

Contact:

info@realschemes.org.uk

0207 981 0875



Compostables Labelling Guidance

How to identify certified compostable materials.

Aim

This labelling guidance has been designed for everyone. It provides clear information on how to identify independently certified compostable materials.

Renewable Energy Assurance Limited (REAL) developed a certification mark for the Compostable Materials Certification Scheme (CMCS) which it owns and administers. CMCS was introduced to pursue consistency in the way certified compostable products are labelled in the UK.

We have created a labelling scheme to help everyone identify independently certified compostable packaging and non-packaging items. This guidance provides details of what the labelling means. It will be updated when any changes have been introduced.

Worldwide, there are many other certification marks which are currently used to label independently certified compostable products. This guidance also provides a short overview of the certification marks you may come across when buying new products or when processing material at composting and anaerobic digestion sites in the UK.

Introduction to CMCS

As part of the drive to reduce use of single-use plastics we have turned our attention to the development of compostable materials which can replace single-use plastics.

Composting materials is a long, complex process. It is therefore very important that any claims of compostability we make can be substantiated by means of laboratory testing and independent assessment of the item's conformance to a standard for compostability that sets pass/fail criteria. Testing takes time and is an involved process carried out by specialised laboratories only.

We have developed certification marks which clearly indicate whether the certified product is suitable for home or industrial composting.

Independently certified products give confidence to the food and garden waste treatment facilities that the product is suitable for industrial scale composting, is certified compliant with a regulator accepted standard, and will not be counted as contaminants in EA permit conditions applicable to contaminant limits for delivered wastes or wastes prepared for feeding into their composting process.

CMCS Marking

Below you can see the certification marks we have developed for compostable materials certified under CMCS.

- Renewable Energy Assurance Ltd's certification mark for products certified as being suitable for industrial composting.



- Renewable Energy Assurance Ltd's certification mark for products certified as being suitable for home composting.



The 'Industrially Compostable' mark contains instructions for the consumer to 'check locally' for suitable disposal options, and also contains a unique product identifier code (starting 'UKIC'), which is printed within the certification mark boundary on the certified product. The product identifier code can be searched for on the CMCS website to check the product is certified.

Standards we are working with

We are working with several international standards for compostable product certification. CMCS allows assessment and certification of non-plastic and non-packaging compostable products to these standards.

CMCS Certification of home compostable materials uses the following standards:

- NF T51-800 'Plastics - Specifications for plastics suitable for home composting'

- AS 5810 'Biodegradable plastics – Biodegradable plastics suitable for home composting'

CMCS Certification of industrially compostable materials uses the following standards:

- EN 13432 'Packaging – Requirements for packaging recoverable through composting and biodegradation'
- EN 14995 'Plastics – evaluation of compostability – Test scheme and specification'

Tips

What to look for

- It is essential that we look for a recognised certification mark with a product identifier code alongside any claims of compostability. Products that display a certification mark without the produce identifier code, do not comply with the certification requirements and therefore should not be regarded as independently certified.
- The size and placement of the certification mark will depend on the certified product.
- On mixed material products with manually separable components the labelling should be clear on which components are compostable e.g. sandwich packaging with plastic windows – check if both the cardboard and its plastic window are compostable or if you need to separate them,
- Where there is no mark it is important that we draw this to the attention of the retailer, other business, NGO or public sector organisation concerned and ask for details of any certification. Where there is none, we must assume that the material is not compostable.

End of waste (EoW) rules for compost

- Any products not independently certified compliant with a standard specified in End of Waste rules is not allowed to be fed into composting process managed as per EoW rules. In the current, 2018 edition of PAS 100, these standards are BS EN 13432, BS EN 14995 and ASTM D6400.
- Any plastic residues greater than 2 mm in the compost will be counted as contamination, whether residue of compostable plastic or not.

Are the home compostable and industrial compostable marks interchangeable?

- Where an item certified as suitable for industrial composting is also certified as suitable for home composting, it can be accepted in industrial composting.
- Where an item is only certified as suitable for home composting it can be home composted but, according to current PAS100:2018 rules, cannot be accepted for industrial composting.

Key differences between standards

The certification criteria for home and industrially compostable products are very similar with due allowance being made for the much smaller mass of compost and reduced management standards that will be found in domestic processes.

Standard requirement	Industrially compostable standards EN 13432 and EN 14995	Home compostable standards NF T51-800 and AS 5810
Disintegration	Disintegration of the product within 84 days at a given test temperature profile resulting in a minimum of 90% passing through a 2mm sieve	Disintegration of the product within 180 days at a test temperature of approximately 25°C resulting in a minimum of 90% passing through a 2mm sieve
Biodegradation	Biodegradation of the product within 180 days at a test temperature of 58°C resulting in a minimum of 90% of that achieved absolute or by a reference sample	Biodegradation of the product within 12 months at a test temperature of 25°C resulting in a minimum of 90% of that achieved absolute or by a reference sample
Other		AS 5810 requires additional earthworm testing and NF T51-800 does not NF T 51-800 regulates the control of constituents: Constituents known to be, or expected to become, hazardous to the environment during the home composting process, besides the limits given in 6.2.2 for regulated elements, shall not be deliberately introduced into the plastic product intended to be designated as suitable for home composting

Other marks

There are other certification marks available for products placed on various markets globally, which may also be used for products placed on the UK market. Examples of these certification marks can be found below and are owned by different organisations.



'Seedling' mark for the European, Chinese, and Australasian markets – owned by European Bioplastics



'DIN-Geprüft' mark for the global market – owned by DIN Certco



'OK Compost' mark for the global market – owned by TÜV Austria

Where to verify their claims

Claims of certified compostability can be checked with REAL.

REAL polices the use of its certification marks and works closely with its certification bodies to monitor products placed on the UK market.

When any products on the UK market is brought to REAL's attention with claims of compostability, but no evidence of independent certification, we will contact the producer to challenge its claims of compostability.

For further information please visit
www.compostablematerials.org.uk

Contact:

CMCS (REAL), Brettenham House, 2-19 Lancaster Place, London, WC2E 7EN

Georgia Phetmanh, Schemes Manager
georgia@realschemes.org.uk

Justyna Staff, Head of the Certification Schemes
justyna@realschemes.org.uk

Twitter: @CompostableCert



In 2019 REAL achieved certification of its Quality Management System to the ISO 9001:2015 standard.

**Compostable
Materials**
Certification Scheme



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