

Position Statement on Degradable Additives to Plastic Packaging

The Southeast Recycling Development Council (SERDC) opposes the use of degradable additives in plastic packaging.

SERDC maintains the following understandings:

The use of degradable additives renders the material un-recyclable. SERDC supports the recycling of recyclable materials. Plastic bottles, film, and containers have strong recycling markets that depend on sources of clean, recyclable material. The use of degradable additives removes the reliability of the resin to be recycled and remanufactured into a new product.

Recycling is a steady and viable industry with positive economic impacts. In the Southeast United States, more than 6,000 people are employed in manufacturing that is dependent upon recycled plastic for feedstock in the production of consumer-ready goods. Working in sixty separate facilities across the region, these businesses annually contribute \$3 Billion in added value to the domestic economy.

Plastic packaging's environmental sustainability lies in its ability to be recycled. No plastic polymer is so sustainable that it should be used only once and thrown away. Over 1,440 million pounds of postconsumer PET and 981 million pounds of postconsumer HDPE were recycled in 2009. Domestic PET processing capacity will increase by 50% in 2011 alone.

The use of degradable additives in plastic packaging is not helpful in the reduction of marine debris. Plastic packaging is a serious and key component of the marine debris problem. While the addition of degradable additives should increase the speed in which that material breaks into pieces, those pieces do not biodegrade into a natural component of marine life. By reducing particle size, risk of ingestion by marine life may not be reduced and are possibly exacerbated.

The application of degradable additives in plastic packaging is not a viable solution to litter control. Littering is neither an acceptable nor a legal material management method. To intentionally design consumer packaging for litter compatibility is illogical and counterproductive. The SERDC supports efforts to reduce litter through education and enforcement.