UNDERSTANDING LABELS

Citizen Behaviour and Sustainability

What's the difference between **degradable**, **biodegradable** and **compostable**?

General misconceptions about different packaging characteristics or labels make giving packaging materials a proper end-of-life use an extremely challenging task.

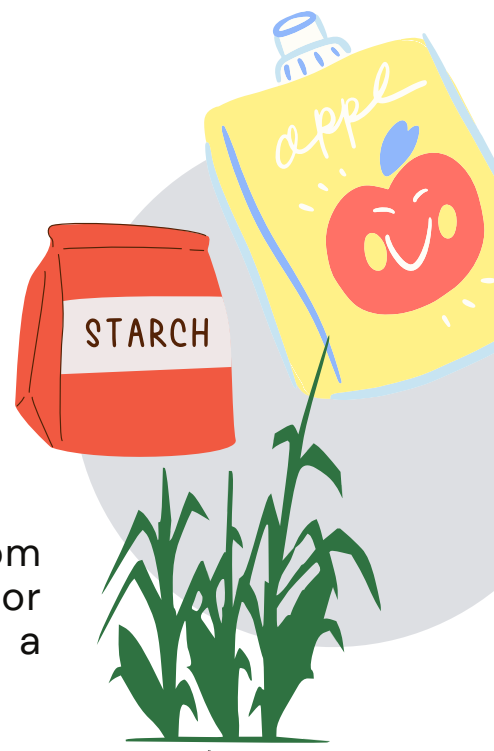
DEGRADABLE

Technically all plastic packaging is **degradable** regardless of its material. It will eventually degrade over time whether it takes decades or a hundred years emitting toxic pollutants when they break down into the environment due to their exposure to air or light.

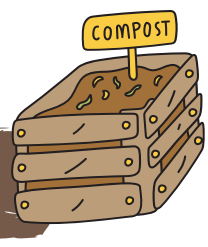
BIODEGRADABLE

As a result of the action of micro-organisms, the material is converted to water, carbon dioxide, biomass, and methane.

Bioplastics could be either **bio-based** -made from renewable resources from natural feedstocks or synthetically produced i.e., transformed into a polymer.



NOT all bio-based plastic is **biodegradable**.
e.g. polyethene derived from sugar cane, **bio-based PE**, **bio-based PET**, and **bio-based PP**.



COMPOSTABLE

For a material to be compostable it must:

1. **Biodegrade**: 90% of the organic materials are converted into CO2 within 6 months and it should break down into carbon dioxide, water, and biomass.

2. **Disintegrate**: no more than 10% residue remains after 3 months of composting and subsequent sifting through a 2mm sieve.

3. **No eco-toxicity**: biodegradation does not produce any toxic material and compost can support plant growth.

Home-compostable and industrially compostable are certified by globally established agencies.

Industrially Compostable CHECK LOCALLY

Home Compostable

BPI COMPOSTABLE

OK compost TÜV AUSTRIA INDUSTRIAL

HOME OK compost TÜV AUSTRIA HOME

compostable

Compostable packaging **CANNOT** be decomposed in any soil environment or just thrown to landfill. **Industrially compostable plastics** require high-level facilities and collection systems in place to allow them to decompose. Even **home-compostable** materials need **suitable environments** to decompose.

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