

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1981/09  
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to the Commission

Subject: Use of biodegradable plastic bags

A report by the Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling shows that 150 billion plastic bags are used in the European Union each year. According to scientific data, the burning of plastic bags releases dioxins, particles, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and other toxic substances which enter into the food chain. Furthermore, the fact that they are mixed with the other waste and recyclable substances slows down decomposition and compromises the recycling process.

Over the last few years research has led to the creation of substitute plastics, so called 'biodegradables'. In a bid, on the one hand, to reduce to a minimum the impact of packaging and packaging waste on the environment and, on the other hand, to avoid barriers to trade and distortions of competition, European standard EN 13432/EN 14995 sets out the basic requirements governing the composition and the reusable and recoverable nature of packaging in accordance with the provisions of Directive 94/62/EC<sup>1</sup>.

In view of the above, will the Commission say:

1. Does it use mechanisms, and, if so, which mechanisms, to check whether the 'biodegradable' bags circulating in the Community are in fact biodegradable and suitable for composting? Does it have specific information on cases in which bags have been found in circulation which were fraudulently claimed to be 'biodegradable'?
2. Is it aware of the good practices applied by Member States so that producers and consumers move towards more sustainable packaging products? Does it have any quantitative and statistical data on the spread of the use of fully biodegradable bags produced from raw materials such as starch?
3. Does it know whether the Greek authorities have taken measures to ensure that plastic bags are managed as waste and recycled?
4. What actions does it intend to take to promote measures to raise awareness, to prevent the creation of waste and to establish suitable quantitative and qualitative points of reference for recyclable products?

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 365, 31.12.1994, p.10.