

# Degradable plastic ban: Primary producers

June 2023

Western Australia's

## Plan for Plastics

Stage 2

### What is being banned?

Under Stage 2 of Western Australia's Plan for Plastics, the sale and wholesale supply of degradable plastics will be banned. This is a ban on the supply of degradable plastic material in any product within WA.

Degradable plastics, such as oxo-degradable and landfill-degradable plastics, contain an additive designed to encourage the plastic material to fragment more quickly.

This type of plastic is commonly found in disposable plastic products such as dog-waste bags, magazine covers and dry-cleaning sleeves. It may also be present in agricultural plastics including:

- mulch film or weed-suppressant film designed to be worked into the soil after use
- packaging for fresh produce designed to break up after brief use
- other uses such as wraps, covers and liners that are designed to degrade at end of life.

### When will the ban start?

The phase out of degradable plastics commenced on 1 March 2023.

A transition period of six months before enforcement will allow time for businesses to use up supplies and source alternative products.

**All products containing degradable plastics will be banned from 1 September 2023.**

### Why ban degradable plastics?

Degradable plastics contain additives that allow them to break up quickly under certain conditions. Although this feature was originally thought to address the plastic pollution problem, it has been demonstrated that the plastic fragments persist in the environment as microplastics and enter the food chain.

Degradable plastics contaminate recyclable waste streams and some of the additives they contain can be toxic to the environment.

The labelling or promotion as 'degradable' creates confusion and leads businesses and consumers to believe that they are making a more environmentally friendly choice, which is misleading.



## How will I know if plastic products contain degradable plastic?

Degradable plastic products may be difficult to identify. Start by following these steps:

1. Check whether terms like 'degradable', 'oxo-degradable', 'photo-degradable', 'landfill-degradable' or 'fragmenting' are used to describe the product. If so, it is likely to contain degradable plastic.
2. Look for the Australian Standard compostability certification logo. This indicates that the product is compostable and does not contain degradable plastic.



If you are still unsure, contact the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation [plastics team](#) for assistance.

## Other frequently asked questions

### ▶ How will the offence provisions apply to my agricultural business?

From September 1 2023 it is an offence for a person to supply a degradable plastic item. This applies to anyone in the supply chain, from the manufacturer to the consumer.

It will also be an offence for a person who supplies or manufactures degradable plastic items to give information that they know is false or misleading to another person about the composition of a degradable plastic item.

After 1 September 2023 the penalty for both offences will be \$5,000. We will initially take an education-first approach to compliance.

### ▶ I have already purchased a degradable mulch film for use in my horticulture business. Is it an offence for me to use these products on my land?

No. The ban applies to the *supply* of degradable plastics, not their use.

However, you will find that you will not be able to source products using this material after 1 September 2023 because it will be an offence for a manufacturer or supplier to supply it to you.

### ▶ I do not sell degradable plastic bags but I use them to package the produce I supply to market. Would this be an offence?

Yes. The ban applies to the supply of degradable plastic items rather than their use.

### ▶ I use biodegradable plastic packaging for the produce I supply to market. Can I continue to use this after 1 September 2023?

If the packaging does not contain additives to accelerate fragmentation, it is not a degradable plastic so is not affected by the ban. Guidance about identifying whether a plastic is degradable can be found in this factsheet.

### ▶ My supplier insists that the packaging they sell me is biodegradable or compostable, should I take their word for it?

If you suspect that the packaging may not be compliant with the ban you should ask for evidence from your supplier that the packaging does not contain an additive that promotes fragmentation.

If your packaging is compostable, it should meet the Australian Standards for biodegradability and composting. The relevant standards include AS 4736:2006 for industrial composting and AS 5810:2010 for home composting.

It is an offence for a supplier to provide false or misleading information about the composition of a degradable plastic item.

### ▶ How are degradable plastics defined in the regulations?

Degradable plastic is defined in the Environmental Protection (Prohibited Plastics and Balloons) Regulations 2018 as follows:

**Degradable plastic** is a “plastic that contains an additive designed to accelerate fragmentation of the plastic into smaller pieces under certain conditions, including exposure to light, bacteria or heat”.

**Biodegradable plastic** means “plastic that is able to be broken down by microorganisms into carbon dioxide, water, biomass and a mineral residue”, and excludes degradable plastics.

For further information, visit [Western Australia's Plan for Plastics](#) or contact our plastics team at [plastic-action@dwer.wa.gov.au](mailto:plastic-action@dwer.wa.gov.au).