



March 3, 2020

The Honorable Paul Tonko, Chairman
The Honorable John Shimkus, Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on
Environment and Climate Change
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

I am writing to applaud the Subcommittee for holding an important hearing on addressing the plastic waste crisis in the United States. PBPC wishes to take this opportunity to draw the Subcommittee's attention to the role plant-based consumer materials can play when considering waste management solutions, particularly recycling and composting, in our modern world of ever-increasing plastic waste.

Plant-based plastics present a viable path toward a more sustainable global economy. Derived from renewable plant material, plant-based plastic resins are a diverse group of polymers that can often fill the same functional role as their traditional petroleum-derived counterparts in consumer materials such as food packaging, service ware, and textiles. At the end of their functional life, some plant-based plastics can be recycled, like many traditional plastics, to create new items. Yet, unlike traditional plastics, many plant-based plastics can often be composted into a valuable soil amendment used to grow the next generation of plant-based plastic feedstock. Overall, the waste management options for plant-based materials follow the ethic of a more circular bioeconomy, and a gradual transition to plant-based consumer materials is indisputably part of the portfolio of solutions that will help combat America's plastic waste crisis.

One natural advantage of recyclable plant-based materials is their ability to be included in the same recycling streams and processing methods as their petroleum-based alternatives. One example is plant-based polyethylene terephthalate (plant-based PET). This plant-based plastic resin is molecularly identical to petroleum-based PET, though its environmental advantage lies in its feedstock: rather than plastic derived from a fossil fuel, plant-based PET is derived from renewable agricultural feedstocks that capture atmospheric carbon during the growing phase. PBPC supports efforts that will ensure a robust recycling infrastructure, particularly noting the potential benefits of incorporating plant-based recyclable plastics and their reduced fossil fuel use benefit.

Other important components of modern waste management solutions to consider are expanded composting infrastructure, along with supported standardized product labeling, and consumer education. When properly disposed of, compostable plastics help reduce landfill methane emissions, plastic pollution, and fossil fuel carbon emissions, along with producing a valuable soil amendment for farmers and homeowners. In the short term, compostable plant-based plastics are poised to become viable alternatives on the consumer materials market, currently with the potential to replace about 66% of major traditional plastic resins¹.

However, without proper composting infrastructure to take in compostable plant-based plastics, these materials become plastic pollution just like their traditional counterparts, and manufacturers hesitate to incorporate them into their materials portfolios. Additionally, standard labeling regarding a product's compostable content and its compostability is needed. Consumers ought to have clarity regarding the end-of-life options for their products, and a clear label indicating compostability is lacking for compostable plant-based products.

Also, consumer education regarding how to properly dispose of compostable products is needed to truly realize their full environmental benefits. If compostable plastics were embraced alongside expanded composting infrastructure, standardized labels, and a consumer education campaign, these compostable plant-based plastics can play a large role in reducing plastic pollution in the environment, while simultaneously creating a valuable soil amendment for local communities and their environment.

The PBPC is eager to assist the Subcommittee on matters regarding America's plastic waste crisis and commends the Subcommittee on its convening of this hearing. PBPC believes that plant-based plastics are an essential component of America's plastic waste management solutions portfolio, and we look forward to the opportunity to inform the Committee of the merits of these materials.

Sincerely,



Jessica Bowman,
Executive Director

¹ World Economic Forum, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, and McKinsey & Company. *The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the Future of Plastics*. (2016) pp. 93.