

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Directorate-General for Environment  
Circular Economy and Green Growth  
Director

Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs  
Consumer, Environmental and Health Technologies  
Director

Brussels,  
ENV.B2/VB/yh Ares(2017)

**NOTE FOR THE ATTENTION OF  
MR G. DANCET, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ECHA**

**Subject: Request to the European Chemicals Agency to prepare a restriction proposal conforming to the requirements of Annex XV to REACH**

So called oxo-plastics or oxo-degradable plastics are conventional plastics that contain additives to promote the oxidation of the material under certain conditions. They are used as agricultural films and in other agricultural applications (i.e. wrapping hay, potting containers, tree ties and vegetable sacks), as rubbish and carrier bags, as food packaging, landfill covers, etc.

Oxo-plastics have been claimed to degrade rapidly to harmless substances into the environment. However, as demonstrated in a recent Commission study<sup>1</sup>, there is evidence that such plastics may not degrade under all relevant environmental conditions and within a reasonable time period. Instead, they appear to fragment into very small particles, potentially contributing to the environmental contamination by microplastics.

Moreover, their marketing as oxo-degradable plastics might encourage consumers to believe that they cause no harm to the environment when they are disposed of. In addition, the fragmentation properties imparted to the plastics makes their re-use difficult and they could negatively impact on the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bb3ec82e-9a9f-11e6-9bca-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ab9d2024-2fca-11e7-9412-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search>

quality of plastic recyclates and of compost, if they enter these recycling streams.

Some Member States have already taken measures to ban the use of oxo-plastics while others are considering restrictive measures.

On the basis of the evidence currently available, the Commission is of the opinion that a potential risk to the environment may arise from the use of oxo-plastics in various products for consumer and professional use, because of their potential to initiate the generation of microplastics, and that these risks need to be addressed on a Union wide basis.

Therefore, the Commission would like to ask ECHA to develop an Annex XV dossier in accordance with Article 69(1) of REACH to address the concern posed by oxo-plastics. The potential restriction could focus on the use and placing on the market of the additives used in this type of plastics with the objective to promote their oxidation. When developing the dossier, ECHA is asked to take into account and to link this task to the work to be done under the recent request to prepare an Annex XV dossier for microplastic particles. ECHA shall enter the relevant intention in the Registry of Intention (RoI) at the same times as the one concerning our request on microplastics.

We would appreciate to receive as soon as possible a confirmatory letter from ECHA that our request has been accepted.

We have recently requested to ECHA to prepare several restriction dossiers and we acknowledge that the workload could be high in 2018. As the quality of the dossiers should not be compromised, we suggest that we re-discuss the priorities and the timing for all restrictions in the second quarter of 2018, to ensure timely delivery of good quality dossiers.

*(e-signed)*

Kestutis Sadauskas

DG ENV

*(e-signed)*

Carlo Pettinelli

DG GROW