



Composting News

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Council adopts compost seal, degradable standard

By Ken McEntee

The U.S. Composting Council last month approved its proposed national compost quality program as well as the proposed logo for biodegradability.

At its meeting last month, the council's board of directors also officially changed the name of the organization from the Composting Council to the U.S. Composting Council.

Seal of testing

At the meeting, the board voted to pass a revised version of the proposed "Seal of Quality Assurance Program," in which a logo would be awarded to products that meet certain criteria.

Rod Tyler, field representative for the council, said the name of the program was changed to "Seal of Testing Compliance," since it more accurately portrayed that the product referred to passed testing criteria. Tyler said the name may be changed back to the original in the future as more work is done on composting standards.

Initially, the proposed logo program required a \$500 fee. That will be reworked into a tiered fee structure by the council's marketing committee.

Compost producers need to do

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How do residents compost?

"Piling it up" was the most popular method of home composting in a survey of residents of the metropolitan Portland, Ore. area. A survey of composters, done by the Metro regional government showed that one in five use more than one of the following choices. For more details about the survey, see page 2.



Use the "pile it up" method	43%
Made a bin/enclosure at home	31%
Used a bin from Metro	17%
Bought a compost bin from a store ..	13%
Bury it in the ground	10%
Worm bin	3%
Other misc./Don't know	3%

Organic growing reduces greenhouse gasses, study says

Regenerative agricultural management systems based on organic fertilizer can reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses, according to a new study by the Rodale Institute.

Findings from the 15-year study conclude that organic methods not only can preserve carbon and nitrogen in the soil, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also can produce the same yields as conventional systems that use synthetic fertilizer.

The new research was published in the Nov. 18, 1998 issue of *Nature*, the international scientific journal.

If the major corn and soybean

growing region of the U.S. were to adopt these organic practices the percentage of estimated annual carbon released into the atmosphere from fossil fuel combustion in the country could be reduced by 1-2

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Highlights

- Only 2 percent of bin-buyers stopped composting, Portland survey shows
- Florida biosolids composter won't go out of business after all, owner reports

Greenhouse

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organic practices won't solve the entire carbon dioxide emissions problem but said that the additional benefits of crop productivity make it an attractive proposition. Aside from requiring less energy to run than conventional systems - which further reduces emissions - implementing organic practices would lead to well-documented improvements in soil quality including soil fertility, water infiltration rates and holding capacity and reduced erosion.

The increased efficiency of nitrogen use could also significantly reduce agricultural impacts on water quality "These multiple benefits would have positive effects on agricultural yields, particularly during dry years, and at the same time reduce other environmental impacts," Drinkwater said.

Council

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three things to qualify for the certification:

- Do regular tests on their compost with the testing frequency depending on the amount of compost they produce.
- Use testing methods as defined by the council in its testing procedures manual - Test Methods for the Examination of Compost and Composting (TMECC).
- Provide directions for use on compost products. Tyler said even poor-quality, immature compost may have an appropriate use which should be specified to consumers. Program participants must offer directions for the use of the product at the point of sale.

The council plans a registry of participating companies that will be made available to potential

customers. The council also plans to promote the program to end-users through advertisements and other means. Tyler said the council will seek grants to help promote the program.

Depending upon what grants are secured, the council may begin pilot testing the program in several states.

A proposed timeline has the kickoff of the program and a national meeting on standards during the next year; narrowing down ranges of numbers relating to each test during the second year; and reaching a consensus on standards and publishing them during the third year.

Biodegradable logo

The proposed biodegradable logo program passed, pending the passage of the currently proposed standards by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).

Tyler said the ASTM standards,

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which are expected to be finalized within six months, will become the official standard test methods for the issuance of a seal.

Tyler said until then the council will search for funding and kick off the program and begin promotions.

The purpose of the program is to create a logo to identify plastic products that will compost in compost programs as well as paper bags do.

A subcommittee chaired by Steve Mojo, of Biocorp, developed the program. The subcommittee was made up of Sharon Barnes, Barnes Nursery; Pat Milner, USDA; Will Brinton, Woods End Research Lab; Gary Leatham, Cargill Dow Polymers; Ramani Narayan, Michigan State University; and Marci Muskin, DuPont Films.

Everybody is not happy about the standards.

Lee-Ann Henkel, of Technicoat Ltd., said the standards are geared to favor corn starch-based products at the expense of her company's bags, which are not based on starch.

Chapter affiliation

A committee was formed to create association bylaws that would allow a chapter affiliation system for interested state composting associations. The idea of tying state associations into the council as chapters was introduced to representatives of the states in October.

The jury is still out on the idea, but at least one group - the fledgling Georgia Composting Association has expressed interest in becoming a chapter of the council.

Tyler said another "all-state" meeting is planned at the council's annual meeting, Jan. 6-7, in New Orleans.

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Florida biosolids composter won't go out of business after all, owner reports

By Ken McEntee

Comp-Lete Foods, a Florida-based biosolids composter, will move its operations to a remote land-reclamation area by mid-1999, company owner Sherry Zendel said.

The company has settled a lawsuit filed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which would have shut the existing plant, in Nocatee, Fla., down at the end of this year. Zendel said she will negotiate with Disney World to compost its waste at the new site once everything is in place.

A final roadblock, which was unresolved at press time, was the insistence of Nocatee residents and DeSoto County commissioners that the current plant be ordered closed.

As reported in the November issue of *Composting News*, the company appeared to be on the verge of shutting down after plans to move to a former mining site were thwarted. However, Zendel said another site has been found and the lawsuit filed by the DEP has been settled, allowing the current plant to keep composting until July, when the new site is expected to be operational.

As reported in the September issue, Comp-Lete has been the subject of an apparent witch hunt in Nocatee, where residents have continuously complained of odors since 1996, even after numerous DEP inspections failed to find any odors or operational

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