



## Press Release

9 November 2011

### **SYMPHONY RESPONDS TO CALIFORNIA LEGISLATION ON LABELLING OF BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC PRODUCTS**

The court action taken by the Attorney-General of California against suppliers of plastic bottle technology has drawn attention to California's legislation on the labelling of biodegradable plastic products. They are not banned, but it is illegal to inform consumers that they are biodegradable. This conflicts with FTC guidance by forcing suppliers to conceal from consumers important information on the characteristics of their product.

California says that this is because it is "inherently misleading" to describe a plastic product as "biodegradable" but they allow a plastic product to be described as "compostable" which is just as likely to mislead. There is no reason to ban the use of the word "biodegradable," so long as the label informs consumers in what conditions and according to what timescale the product will biodegrade.

If a product is intended to biodegrade in the special conditions found in industrial composting it should be so labelled, but if intended to biodegrade if it gets in the environment it should be proved to be degradable, biodegradable, and non-toxic by the test methods prescribed by ASTM D6954, and so labelled.

In every country in the world some of the plastic will always escape the preferred disposal routes and find its way into the open landscape or the ocean, from which it cannot realistically be collected. Instead of prosecuting companies who bring forward innovation California should require all short-life plastic to be oxo-biodegradable, as has already been done in the Middle East.

Symphony has developed an oxo-biodegradable technology called d2w. The fundamental point about this technology is that it quickly converts ordinary plastic at the end of its useful life in the presence of oxygen into a material with a *different molecular structure*. At that stage it is no longer a plastic and has become a material which is inherently biodegradable in the open environment in the same way as a leaf. It cannot then entangle wild creatures nor block drains, and it is no longer a form of visual pollution. It does not leave fragments of plastic, and it is not toxic.

Oxobiodegradable technology has been verified by independent laboratory tests, and published science, and is used by large companies around the world, who have conducted extensive due-diligence. We would welcome a dialogue with the California authorities, and await an invitation.

During its useful life a d2w plastic product can be recycled with ordinary plastic <http://www.biodeg.org/position-papers/recycling/?domain=biodeg.org> but compostable plastic cannot. d2w plastic will not degrade in the absence of oxygen and –unlike compostable plastic - the undegraded d2w plastic will not emit methane in landfill. A Life Cycle Assessment published this year by the UK Environment Agency shows that ordinary and oxo-biodegradable plastic bags have a better LCA than paper or compostable plastic bags.





The Standards for compostable plastic require it to convert quickly into CO<sub>2</sub> gas within 180 days, which contributes to climate change but does nothing for the quality of the soil, but no such requirement is necessary for oxo-biodegradable plastic. There is no need for it to biodegrade completely within a year – a leaf would take many years – and so long as the label indicates approximate timescale nobody will be misled.

It is often said that that people would dispose more carelessly of biodegradable plastics, and this is an argument which would if true apply to compostable plastics and to paper, cotton etc., as well as oxo-biodegradable, plastics. It is not however true. An apple-core is obviously biodegradable, but a person who causes litter could not tell the difference between an ordinary plastic bag and an oxo-biodegradable one. Would such a person take the trouble to read a label to see whether it is biodegradable, before deciding to throw it away? In any event a lot of litter is accidentally released into the environment, without any conscious decision by anyone.

But suppose for the sake of argument that 10% more were discarded. If 1,000 conventional and 1,100 oxo-biodegradable bags were left in the open environment, 1,000 conventional bags would remain in the rivers, streets and fields for decades, but none of the oxo-biodegradable bags would be left at the end of the short life programmed into them at manufacture.

Education will help, but there will always be people who will deliberately or accidentally discard their waste. Would it not be better if the discarded plastic were all oxo-biodegradable? d2w is a low-cost insurance.

**To watch a plastic bag degrading, please visit:** <http://degradable.net/play-videos/4>

ENDS

#### **NOTE TO EDITORS:**

##### **About d<sub>2</sub>w**

d<sub>2</sub>w is the brand name for controlled-life plastic technology which is designed to control and shorten the life of normal plastic packaging and other products. d<sub>2</sub>w is a carefully researched and tested formulation which is added to normal plastic at the time of manufacture. If all the plastic had been made with d<sub>2</sub>w there would be no “Pacific Garbage Patch.”

##### **About Symphony**

Symphony Environmental Technologies Plc is the only public company in Controlled-life plastics. It has a diverse and growing customer-base and has established itself as a global business, now serving 96 countries through 67 Distributors. It has invested heavily in R&D at its headquarters in Borehamwood and its test facilities in Norfolk and Shropshire and continues to develop innovative environmental technology. Symphony employs local people and earns revenues abroad for the UK.

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Symphony is a member of the Oxo-biodegradable Plastics Association ([www.biodeg.org](http://www.biodeg.org)), the Society for the Chemical Industry (UK), the British Plastics Federation, the European Organisation for Packaging & the Environment (EUROPEN), and the British Brands Group. Symphony actively participates in the Committee work of the American Standards organisation (ASTM), the British Standards Institute (BSI), the European Standards Organisation (CEN), and the International Standards Organisation (ISO).

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