

# Biodegradability – just another form of disposal?

Meadhbh Bolger, Friends of the Earth Europe  
and Rethink Plastic

“Fighting marine litter: The contribution of  
plastics which are biodegradable in the marine  
environment”

European Parliament, June 2018





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# Main points

- **Technical issues related to marine biodegradability**
- **Consumer confusion and greenwashing**
- **What's happening in EU policy and our recommendations**



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# Confused?

**Bioplastics**

**Bio-based  
plastics**



**Oxo-plastics**

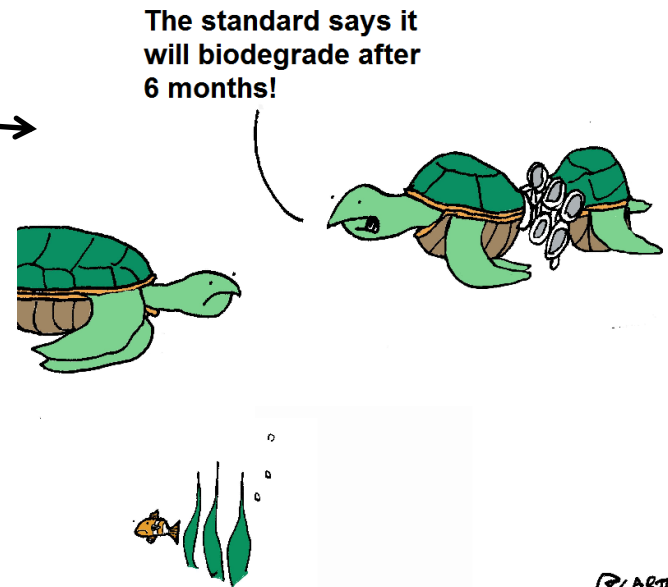
**Biodegradable  
plastics**



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# Technical issues related to marine biodegradability

- Marine environment is highly variable
- Potential harm during biodegradation timeframe
- Difficulty developing biodegradability standards that are completely safe
- Finished products not tested
- What if it accidentally ends up in a different environment?
- Existence of standard = pull of the market



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# Consumer confusion and greenwashing



**vegware™**  
packaging made from plants



# What's happening in EU policy

- *“The adapted definition of plastics should therefore cover....bio-based and biodegradable plastics regardless of whether they are derived from biomass and/or intended to biodegrade over time.”* 😊
- Harmonised rules for defining and labelling; Criteria for use, possible applications 🤔
- Potential setting of a standard for biodegradation of certain single-use plastic products in the marine environment leading to exemption of these products from marketing restrictions 😱

# **Our recommendations**

- **Prioritise absolute reduction in plastic production and consumption**
- **Do not develop European standard for marine biodegradability**
- **Stricter rules on marketing and labelling of other biodegradable plastics**

**LET'S RETHINK PLASTIC**



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