



## **Degradable Additives and Innovation – The PFSA's position.**

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Plastics are equated with innovation and contributing to our modern lifestyle. For two decades at least, the plastics industry has been at the forefront of developing the technologies and infrastructure that allow us to recycle many of today's plastics. Many widely used plastics — such as bottles of every shape and size, food jars, bags, wrapping and containers of all sorts, automotive parts and general consumer goods and even old bill board materials - can be, and are, recycled into useful new products such as new packaging, clothing, decking, agricultural and building products, carpeting, and new consumer goods. Plastics products are used in innovative and important ways every day like helping to lightweight vehicles, saving fuel and greenhouse gas emissions, protecting food and helping to save lives using plastic medical devices that are essential to health.

And the story of plastics innovation doesn't stop with these "first" uses of plastics. Increasingly, plastics can be and are recycled at the end of their "first life," going on to live a second life and more. A plastic bottle can live again as a fleece jacket or a duvet; a plastic bag as a park bench or as building sheeting; or a plastic milk jug as a plastic pipe.

Degradable additives (such as oxo-biodegradable additives) are one of the newer innovations in the world of plastics. Conceptually, these additives are intended to help plastics that find their way into the environment, or a solid waste facility, break down into components more quickly than they otherwise would. While we applaud the intention and the innovation behind it, we believe there are currently a number of concerns about the potential impacts of degradable additives in plastics that deserve serious consideration and evaluation of the data.

### **What are some of these concerns?**

Degradable additives could weaken "first use" products or shorten the useful life of plastics. They could negatively impact the performance of plastic in its second use, after recycling. Products that are touted as "degradable" could actually encourage littering and there is considerable doubt that the degradation process does continue when the product is land filled. A similar comment applies when plastic litter is not subject to the conditions required to aid or complete degradation.

Recycling, and ongoing innovations in the use of recycled plastics and in plastics recycling itself, is important to South Africa, the Plastics Federation and the SA Recycling Industry that has invested millions and that employs many thousands of people both directly and indirectly and that upgrades their skill levels. Recycling is a cornerstone of the National Environmental Management Waste Act .We support development of appropriate testing protocols and quality data to substantiate claims that degradable additives will not impair the first use of the plastic product; impede the collection or processing of plastics for recycling; or reduce the performance or useful life of products containing recycled plastics. Right now such data is not available in the detail required so we remain concerned.