

International News

Society: Environment: Bag behaviour: Supermarkets switch in favour of degradable plastic

The end of the most pervasive product of the 20th century may come sooner than expected. World production of plastic bags is at an all-time high, but an additive developed in Britain is said to be reducing their lifespan from decades to just a few months.

In a quiet revolution, four of the five big supermarket chains, which together hand out up to 10bn plastic bags each year, have conducted trials and now have partly or wholly switched to using degradable bags.

Made with an additive known as D2W, they become brittle when exposed to air and then decompose into water and carbon dioxide with minimal trace elements, at a speed that can largely be predetermined. D2W, which can cause flexible plastic to self-destruct in just two

months, has been welcomed by some local authorities and waste and food industries, which are under pressure from the government and consumers.



“The technology is not new, but the application is,” says Allan Blacher, of Hertfordshire-based Symphony Plastics, one of several companies worldwide pioneering the technology.

But what seems to be a totally benign technology is the subject of a

fierce debate in parts of the polythene industry, which believes that D2W will be overtaken by new EU laws, which will soon stop anything that is not biodegradable going into waste tips, and by environmental groups, which argue that it does not encourage people to use fewer bags.

It is also feared that degradable plastic will fail to properly decompose in oxygen-starved environments such as waste tips, and could, in fact, lead to an increase in greenhouse gases - methane, for example - that contribute to global warming.

But this is fiercely contested by Symphony Plastics, which argues that there is more than enough oxygen at the top of tips, and that biodegradation is not affected.

Source: www.plastics.com

Green Living

For many people the term Green Living may mean outdoors – mountains, trees, grass, green lawns. But we can always start Green Living at home by choosing recycled plastic products, finding new and creative uses for old items, and reducing unmindful use of natural resources. We can define Green Living as perfecting the environment by conserving and effectively using the resources.

Source: www.plasticsresources.com

