The Importance of Clarity
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Food Waste Composting: Challenges, Lessons & Successes
National Zero Waste Business Conference
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GreenBlue is a non-profit dedicated to researching and promoting the principles of Sustainable Materials Management.

- Use wisely
- Recover more
- Eliminate toxicity

Sustainable materials management
GreenBlue’s Sustainable Packaging Coalition

- Membership group that brings together hundreds of companies & stakeholders
- Working *together* to broaden the understanding of packaging sustainability, develop meaningful improvements
GreenBlue
Compost Collaborative
Collaboration of Key Action Stakeholders
Value of Compostable Packaging
“Foodservice-Ware”

It facilitates the diversion of waste associated with food scraps, but...

Contamination from non-compostables, and lack of clarity on what is certified compostable, remains a major issue.
Main Issues with Compostable Packaging

1. Lack of understanding of the composting process and end product
2. Contamination from look-alikes
3. Absent or unclear marking and labeling
4. Overall messaging conflating compost collection with recycling
5. Inconsistency in messaging
6. Processing in various composting technologies
7. Organic certification
Lack of Understanding

- Lack of consumer understanding of composting (and recycling!) generally generates incorrect sorting
- General “eco-friendly” language confuses consumers
- Even composters incorrectly use the term “biodegradable” or “decomposable” – it’s not the same!
Lookalike Products
Lookalike Products
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Lookalike Products
Lack of Marking is Also Problematic

Vermont sued Penley (2011) and Fabri-Kal (2012) for not properly disclosing limited availability of composting options – now no label causes contamination of recycling
Graphic elements are encouraged to increase legibility of the word “compostable” and overall product distinction that may include text boxes, stripes, bands, or a green or brown tint of the product.
Marking and Labeling: Compost Label Landscape

Current BPI Label

Other Labels Being Used in the US and Abroad
Resin Identification Code Confusion

• RICs used incorrectly as recycling indicators
• #7 is “Other” and compostables fall under this category, with other non-compostables
Inconsistency of Public Communication

Including “all paper” introduces micro-plastics into the system and reinforces misconception that cartons and some foodservice items are “wax-lined”
Solutions

- Educate the public, distributors, municipalities, brands
- Designers work with composters
- Work ongoing within and beyond the Composting Collaborative
- Update USCC toolkits and promote their use
- Expand use of BPI logo through the new How2Compost Label Program
The How2Compost Label

CONSUMER TESTING
Round 2 Recently Completed

LABEL LAUNCH:
Summer 2016
On-package Labeling: The SPC’s How2Recycle Label Program

Widely Recycled
At least 60% of Americans can recycle this package at curbside recycling or drop-off recycling.

Sometimes Recycled
Between 60% and 20% of Americans can recycle this package at curbside recycling or drop-off recycling. Check your local program.

Not Yet Recycled
Either less than 20% of Americans can recycle this package, or, it could cause a problem in a recycling facility.

Store Drop-off
Anyone who lives near a store that accepts plastic bags and wraps for recycling can take this packaging to that store and recycle it there.

*Not recycled in all communities
Adding Compostability to H2R: Why?

Advance better labeling to help both consumers & generators provide clean food scrap streams to composters

- Elevate the use of the BPI logo
- Some packages are recyclable and compostable
- Some packages have recyclable and compostable components
- Help address look-alikes and unlabeled compostables
- Aims to get ahead of local labeling legislation by creating industry-consistent label
Example Uses

- **Green Giant**: Steam Heat. Batches rich in flavor cooks sliced carrots and edamame.
- **Ziploc**: Brand bags can be recycled. Environmental Facts: Bags are recyclable when clean and dry at drop-off bins at participating retailers. Please recycle this pouch and carton.
- **Paper Bag**: Made with 100% post-consumer recycled fiber. Recycle if clean & dry. Store Drop-off.
- **Kellogg's Box**: Please Recycle. Recycle if clean & dry.
Example: a Bag of Compostable Cups

*Not in backyard; Composting programs for this cup may not exist in your area.
Example for Dual Stream

[Image of a paper bag with recycling and composting symbols]

how2recycle.info

Compost if Food-Soiled

how2compost.info

PAPER

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Thank you!

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