

Press release

Renewable Carbon Initiative (RCI)

www.renewable-carbon-initiative.com

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Reusable – yes, absolutely!

If there is a system change, then do it properly: without crude oil. New reusable systems only with raw materials from biomass, CO₂ and recycling!

The Renewable Carbon Initiative (RCI) supports the ban on single-use plastics for a range of applications such as cutlery, plates or straws, but also wet wipes and ear cleaning sticks, which came into force throughout the European Union in July. The systems change, from single-use to reusable, reduces resource consumption and plastic flows to the environment, where they turn into microplastics. It requires significant efforts in terms of technical developments, standardisation, logistics and investments. At the same time, however, a start should be made on phasing out fossil fuels completely.

Michael Carus, the founder of the initiative: “Fossil carbon, from which also 99% of plastics are produced today, is the main cause of manmade climate change as it leads finally to the emission of additional CO₂ into the atmosphere. If we now want to introduce new, sustainable and future-oriented reusable systems for packaging and catering, these must not be based on virgin crude oil and thus introduce more and more fossil carbon into the atmosphere. Especially since today almost all plastics and many other materials can just as well be obtained from biomass, CO₂ and recycling. The system change must not happen on the basis of petroleum - no one today would think of relying on petroleum for a new concept in mobility. And it should be the same for plastics!”

The companies that have joined forces in the RCI can already offer a variety of solutions here, the further optimisation and general expansion of which should be supported. For example, reusable catering boxes as well as reusable cutlery and plates can already be made from polyethylene (PE), which is no longer based on petroleum but on biomass, CO₂ or recycling. In concrete terms: PE is already produced from sugar cane, from used cooking oil by the company NESTE (Finland) and from the exhaust gases of steelworks that contain CO₂, CO and hydrogen by the company LanzaTech (USA). Numerous companies also offer high-quality PE recyclables.

Polyesters, too, can soon be produced from renewable sources. From 2023 onwards the Finnish company UPM will produce wood-based MEG at its new biorefinery in Germany; MEG is an important precursor for polyesters like PET and PEF. In the same direction, Cosun Beet Company (the Netherlands) is actively working on the ambition to valorise their sugar beets into MEG.

The high-performance polymers of the German company Covestro and the US company DuPont Biomaterials, which are suitable for high-quality reusable systems, can also already be produced from biomass and CO₂, at least in certain proportions. A variety of non-fossil plastic solutions derived from organic waste are offered by the Israeli compounder TripleW.

But even where reusable solutions are not possible, as in the case of wet wipes, they can already be produced 100% bio-based without compromising quality. This is demonstrated, among others, by the Austrian cellulose fibre producer Lenzing and the German Nivea manufacturer Beiersdorf, which uses only plant-based fibres for their facial cleansing wipes.

In conclusion, where reusable solutions are possible, they are definitely to be preferred. Therefore, the RCI supports the new law, but suggests policy makers to go one step further: All new concepts must be free of fossil carbon - using biomass, CO₂ and recycling!

By the way, all mentioned companies are members of the Renewable Carbon Initiative and are serious about climate protection in the chemical and plastics industry. You too can become a member: www.renewable-carbon-initiative.com

Disclaimer

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The Renewable Carbon Initiative (RCI) was founded in September 2020 by eleven leading companies from six countries under the leadership of nova-Institute (Germany). The aim of the initiative is to support and speed up the transition from fossil carbon to renewable carbon for all organic chemicals and materials. www.renewable-carbon-initiative.com

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