, and doing too much damage.

I am beginning to wonder whether COVID policy is driven by science or is in fact being driven by those such as Mr. Schwab and the World Economic Forum, who see COVID as an opportunity to impose the “great reset of capitalism” on all of us against our will. If so, they are being remarkably successful.

From the British Medical Journal “Testing is there to drive the test and trace strategy, but what seems to be happening is that, as soon as we see an outbreak, there tends to be panic and over-reacting. This is a huge problem because politicians are operating in a non-evidence-based way.”

From Jonathan Sumption – former judge of the UK Supreme Court, writing in the Daily Telegraph “We are forever being told not to blow it now by throwing away our past efforts. Truth is, our past efforts have been useless. They reduced infections and associated deaths while the lockdowns were in force, but only by shifting them into a later period. That is why we are where we are now.”

“Governments and laws operate in a human environment. A policy that only works by suppressing our humanity is unlikely to work at all. Life is risky. A policy that seeks to eliminate risk ends up trying to eliminate life. We have to re-examine the whole concept that governments can simply turn social existence on and off at will, treating us as passive instruments of state policy.”

“This is not just a practical problem. It is a moral problem... Ordering the young and healthy to isolate so as to avoid infecting the vulnerable, when the great majority of the vulnerable can keep themselves out of harm’s way if they wish, is not rational, conflicts with every instinct of social animals and defies human nature.”

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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