

PRESS RELEASE

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Inconsistent Guidelines to the Single Use Plastics Directive to hurt high-tech, natural, and renewable materials industry with the potential to create numerous highly skilled jobs in Europe.

The European Commission has published the Final Guidelines to Directive (EU) 2019/904 or the Single Use Plastics Directive (SUPD). GO!PHA notes with great disappointment the inclusion of Polyhydroxyalkanoates (PHA) in this Directive, which is inconsistent with the law itself and the science. The SUPD stops the development and growth of a class of high-tech, naturally occurring and renewable material in Europe. This class of materials are functional like plastics and compostable, recyclable and biodegradable (in nature, including marine environments) just like paper/cellulose, and they do not generate microplastics. Polyhydroxyalkanoates have the greenest manufacturing profile of all the natural materials that have been exempted from the directive.

PHA biopolymers have the potential to upcycle low value waste organic carbon generated in Europe. In fact, the European Union alone (not including the member states) has sponsored over 108 million Euros in research grants to valorise waste organic carbon to produce PHA. In addition, the PHA industry has the potential to create numerous new and highly skilled jobs in Europe. One manufacturer has put on hold plans to build a substantial volume PHA factory in Europe, which will now be built elsewhere.

The European Commission did not consider appropriately the loss to limited seating and small restaurants that do a sizable business in take-out meals. PHA single use packaging articles such as takeout containers, cups, plates, straws, and cutlery can be composted in home and industrial composters and they can be recycled, just like cellulose/paper products. If PHA articles are littered, unlike plastics and like paper, they would biodegrade in nature including in the oceans without generating microplastics. PHA has the in use functional profile of many popular fossil plastics that the SUPD has rightfully included in the directive, and PHA's exclusion would have allowed the consumer to enjoy the same benefits of fossil plastics without the environmental pollution caused by fossil plastics, which was the primary inspiration behind the single use plastics Directive. Conversion from existing fossil plastics to PHA single use food packaging items would have reduced the negative impacts of litter and microplastics and continued to help the small take-out restaurants throughout Europe, especially during the pandemic due to the highly reduced in-restaurant dining capacity.

It is disappointing to see that the 2019 impact assessment that the EU carried out prior to enacting Directive (EU) 2019/904 did not consider Polyhydroxyalkanoates and the benefits it can bring to the above-mentioned stakeholders.

GO!PHA will continue to advocate for Polyhydroxyalkanoates (PHA), as it is the only class of natural materials that are renewable, that offers the functionality of plastics, with the end of life profile that matches cellulose/paper, which includes both recycling and composting (home and industrial). If leaked into the environment PHA would biodegrade in all environments without generating microplastics.



GO!PHA

Global Organization for PHA

The Global Organization for Polyhydroxyalkanoate (PHA) is a member-driven, non-profit initiative to accelerate the growth of the PHA industry.

PHA biopolymers are found in nature and have many of the functional properties and the processability of fossil plastics. PHA biopolymers provide a unique solution in reducing greenhouse gases by using renewable carbon-based raw materials and by offering diverse end-of-life options that include recycling and home & industrial composting. If littered, PHA biopolymers do not create microplastics, nor environmental plastics pollution, since they biodegrade in soil, freshwater, and marine environments.

Therefore, PHA offers a sustainable and circular approach to materials in our economy.

GO!PHA is a platform for learning, creating and sharing experiences and knowledge on PHA biopolymers and to facilitate the growth and proliferation of the PHA Industry and its downstream markets.

Take the pledge to use sustainable materials, become a member, or sponsor our special programs. Start sharing, contributing, and collaborating to grow the PHA industry.

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