



MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

PLASTIC WASTE

Speaking after a presentation in the European Parliament by Symphony Environmental Technologies P.l.c. of Borehamwood, Herts., U.K., Dr Caroline Jackson MEP said:

"European legislation on waste has tended to concentrate on waste which can be collected, and to encourage people to reduce, re-use, and dispose responsibly of their waste, by recycling, incineration with energy-recovery, or by other disposal routes."

"However, we also need to take account of the fact that there we will never succeed in collecting all the waste and that some may remain to disfigure the landscape. This is particularly the case with plastic waste, from errant supermarket bags to agricultural plastic. Where this goes uncollected it can accumulate in the environment, polluting the land and the oceans for many decades, and perhaps for hundreds of years."

"However, technologies have now become available which can produce plastic products such as shopping bags, garbage sacks, packaging etc. which are fit for purpose, but will harmlessly degrade at the end of their useful life. These fall into two broad categories, namely:

1. Hydro-biodegradable plastics, made wholly or partly from crops, which biodegrade in a highly microbial environment, such as composting, and
2. Oxo-biodegradable plastics, made from a by-product of oil-refining, which degrade in the environment by a process of oxidation initiated by an additive, and then biodegrade after their molecular weight has reduced to the point where naturally-occurring micro-organisms can access the material."

"We need to encourage both of these technologies, and to ensure that European Standards are developed which are appropriate to both. It is worth bearing in mind that the Parliament is concerned by the use of scarce land and water resources around the world to produce biofuels in competition with food-crops and the same concern applies to growing crops to make biodegradable plastics, so I hope the European Commission will give more positive support to oxo-bio plastics." ENDS

*Dr. Jackson is the immediate past-Chairman of the Environment, Public Health, and Food Safety Committee of the European Parliament, and was the Rapporteur for the EU Waste Framework Directive. Caroline.Jackson@europarl.europa.eu +44-77859-38102