

Innovation and challenges in composting plastics

8 January 2019

In the run up to OUTLOOK™ India, we caught up with Naturework's Eamonn Tighe on plastic recycling and the opportunities and challenges brought by compostable plastics

You will present at [OUTLOOK™ India](#) on compostable polymers. Can you elaborate on new possible applications in this sector?

The opportunities are growing on a weekly basis. Everything from developments in coffee & infusion, food service to growing developments in 3D printing, even durable white goods. And of course the medical and hygiene sectors! The conference will also allow for valuable discussions around renewable sourcing and performance in addition to composability. I will discuss this in much more detail during my paper in Delhi.

How aware do you think the average consumer is of the different types of composting (i.e. industrial vs. home)? Can the industry do more to raise awareness?

In general, not very and it really depends on the geography. For sure Industry can assist in developing some 'joined up' thinking on this. There is a great opportunity to build on the fact that consumers are becoming more educated and demanding manufacturers and brands do a better job of disclosing components. A good example here is how most consumers think that 'soft' diapers are cotton when they are generally polyolefins.

Recently, EDANA, on behalf of the nonwoven producers amongst its membership, issued a pledge to significantly increase the use of recycled PET. Is this part of a general trend and if so is it moving fast enough? Which regions are leading?

This is of course great news and must be encouraged. But we shouldn't forget the contribution that renewable raw materials can also make. To solve the disposal issues with plastics, and to continue being able to take advantage of their performance and benefits they offer, it will take a portfolio of options. This is the beauty of the circular economy approach.

What innovations from outside your own company excite you as a consumer?

The broader awareness of the absolute need for using more sustainable products is exciting. As someone who is passionate about the use of sustainable materials, the fact that more and more brands, retailers and in general the complete supply chain are stepping up and innovating with regards to sustainability now being a key driver.

