

ASSOBIOPLASTICHE: MISLEADING CONCLUSIONS OF THE “LIFE CYCLE ASSESSMENT OF GROCERY BAGS” PRODUCED BY THE DANISH ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY

Rome, March 26th 2018 - The recent “Life Cycle Assessment of Grocery Bags” study commissioned by the Danish Environmental Agency on the LCA of carrier bags suggests that the best option from an environmental point of view would be polythene bags and that therefore biodegradable bags are not advisable.

Compared to the benchmark used (“typical bag made of LDPE”), biodegradable bags are comparable or better in two key indicators - the potential for global warming and the consumption of non-renewable energy resources – whereas they fare worse in other impact categories.

The Scientific Committee of Assobioplastiche, the Italian association of bioplastic producers and converters, believes that this study was carried out on a series of initial assumptions based on subjective criteria and disputes the overall validity of the results.

1. Firstly, the study establishes that biodegradable bags do not reach composting facilities because in Denmark they are eliminated through screening.

But the screening process is far from perfect.

This inefficiency has two consequences:

- a) **besides the bags, large amounts of organic waste are also removed that must be disposed of (landfill or incineration)**
- b) **fragments of the bags end up in the compost. If the bags are not biodegradable, plastic is released into the environment. A very serious risk that was totally neglected by the Danish study.**

- 2) The study compares the impact of one polythene bag to the impact of two biodegradable bags, on the grounds that the latter, although exceeding the weight requirement to be supported (12 kg), would have lower performance than the polythene bags due to their greater fragility.

This is a subjective and completely arbitrary decision that has a major impact on the results.

It is no coincidence that the reviewers of the study asked to do further analysis by calculating the impact of a single biodegradable bag. The result of this in-depth analysis clearly highlighted the superior environmental performance of the biodegradable bag.

- 3) The study seems to be conditioned by a bias against biodegradable bags, which are accused of being “able to degrade only in industrial plants”, as if this were not true of all forms of recycling.

The authors do not seem to know that packaging which is recoverable by organic recycling is regulated in Europe in both legislative and technical terms; the way they describe “biodegradability” as a feature that is “still under debate” seems to be based on superficial knowledge rather than on the knowledge of the directives and standards and certifications that have been in place for over twenty years.

The Scientific Committee of Assobioplastiche therefore believes that the results of the “Life Cycle Assessment of Grocery Bags” study produced by the Danish Environmental Agency cannot be considered in any way to be of general value and that, on the contrary, it represents a source of information that may mislead countries, communities and organisations to make incorrect choices with regard to environmental sustainability and the circular economy.

Assobioplastiche –the Italian Association of Bioplastics and Biodegradable and Compostable Materials - was established in 2011 and represents companies active in Italy and abroad in the production of biodegradable polymers and finished products and in the end-of-life management of products made of bioplastics. Assobioplastiche is headquartered in Rome and is currently chaired by Marco Versari.

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