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Bioplastics — how much of a threat are these materials to the European plastics recycling industry?

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Q. Which sectors of the European plastics recycling industry are potentially at the greatest risk?

A. LDPE Waste films recyclers.

Q. What are the most common waste plastic films recycled in Europe?

A. LDPE:

Shrink films, stretch films and pallet hoods

Silage wrap and pit cover

Greenhouse and polytunnel films

Recovered GP plastic packaging films and bags



- If bio plastic films contaminate the LDPE plastics waste stream — can this mixed waste be successfully recycled into pellet?
- Answer — Yes



○ Can bio plastic contaminated recycle be successfully remanufactured into new products such as building and construction films?

○ Answer — Yes



Waste polythene films contaminated with bio films can be collected, recycled and re-manufactured into new products such as building and construction films.

Original question — “Do bio plastics represent a threat to European plastic waste recyclers?”

- Answer – yes, *and a potentially massive one.*
- Why – market/customer (end user) perceptions.

Fact 1

For any plastic recycling industry to survive, guaranteed end markets for the recycled materials produced must exist.

This includes all heavy duty films including pallet hoods, shrink films, polytunnel film — not just AG film waste.



Fact 2

Across Europe international specification bodies including BS, ASTM and EN are already questioning if material specifications should be changed to state for building and construction films — *“...to be manufactured from virgin polymers only... no recycled content...”*

Example — a recent change to one specification for geomembrane film now states “...a 5 year guarantee for membrane manufactured from recycled material, alternatively a 20 year guarantee for virgin material..”

Is this based on scientific fact?

No — this is purely based on market/customer perception.

Q. Why is market availability for recycled plastics so important?

A. Without available markets for the recyclate we produce — we do not have a viable industry sector.

As one famous European politician famously said...

"You can't buck the market"



Summary

- Bio plastics are a real threat to our European plastics recycling sector.

What must we do:

- Lobby hard, especially in Brussels to explain bio plastics will have unintended consequences for our sector.
- Explain to the specification bodies that we have robust waste stream segregation in place.
- Increase collection rates for all waste plastics and explain to the NGOs this is the answer to waste/litter — not more use of bio plastics.

Summary

If we do not do this, the likely outcome will be:



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING