

Stefano Facco

Novamont

Head of New

Business Development

stefano.facco@novamont.com

Abstract: Positioning of Compostable Polymers within SUP and ECHA, Special Outlook on Southern Europe.

The new directive on Single Use Plastics (SUP) highlights the difference between biodegradable plastics and traditional plastics, by including a specific definition that describes the biodegradation process and the related European standard on Requirements for packaging recoverable through composting and biodegradation. Member States have all the tools to implement the provisions of the SUP Directive taking into account the individual national contexts and related waste management systems, and also considering that the Waste Framework Directive set the separate collection of organics waste to be mandatory throughout Europe by 2023, recognizing the role of compostable materials in driving more efficient organic waste collection schemes.

In this legislative framework there seems to be space to multiply the already existing and successful European demonstrative case, such as the Italian one. The pioneering activities on biodegradable products and their value-chain in Italy are becoming a powerful case study of relevant dimensions that can confirm the key role that compostable and biodegradable plastics can play in improving the quality of organic waste collected, reducing the possibilities of pollution of agricultural soils and avoiding the accumulation of harmful substances in solid and liquid streams, decreasing at the same time the total share of single-use bags placed on the market.

Another scenario seems favorable for the positioning of compostable polymers, paving the way for new development possibilities in many application sectors: last January the ECHA made available the dossier, compliant with Annex XV of the REACH Regulation, containing the restriction proposal for microplastics intentionally added in products of any kind. The definitions of microplastics excludes polymers naturally occurring and not chemically modified (with the exception of hydrolysis) and the (bio) degradable polymers according to the interim criteria of the Appendix X. Also in this context Italy presents successful case studies related to ingredients for cosmetics, "readily biodegradable" in accordance with OECD guidelines.