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Plastics go green with biobag

by Michelle Ong, ANC

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MANILA, Philippines - We live in a plastic world. And we've all heard the "Plastic is bad for the environment" talk.

Most plastics are oil-based. A US research shows manufacturing plastics uses up to 10% of the oil supply in the world.

Not only do plastics increase the risk of global warming, it also takes a thousand years to degrade. Meaning, when we're finally done with plastics, they're about a thousand more years away from being done with us.

But all that could soon change with the biobag.



Sweetlink's Nelson Co told Mornings@ANC's "Going Green" that the biobag turns into compost or fertilizer in 45 days or less.

While the traditional plastic is made from polyethylene, the biobag is made from cornstarch called Matter-Bi resin. It's biodegradable and compostable. There are currently only 5 factories in the world producing Matter-Bi resins.

So what's the difference?

Co once and for all set the record straight. When a plastic is "compostable", that means it later on becomes compost or fertilizer.

"Biodegradable", on the other hand, simply means the matter degrades or breaks down into



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small components.

"The right term is actually 'bio-fragmentation', meaning it degrades into small pieces, fragments. But that doesn't help the environment at all," Co said. This is similar to sweeping dust right under the rugs.

Biobag: Get rid of me, and do it fast

The durability of the biobag is very competitive. It, however, loses its strength over time, which is a good thing considering the bigger picture of waste disposal.

When unused and kept at room temperature, the biobag has a shelf life of 8 months give or take before it starts breaking down into smaller strips and eventually tiny particles. In cooler and less humid areas, the biobag's life could extend up to 18 months.

The biobag also does not emit the same odor you get when burning a regular plastic. It also does not produce plastic filaments afterward.

The biobag has been tested to be non-toxic and digestible, wherein biobag particles were fed to sea turtles.

Being an organic bag, the biobag "breathes". So using the biobag to store produce will help keep them fresher for longer periods of time.

Afterward, the biobag can be used to store kitchen waste.

Since the biobag is porous, it allows the waste inside to dry up, making the environment unsuitable for microbes. In short, no microbes, no stink. As simple as that.

When done, the whole bag of kitchen waste can be thrown directly to the backyard... and after 14 to 45 days, you have an extra supply of fertilizer for that great gardening experience.

At what cost?

While a quick glance at the price list could easily tell you these eco-plastics are more expensive than regular plastics, with a going rate of P6 to P15 price for each biobag versus plastics worth a few centavos, Co encouraged the public to look at the bigger picture.

"The value of the biobag is not in the initial cost. It's in the composting. When you start composting, growing your own organic fruit... that's the value. Less waste, less landfill, less health problems. That's the real value of biobag. People have to start looking at this at the bigger picture," said Co.

He is also pushing for a shared effort among consumers, manufacturers, retailers and the government. The "not in my own backyard" mentality should be thrown out, he noted.

Aside from plastic bags, there are also Matter-Bi starch ware, biodegradable plates made from potato starch, starch cups printed with non-toxic soya ink, and bio-garbage bins.

Living in a plastic world isn't so bad after all. Especially when one has the license and the tools to get rid of them, and get rid of them quick!

"Going Green" is the weekly eco segment of Mornings@ANC. Hosted by Paolo Abrera, the segment features green-ventions and eco-projects. It airs every Wednesday.

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