

# AfOR '*call to action*' for Local Authorities to improve biowaste quality

**AfOR urges Local Authorities to improve the quality of biowastes collected.**

## The importance of biowaste quality

- The quality of source segregated biodegradable wastes (biowaste)<sup>1</sup> delivered to composting and anaerobic digestion sites is an imperative to secure the production of high quality composts compliant with the PAS 100 specification, and high quality digestates compliant with the PAS 110 specification.

## Market acceptability

- The presence of physical contaminants such as plastics, metal, glass, sharps and other non-compostable / non-digestible items in biowaste collected and delivered to composting and anaerobic digestion sites can significantly undermine the quality of composts and digestates.
- This has the potential to significantly reduce the acceptability of composts and digestates in the market place. Farm assurance schemes, food retailers, growing media manufacturers and other end users of composts and digestates will not tolerate physical contaminants in composts and digestates, for example when these are applied to land grazed by livestock or on which crops are grown for human or animal consumption.

## Recycling performances

- The Scottish and Welsh devolved governments have already announced that waste materials that are sent to composting sites non-compliant with PAS 100, and AD sites non-compliant with PAS 110 will not be considered as recycled in the household waste recycling performance figures. Defra have also recently verbally confirmed that they will adopt the same approach in the near future. The Waste Policy Review released on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2011 confirms that composting is classed as recycling with respect to the waste hierarchy only if compliant with the Quality Protocol (hence, with PAS 100 Specification).

## The cost

- Removing physical contaminants from source-segregated biodegradable wastes delivered to composting facilities (e.g. via picking lines, wind sifting etc.) is costing the

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<sup>1</sup> Includes source-segregated garden wastes, food wastes and co-mingled food and garden wastes

industry an estimated **£15.6 million to £78 million per annum**<sup>2</sup>. The cost of landfilling the process rejects is in the range of **£12.8 to £ 19.1 million per annum**.<sup>2</sup>

- Gate fees should be varied according to input quality to recover the above costs.

## AfOR call to action

- AfOR emphasizes the need for improved input material quality from organic waste collections delivered to composting and digestion sites.
- Local Authorities have a crucial role to play in improving the quality of source-segregated biodegradable wastes collected and sent for composting and/or digestion.
- When implementing biowaste collection schemes, attention should be given to the quality of biowaste collected as well as the quantities achieved.
- Where physical contamination is present in biowastes delivered to composting and digestion sites, AfOR urges Local Authorities to consider ways to improve the quality of biowaste collected. These include but are not limited to:
  - improving the educational materials and messages that are made available to the householders;
  - communicating with composting and digestion operators and defining clearly their input specification in order to achieve the quality of output required by the site;
  - introducing ‘compostable’ / ‘home compostable’ liners or collection bags instead of plastic bags;
  - educating biowaste collection crews through visits to composting and digestion sites; and
  - taking actions to change the behaviour of those householders who do not follow the local authority’s instructions.
- Composting and digestion operators should agree and clearly define input material specifications in the contractual arrangements with Local Authorities. They must also check that each biowaste type is included in their authorization from the regulator to carry out a biological treatment process.
- Local Authorities and their contracted operators should also note that the PAS 100 Specification for composted materials and AfOR’s Compost Certification Scheme Rules require that:
  - care **shall** be taken to avoid any potentially polluting waste products or materials from becoming included with the input materials;
  - collection bags, liners, food packaging and cartons, or any other products made from biodegradable polymers that are not independently certified ‘compostable’ to standards BS EN 13432, BS EN 14995, or the other equivalent standards (see [AfOR’s short guidance on ‘compostable’ and ‘home compostable’ items](#) for a list of standards and ways to verify that products are really certified) must not be included in the biowaste collection service;

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<sup>2</sup> These figures are derived by AfOR’s consultation with members

- if biowastes are delivered for processing but include packaging that is not certified 'compostable' or 'home compostable', a pre-composting treatment step **shall** remove any non-biodegradable packaging prior to feeding biowaste into the composting process.