

Frequently Asked Questions



What is BioMass Packaging®?

BioMass Packaging is a line of sustainable, compostable, bio-based foodservice disposables created from renewable agricultural sources like sugarcane, reed, bamboo, palm, eucalyptus, corn, and other renewable resources.

BioMass Packaging, a division of Excellent Packaging, is an environmentally responsible and attractive replacement for industry standards such as Styrofoam™, Polystyrene, PET, and other non-renewable petroleum-based products.

In the past, all foodservice packaging was considered equivalent; selected for its presentation and ease of use. But as the negative effects of using petroleum based products, such as polluting groundwater, increasing greenhouse gases, and dumping non-degradable materials into our landfills and waterways, have become apparent, reducing these environmental consequences has gained in importance.

BioMass Packaging by Excellent Packaging is an excellent way to care for the environment without losing the convenience, performance or aesthetic appeal of traditional packaging materials.

What about recycling plastic?

The U.S. has a mature recycling system that works well for some materials but not for plastics. According to figures from the EPA, we recycle less than 1% of the total plastic waste we generate. We do better with PET, the plastic commonly used in drinking water bottles with almost one quarter being recycled. But that still leaves almost 3.2 billion pounds of PET ending up in our landfills.

If PET containers were replaced by bio-based compostable bio-plastics such as Ingeo™ (PLA-poly-lactic acid), then even if those new bottles were not recycled or composted (yes, they are recyclable!), they would still not become the permanent pollution problem that PET is now.

Why BioMass Packaging?

The BioMass Packaging program of sustainable foodservice disposables offers a comprehensive alternative to the use of non-renewable plastic packaging. Most products in this program are:

- Bio-based
- Sustainable
- Renewable
- Compostable

BioMass Packaging is made from renewable agricultural crops and residual agricultural waste; each of which is recognized as a green energy source and a sustainable replacement for non-renewable greenhouse gas producing fossil fuel-based packaging.

What products are available right now?

New bio-based products are continually being introduced into the marketplace. Currently, the BioMass Packaging line offers BagasseWare® pulp and fiber based products to replace Styrofoam, Ingeo vegetable starch plastic to replace traditional clear plastic for cold food use, SpudWare® to replace oil-based plastic cutlery, Ecotainer® white paper hot cups and soup containers lined with compostable Ingeo, Natural paper hot cups lined with Ingeo, EcoSafe® compostable waste bags and can liners, NatureFlex™ clear cellulose-based sandwich wraps and bags, unbleached paper products such as napkins, bags, and sanitary paper made from sugarcane bagasse or recycled paper and Tulsack™ shopping bags made from 100% recycled paper, 95% of which is post-consumer recycled.

How does Bio-based packaging affect greenhouse gas emissions?

The materials used are from bio-sources and **carbon neutral**. Even when burned, the carbon released is equal to that absorbed from the atmosphere by the plant during its growth. If it is composted, much of the carbon will be fixed in the compost; replenishing the soil to assist plant growth instead of being released into the atmosphere.

What is Ingeo (PLA) vegetable-starch plastic?

NatureWorks® Ingeo biopolymer is an attractive clear plastic used for cups, deli containers, bowls, and hinged containers that is produced from domestically grown nonfood grade #2 dent corn; designed for cold applications; not tolerating temperatures over 120°C.

The basic raw materials for NatureWorks Ingeo biopolymer is dextrose; a natural sugar derived from the starch in corn kernels, or other vegetable sources, carbon dioxide, and water. NatureWorks Ingeo uses up to 100% fewer fossil resources in its manufacture than conventional plastics. It can completely compost back to carbon, water, and organic matter; helping to maintain the balance of nature.

What is BagasseWare?

Sugarcane bagasse is the waste fiber that remains after sugar is extracted from the sugarcane. Historically this waste has been burned in the fields, however, now it is a valued raw material for takeout food packaging.

BagasseWare is foodservice packaging made from bagasse as well as reed, bamboo, palm and other fibers. It tolerates high and low heat can hold wet or dry food as well as be frozen, microwaved or baked. It's the most cost-effective and carbon neutral replacement for all varieties of fossil-based plastic plates, cups and containers.

What is SpudWare?

SpudWare is a bio-plastic made primarily from plant-derived materials and natural fillers. The bio-based resin used to make SpudWare available in 6" and 7" utensils (knife, fork and spoon), and 6" sporks, SpudWare® will tolerate boiling water while maintaining its integrity.

What is the difference between compostability and biodegradability?

Compostability is the ability to biodegrade in a managed process; producing useful compost within a 180-day period. (California bill AB 1972 prohibits the use of the word "compostable" unless the food packaging product described has been tested to meet ASTM Certification.)

Biodegradability is a term used to indicate that a substance will break down into pieces small enough to be eaten by microorganisms. "Biodegradable" has been commonly used to describe natural products that typically take longer than 180 days to degrade. (California bill AB 1972 prohibits labeling any food or beverage container "biodegradable" or "degradable".)

Does BioMass Packaging need to be shredded prior to composting?

Municipal compost is usually shredded prior to composting. Uniform piece size is important for compost to process uniformly. The home composter may not be in the habit of shredding compostable waste, but complete composting will occur more rapidly if the material is shredded.

Sustainability: Why should I buy compostable packaging if it is not being composted?

The value of sustainable, renewable, compostable packaging is not diminished if it is not composted. The amount of carbon released from products made from biomass is equal to the carbon fixed in the plant as it grew. As plants grow they absorb carbon from the atmosphere only to release the same amount when burned or composted. This renewable system becomes even more valuable when waste products from local agricultural production are utilized to make the packaging.

Is BioMass Packaging more expensive than traditional packaging?

The price of products in the BioMass Program can cost more or less than traditional fossil fuel-based packaging depending upon the specifications of the products being replaced; Clear Cups, BagasseWare plates, and SpudWare are all competitively priced. Clear hinged containers and paper hot cups with

compostable Ingeo lining cost more than their counterparts, as do compostable can liners.

Price differences will tend to lessen as bio-based packaging becomes more widely used and the price of oil continues to increase. BioMass Packaging products have shown very stable pricing over time and we expect that trend to continue. Most price comparisons fail to take into account the added benefits of BioMass Packaging and the environmental cost of the continued use and disposal of fossil fuel-based packaging. Because BioMass Packaging is made from renewable agricultural sources, it reduces greenhouse gasses and landfill space and it cuts our dependence on foreign oil and imports. It provides industry with a product that is convenient, sustainable, and appealing to consumers who are becoming more aware of the negative impacts of petroleum based plastics and want to avoid these negative disposal consequences without giving up the convenience of disposable packaging.

What is a bio-based economy?

We currently are a fossil fuel based economy. Sources of fuel, heat, fertilizer, packaging, and clothing are primarily fossil fuel based. A bio-based economy generates the means to support our lifestyle from local sustainable carbon neutral sources. Every year we destroy or mismanage tremendous amounts of biomass in the form of forest trimmings, wheat and rice straw, sugarcane bagasse, and much more.

Utilization of these natural resources for packaging will create a system of managing the biomass that is good for our economy and environment. The "win-win" solution of utilizing agricultural waste for packaging eliminates the need to dispose of agricultural waste by burning, burying, or allowing it to rot in fields and wetlands.

When you support the BioMass Packaging line of sustainable and bio-based foodservice packaging, you are creating the demand that will promote local production of compostable, sustainable, and bio-based foodservice packaging. Local production will also reduce transportation costs.

To see our complete line of BioMass Packaging® products visit biomasspackaging.com. Or call our office at (800) 317-2737.



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