



8th of June 2009

POSITION PAPER OF THE BIOWASTE ALLIANCE

Calling on the Need for European-Wide Legislation Covering the Treatment of Biowaste to:

- harvest the full benefits potential of sound biowaste management for soil, climate and resource protection purposes;
- help Member States fulfil the organic waste diversion targets of the Landfill Directive;
- provide legal certainty by ensuring long-term confidence for public and private investors; and
- ensure cross-compliance consistencies between different European Acts and Strategies.

The issue of a stand-alone Biowaste Directive was first brought up at EU level in 2000. Even nine years later, after three comprehensive Commission working papers, numerous stakeholder meetings and at least six different institutional calls for legislation no substantial activities towards a Directive have been delivered.

As an **Alliance** bringing together both industry and civil society, we are deeply concerned about the Commission's reluctance to propose an independent legislative initiative on the biological treatment of biowaste, despite the manifold evidence that such legislation would bring about multiple environmental and economic benefits.

We are pleased that the Commission is finally carrying out an assessment on the needs and impacts of such a Biowaste Directive. However, we would like to warn against delaying further action on this urgently needed EU legal instrument.

The biodegradable waste fraction accounts for 30% to 45% of municipal solid waste across Europe. The sound management of biowaste resulting from explicit drivers that promote composting and anaerobic digestion across Europe would maximise environmental benefits for soil, climate and resource protection. Setting recycling targets and legal guidance for biological treatment of organic waste at a European level would, above all, provide an important signal at a time when Member States and local authorities have to make long-term decisions and investments for waste management. Providing long-term certainty and guidance for investments with a legal framework becomes all the more important for the public and private sectors in these times of economic crisis.

The development of a proposal for an end-of-waste standard for compost in the context of the implementation of the Waste Framework Directive is not enough. This **standard alone is insufficient to establish the drivers to generate the critical mass** required to ensure the viability of socio-economic activities for sound biowaste management (e.g. investments in infrastructure, quality assurance schemes, research etc). Establishing such drivers is a pre-condition to establish and maintain a reliable and healthy compost production and market.

A Biowaste Directive setting binding recycling targets for organic waste from households, industrial and commercial sources is therefore urgently needed from both an environmental and economic perspective in order to:

- explore the full potential of using soil organic matter as a carbon sink and help achieve the goals of the European Climate Change Programme;
- provide a clear political signal with waste management objectives and comprehensive guidelines for the management of biodegradable waste. This would enable the private and public sectors across the EU to make the appropriate investments and would therefore help Member States fulfil the diversion targets of the Landfill Directive;
- tackle the constant decline of soil organic matter in arable land and encourage the recovery of organic matter in line with the Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection;

- support the requirement of Article 22 of the Waste Framework Directive to encourage the separate collection of biowaste, its environmentally sound treatment and use of the produced compost and digestate;
- help meeting European market and customer demands for quality assured composts and digestates produced according to high quality standards;
- promote the efficient use of nutrients, humus and energy resources in organic waste in line with the Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources;
- provide incentives for Member States to set up national public awareness raising campaigns and green public procurement strategies to promote waste prevention in general and local educational and composting initiatives in order to ensure a wider mobilisation of the general public;
- boost rural job creation and economic growth as advocated by the Rural Development Strategy and Lisbon Agenda;
- create a flexible and cost-effective recycling option which can be easily adapted to local conditions in each individual Member State; and
- provide legal certainty at EU level for the biological treatment of waste by ensuring long-term confidence for investors, banks and industry and avoiding unacceptable financial risk for both the private and public sectors.

Preparing a Biowaste Directive without delay will provide a **unique opportunity at a crucial time** to realise the environmental and economic benefits of sound biowaste management in Europe and meet the strong support from a wide range of stakeholders.

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