



RENEWABLE RESOURCES & FOODSERVICE PACKAGING

Single-use products are a staple in our culture, and it is going to take a series of fundamental systems shifts before reusables at scale are a viable alternative for the foodservice industry. While we bridge to that future state, the materials we choose to make those single-use products from will matter more than ever. Using renewable resources to make these products represents a more responsible approach to resource use for single-use items, and is consistent with the principles of a circular economy.





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The Value of Renewable Raw Materials

Raw materials can have a significant effect on a product's overall environmental impact, which is why we pay close attention to them.

Renewable resources are natural resources, like plants, that are not finite and can be grown again and again. As plants grow, they build upon CO₂ already present in the atmosphere. Depending on the raw material and how it is grown and harvested, it may provide climate benefits by sequestering carbon from the atmosphere while still in its plant form.

And, depending on how they are manufactured and what other raw materials they are combined with, products made from renewable resources can be composted at the end of their useful life.

Non-renewable resources have none of these benefits, and using them to create products that are designed to be used once and discarded into a system that is not set up to recover them is at odds with the principles of circularity.

Composting

While the full environmental benefits of compostable materials are realized when they are composted, the common-sense benefits of using renewable resources to make single-use products are every bit as real when composting is not available.

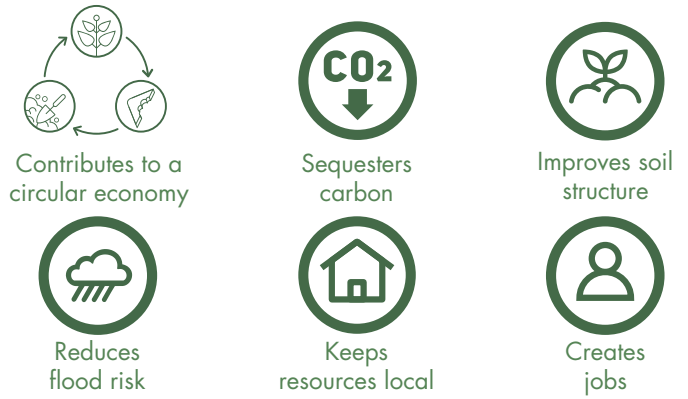
Composting is the natural process of recycling organic materials like yard trimmings, food scraps, and compostable packaging.

The end result of the composting process is a valuable soil amendment (compost) that helps reduce soil erosion, assists in stormwater management, promotes healthier plant growth, improves soil health, and assists in wetland reclamation.

According to the most recent EPA Municipal Solid Waste Data:

- Americans send more food to landfills than any other material.
- When that food breaks down in landfills it creates methane, which is over 80 times worse as a short term greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.
- When composting infrastructure is available, compostable products facilitate the diversion of food scraps from landfills because the food and packaging can go together into the same stream.

BENEFITS OF COMPOSTING



End-of-Life Recovery for Foodservice Packaging

The truth is that the overwhelming majority of foodservice packaging, regardless of what it is made from, is being landfilled today. One reason for this is that current recycling markets do not value many of the shapes and material types that are common in the foodservice industry, and that is not likely to change anytime soon.

Another reason is that food and food residue can be a contaminant in the recycling process, further lowering the market value of the material.

That same food and food residue that creates challenges for recycling is sought after in the composting process.

There is No Perfect Option

All single-use packaging options have trade-offs, and no solution will come without some form of environmental impact. Recycling and composting infrastructure is dynamic, and changes in what services a community has access to are likely to occur in both the short and long term. What we do know is that using renewable resources to make single-use foodservice items in a world where recovery options for both recycling and composting are limited will always make good sense.

Choosing not to use a product made from renewable resources because it cannot be composted is the very definition of letting the perfect be the enemy of the good. We can't solve our composting and recycling infrastructure challenges overnight, but we do have an entire set of renewable materials and the technology required to make perfectly good foodservice products out of them. Why not put them to use?



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