



COMPOSTABLE COALITION UK

Closing the Loop for Compostable Packaging



Will 2023 be the year we finally re-set our relationship with plastic packaging?

From the summit of Mount Everest to the depths of our oceans, our planet is drowning in plastic and microplastic. Despite assertions from the Government and big retailers that we are successfully tackling plastic waste, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation has concluded that we are nowhere near reaching our global obligations to ensure 100% of plastic waste is either reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025.¹

Currently, only around 14% of plastic packaging is collected for recycling globally. **Without fundamental redesign and innovation, about 30% of plastic packaging will never be reused or recycled.**²



Since the 1950s,
8.3 billion tons of plastic
has been produced



By **2040**,
we will double
our plastic waste



In the UK,
over **40%** of
products are
packaged in
flexible plastic



Yet only **9%** of
such packages
are recycled



Almost **91%**
will end up
in Landfill or
Incinerated

OUR MISSION

Substitute hard-to-recycle flexible plastic with fully compostable alternatives

[Compostable Coalition UK](#) brings together the UK's major compostable packaging manufacturers, the bio-waste industry and leading academic and consumer behaviour experts. Backed by UK Research and Innovation's Smart Sustainable Plastic Packaging Challenge, we aim to demonstrate the practicality of effectively collecting, sorting & recycling compostable packaging at scale.

Certified compostable packaging offers an alternative to combat the plastic waste challenge, providing an effective solution for hard-to-recycle flexible plastic. Compostable packaging solutions are designed to protect goods and at end of life these packages can be collected alongside food waste and be composted at industrial compost facilities, leaving zero waste, zero microplastic behind, as well as contributing to the creation of soil nourishing compost.

"Compostable plastic offers the best means of substituting difficult-to-recycle plastic, such as plastic film."

EFRA Committee, Plastic Waste Inquiry, (November 2022)

The UK cannot meet its plastic recycling targets without composting as part of the mix.

If the Government is truly committed to achieving its plastic reduction targets by 2025, where 70% of plastic packaging is effectively recycled or composted, it's time the Government supported the development and growth of novel, alternative technologies - including compostable alternatives.

Many brands and retailers are showing considerable leadership and switching from conventional plastic to using compostable plastic for products ranging from tea bags, coffee capsules, snack food, fresh produce and frozen food. However, a more fundamental re-set of our relationship with conventional plastic can only hope to be achieved with ambitious policy frameworks which help, rather than hinder, the ability of the nascent compostables industry to innovate and grow at scale.



In Italy, Ireland and Spain compostable packaging is already successfully collected via food waste bins and in the UK, major brands and retailers such as **Waitrose, Riverford Organic Farmers and Stella McCartney**, are already effectively utilising compostables, proving that the technology works and that compostables fit into the current waste infrastructure.

We believe there are five reasons why you should support our mission:



Certified Compostable Packaging solves recycling's problems

Most plastic packaging products are simply not fit for recycling. DEFRA's misplaced faith in untried, energy-intensive recycling technologies, risks further entrenching our dependency on conventional plastic packaging. Tackling plastic waste can only be fundamentally addressed at source – the design phase – with innovative solutions such as compostable packaging.



Hate food waste? Us too!

The UK wastes 9.5 million tonnes of food waste a year³, most of which ends up in landfills. Compostable packaging is able to capture and divert food waste that is otherwise lost to landfill. 17% of local authorities in England already collect compostable packaging via food waste bins, while universal roll-out of household food waste collection could build upon the 35% of local authorities already collecting food waste.



Investing in industries fit for the future

From Cumbria to Cambridge, the compostable packaging industry is already a significant regional employer, providing high-skilled, well-paid opportunities. It is estimated the compostable industry can generate 35,000 green jobs across the UK, with the global market predicted to grow by £33bn.⁴ This presents an opportunity for the UK to assert itself as a global leader and the epicentre of research & innovation and future inward investment.



Public demand

Consumers continue to demand action on accelerating the plastics transition. A recent YouGov survey of 1734 UK adults found a mammoth 89% support councils being required to collect all recyclable or compostable packaging from households, with 85% supporting a ban on conventional plastic packaging where alternative compostable solutions are available. Clearly, the public are strongly in favour of compostables and political inaction risks alienating a significant proportion of society.⁵



Replenishing England's green and pleasant land

33% of the earth's soil is in decline and diminishing, with this set to increase to 90% by 2050.⁶ Soil is currently being destroyed ten times faster than it's being created.⁷ The loss of fertile soil can make land less productive for agriculture, pollute waterways and increase the likelihood of flood events. Compost can replenish topsoil, promoting soil fertility and biodiversity. As well as being good for the planet, compostables are good for agriculture and farmers too.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?



Apply pressure on the Government to review the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme

to ensure its modulated fees regime incentivises rather than hinders the adoption of more sustainable packaging solutions, including compostable packaging.



Back the EFRA Committee's call for money raised from the Plastic Packaging Tax and EPR reforms

to be invested in organic recycling infrastructure to make composting at scale a reality across the UK.



Call for compostable packaging to be collected alongside organic/food waste across England

to allow for this form packaging to more fundamentally replace hard-to-recycle plastics, especially flexible plastics and small formats which are currently not fit for recycling, and which represent over 25% of all plastic waste.

With the clock ticking, tackling the scourge of single-use plastic is now mission critical – it's mission compostable.

ABOUT US

[Compostable Coalition UK](https://compostableuk.info/) has received £1.2M grant funding from UK Research & Innovation's (UKRI) flagship £60 million to support a 24 month research project. If you would like more information, please visit our website: <https://compostableuk.info/>



UK Research
and Innovation

1. <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/press-release-progress-needs-fresh-acceleration>
2. <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/press-release-progress-needs-fresh-acceleration>
3. <https://wrap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-11/Food-surplus-and-waste-in-the-UK-key-facts-Jan-2020.pdf>

4. <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/21492/html/>
5. Total sample size was 1,734 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 15th - 16th November 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).
6. <https://www.fao.org/fao-stories/article/en/c/1599222/>
7. Saving the Earth, A Sustainable Future for Soils and Water