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From Blue Planet, to taxes on unrecycled plastic, and a plastic waste export ban, Britain has been a world leader in highlighting and tackling the plastic pollution crisis.

Yet this month (October) the British Standards Institution (BSI) enacted a new specification (PAS9017) which supports plastic materials which require additives to degrade to be sold on the UK market.

These plastics bear remarkable similarities to oxo-degradable plastics which will be banned across the EU from next year¹. These materials contain additives that accelerate the conversion of macroplastics into microplastics after months or years of laying in the open.

Increasing evidence is showing microplastics entering our food chain through animals, fruits and vegetables. The full health implications of this are yet unknown, as are the cascading impacts on soil health and biodiversity.

This does not solve the global problem of plastic pollution but worsens it and by misusing the term biodegradable, this plastic provides the public with a licence to litter.

Recycling facilities are unable to differentiate between conventional plastics and these doctored alternatives. This renders recycled plastic useless as it is contaminated with additives designed to degrade it.

This plastic will also find its way into composting and biogas facilities, causing severe financial damage to the sector, and make it harder to produce high quality composts and biofertilisers.

Furthermore, British companies that take up these materials could find they are unable to export their products to the EU once the ban comes into force in 2021.

The UK voted for the EU ban when it was proposed in 2019. Failing to act now could turn Britain from a leader into a laggard in fighting the plastic crisis.

For these reasons, we call on the Government to protect our environment, protect our food production, and protect British business by banning these materials immediately.

Signed

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32019L0904&from=EN>