CONTAMINANT MANAGEMENT & COMPOST QUALITY

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Green Mountain Compost Facility

Constructed in 2010
Covered Aerated Static Piles
Typical aeration period: 6-8 weeks
What are contaminants?

Characterization and tolerance thresholds depend on what you’re trying to achieve

• Premium Quality Compost Products?
• Maximum Diversion from MSW stream?
• Animal Feed?
• Anaerobic Digestion Feed?
Compostable Plastics: a growing reality
The Dilemma

Poly Styrene Clamshells

Compostable Plastic (PLA Cups)

Who Knows?!?!
The History of Compostable Plastics at Green Mountain Compost

- Mid 1990’s – early compostable liner bags trialed at ICP

- Late 1990’s – foodscrap collection numbers grow as compostable liner bags began to replace traditional trash bags
The History of Compostable Plastics at Green Mountain Compost

- Early 2000’s – new to market “compostable” plastics emerge on scene
- 2006 – influx of compostable plastics begins, as larger partners buy into green marketing
The History of Compostable Plastics at Green Mountain Compost

- 2007-2008 – processing residuals awash in a sea of “compostable cutlery” that failed to compost.
  - Staff handpicks hundreds of thousands of forks, knives, spoons from overs piles
The History of Compostable Plastics at Green Mountain Compost

- December 2009 – implementation of ban on all cutlery from compost facility

- Fall 2010 – ICP/CSWD consider banning all compostable plastics following threat to organic certification of finished compost
The History of Compostable Plastics at Green Mountain Compost


- July 2011 – GMC decides to allow compostable plastics in feedstock mix, plans dual-stream composting at new facility in Williston.
The History of Compostable Plastics at Green Mountain Compost

- 2014 – GMC lifts ban on compostable cutlery following a lengthy study showing adequate degradation in our system
Pulling “Organic” out of Organics

 “Approved for use…”

 National Organic Program
  • Compostable plastics disallowed due to synthetic manufacturing process, regardless of residuals remaining in finished product

 Trace amounts of persistent herbicides allowed, compostable plastics not allowed
Pros and Cons of Compostable Plastics

**Pros**
- Reported greenhouse gas reduction in manufacturing
- Increased convenience
- Potential for increased diversion from landfills
- Compost promoting by major players
- Guilt-free disposal

**Cons**
- Zero benefit to quality, volume of finished product
- End of life issues - Cart before the horse
- Mistrust of manufacturers
- Aesthetics/Handling
- Increased contamination
- Confused Consumers
- Varying degradation rates
- Guilt-free disposal
More compostable plastics = More contamination
Curbside Organics Collection in Toronto, Canada

Collected foodscraps per household per year

- **Pounds**
- **Waterloo**
- **Kingston**
- **Peel**
- **Simcoe**
- **Dufferin**
- **Durham**
- **Halton**

- **Paper Bag Only**
- **Compostable Plastic or Paper Bag**

Questions?

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