

Media release
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WasteMINZ pleased to see phase out of plastic items that contaminate composting

The WasteMINZ Organic Materials Sector Group is pleased to see plastics that often contaminate composting are being considered as part of a wider Government ban on single-use plastics.

The proposed changes will support the production of high quality, contamination-free compost for the New Zealand horticulture sector and home gardeners.

“The inclusion of oxo-degradable plastics and fruit stickers in this consultation is especially important for the organics sector as these items often end up at commercial composting facilities. Because they are not designed to breakdown in compost they can end up as microplastics in soil,” says Chris Purchas, chair of WasteMINZ’ organics materials steering committee.

The Sector Group looks forward to seeing more detail on the planned phase out of the seven single-use plastics identified in the consultation document.

“We welcome the inclusion of compostable plastic bags in the phasing out of single-use plastic produce bags because they are often difficult to distinguish from other plastics,” Mr Purchas says.

However, coffee cups and wet wipes are not included in the initial proposed phase out. These single-use items cause significant problems for industrial composting facilities. The Organic Materials Sector Group is interested in seeing how the Ministry for the Environment intends to address these two items later. “Compostable coffee cups are mostly lined with a plant-based plastic called PLA, and this cannot be processed at many of New Zealand’s industrial facilities. Non-compostable coffee cups are not recyclable so, at the moment, single-use coffee cups generally need to go to landfill. More work definitely needs to be done in this area.”

While wet wipes are more of an issue for wastewater plant managers, they can also end up in council organics collections inadvertently.

“This consultation on problematic and single-use plastics is very timely and a good start in dealing with some sources of contamination in the organic materials sector.”

WasteMINZ looks forward to ensuring its members are part of this significant consultation.

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