

Problems with “Compostable” Plastics

In Oakland, food vendors are not allowed to use “compostable” plastic (CP) foodware, (also called “bio-plastics”, “biodegradable”, or “made from plants”). Here’s why:

Environmental Impacts



- CPs may contain petroleum-based materials, even if the label says they’re “plant-based”.
- CPs contribute to microplastics and other toxins in our ecosystem.
- When landfilled, CPs generate methane – a powerful greenhouse gas that contributes to global climate change.

Health Effects



- Food crops, such as corn and potatoes, are being turned into single-use CPs instead of feeding people or animals.
- CPs can contain harmful chemicals such as phthalates that may leach into your food, beverage, body, and the environment. Phthalates have been linked to cancer and reproductive health issues.

Operational Inefficiencies



- CPs do not fully break down in commercial compost operations, leaving behind semi-processed CPs in the finished compost – see photo below (not ideal for gardens).
- In Oakland, CPs are not allowed in the COMPOST because they act as contaminants. CPs are also not allowed in certified-organic COMPOST.
- In Oakland, all CPs belong in the TRASH and food vendors are not allowed to use CP foodware.



These “compostable” plastic utensils went through a commercial composting process and finished with little change.

Source: StopWaste



Rules are tied to the City of Oakland’s Reusable Foodware Ordinance.

Learn more about the law here:

www.OaklandRecycles.com/laws/#reusables

