Question for written answer P-006113/2018 to the Commission
Rule 130
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Subject: Maintaining incentives for innovation in the absence of EU standards on biodegradability

A recent Commission proposal for a directive seeks to reduce the adverse impact of single-use plastics and incentivise new innovation.

Given that there are no EU standards for biodegradability in place, manufacturers of alternative products are having to rely on other national and international standards in order to certify the environmental benefits of their products.

Some efficient examples of biodegradability labels include the Seedling certificate and the OK Biodegradable Marine certificate offered by the Belgian branch of the TÜV AUSTRIA Group, and those offered by the German certifier DIN CERTCO.

With no harmonised EU standard in place, how will the Commission ensure that there are sufficient incentives to develop innovative new products – which are made out of materials that are recyclable and free from microplastics, can biodegrade in industrial composting, and in marine environments in under a year, and are not toxic or do not cause other harmful effects to aquatic organisms – that can be sold on the European market as a replacement for single-use plastics?

Does the Commission intend to restrict innovation of this kind on the market – an approach that runs counter to the goals of the strategy on plastics?

If not, what action will it take to ensure that such innovation is not banned or limited because of the directive on single-use plastics?

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