

APE Europe Position Paper

Agricultural Plastics are Non-Packaging Plastics¹

The security of European food production depends on the continued use of agricultural plastics in the production process. Through the efficient control of essential crop and livestock parameters such as temperature, light, hygrometry, irrigation, weeds, pests, crop and fodder protection, agri-plastics have a **hugely positive agronomic effect**. Agri-plastics play an essential role in increasing the quantity and quality of Europe's food production, 60% of which would be put at risk without them. With such a significant and direct role in agricultural production, **agri-plastics can only be considered as non-packaging plastics**.

Environmentally Friendly

Agri-plastics also reduce the environmental impact of agricultural production since **fewer resources** are used, especially water and chemicals. They protect the structure of soils and by increasing the temperature and moisture of soils they promote the development of roots, foliage and fruits, producing higher yields and better harvests. Furthermore, agri-plastics improve the health of our livestock by improving the quality of their seeds and feeds through reduced contamination and growth of harmful mycotoxins in the fodder that is so essential for our livestock during the winter months.

End-of-Life Management

Nonetheless, a well organised agri-plastics end-of-life management policy is essential **to avoid any negative impact** on the environment after use. If agri-plastics waste is not properly managed, it may be left on the soil, buried, burned, or stored in unsuitable areas. Over time, exposed to the sun, degraded plastic waste may be carried away by wind and end up in rivers and oceans.

National collection schemes have accelerated in recent years.² Such schemes have produced remarkable results **in raising collection and recycling** rates of used agri-plastics. The governance is shared amongst the Plasticulture community (*farmers, distributors and plastic converters*), through specific industry-led collective initiatives operating under an Extended Producer Responsibility framework. Together, they finance the schemes, bringing economies of scale efficiencies to waste collection, supporting the recycling industry, ensuring a financially robust, reliable and sustainable circular economy, underpinned by the commitment of plastic converters to increase the proportion of recycled content in new products.

Legislation

The achievements made by our industry in the end-of-life management of used agri-plastics is widely recognised. From design to recycling, collaboration of the entire value chain has led to agri-plastics having one of the highest recycling rates of the whole plastics industry. This should be noted when considering new waste management policies. New taxes or restrictions of use, if applied to plastics used in agricultural production, will put at risk the circularity already in operation, undermine the sustainability for collectors and recyclers, and delay new investment in urgently required recycling capacity and technologies.

Non-Packaging Plastics

EU Member States are respectfully invited to take into account all these achievements, the unique role played by non-packaging agri-plastics in agricultural production, and the vital contribution agri-plastics make to the security of Europe's food production.

APE Europe is the professional representative body of plastics for agriculture in Europe. APE promotes the technical use of plastics in agriculture and the development of National Collection Schemes for used agri-plastics across Europe, while offering an information exchange platform to its members. Our members constitute 80% of the European Market for agricultural plastic films, bale nets and twines.

¹ Films (greenhouses, tunnels, bale wrap, silage sheets, mulching...), irrigation pipes, twines, nets...

² 80% of used non-packaging agri-plastics in Europe is under existing National Collection Schemes.