

Biodegradable and compostable packaging:

As green as we think?



Due to great pressure to reduce or even eliminate plastic packaging, so-called biodegradable and compostable packaging have become increasingly popular in recent years. **Consumers now see those as being THE solution to plastic pollution.**

But what's the real story?

A report prepared jointly by ÉEQ and SOLINOV, a consulting firm specializing in environment and organic materials recovery management, **reveals that such packaging cause other problems that are as yet not well known.** Here are the report's highlights.

[Read the report >>](#)

Need to know



1.

The words "biodegradable" and "compostable" printed on a packaging are an **environmental claim that is not verified by a third party** (except if the packaging is certified). Therefore, it's fair to question the actual biodegradability or compostability of a packaging identified as such by its producer.

2.

Existing certifications to confirm that a product is suitable for composting **are voluntary and carried out in labs** under specific and controlled conditions that are different from those in the field.

3.

Because these designations **create confusion**, consumers make sorting mistakes, and compostable packaging end up **in all municipal collections**: garbage, organic materials, recyclable materials and sometimes out in nature (so-called litter). In the end, a large share of that packaging may well end up in landfills.

4.

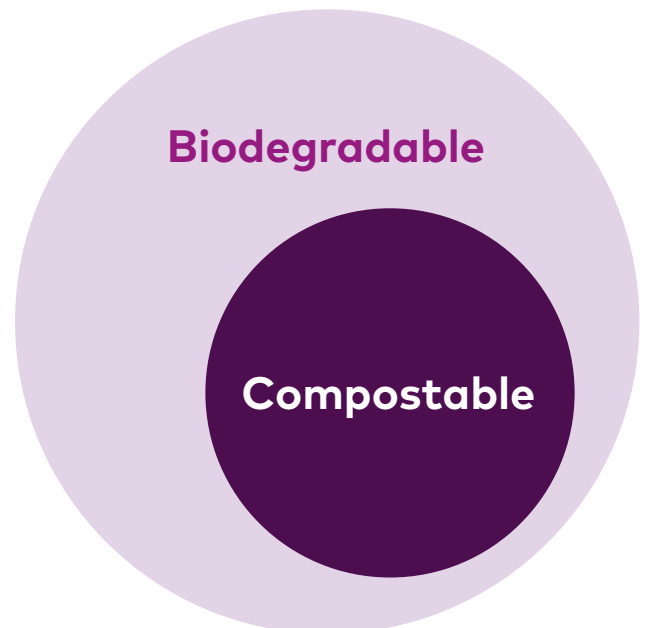
Contrary to the recycling stream, **the mission of the composting and biomethanization stream is not to manage packaging or sort materials**. It aims to produce quality compost or digestate that can be returned to the ground.

Biodegradable and compostable plastic packaging - What's the difference?

Two main differences:

1. Biodegradation time: The degradation time of compostable plastics should be comparable to that of food and green residues, whereas biodegradable plastics have no degradation time scale.

2. Effect on the environment: Contrary to biodegradable plastics, broken down compostable plastics should not leave visible, identifiable or toxic residues.



Remember

Compostable plastics are biodegradable, but not all biodegradable plastics are compostable.

Being a more ecoresponsible citizen thanks to the 3Rs:



Reduce

I **select** products with as little packaging as possible.

I **select reusable** packaging (whenever possible).

I **try to reduce** the garbage I generate as much as I can.

Reuse

I **reuse** packaging.

I **find new uses** for packaging before throwing it out.

Recycle

I **select recyclable** packaging over non-recyclable ones.

I **only deposit** containers, printed matter and packaging in my recycling bin.

I **find out** about how to best dispose of packaging using the **ÇA VA OÙ? app**.

[Download >>](#)

I **buy** products that contain recycled materials.

Bac-à-Bac

The Bac-à-Bac (Bin it) video series, hosted by Rose-Aimée Automne T. Morin, takes viewers on a tour of the circular economy and highlights the ongoing transformation and future directions of curbside recycling.

