

For Immediate Release

11th November 2005

SYMPHONY PLASTIC TECHNOLOGIES PLC

LECTURE AT ROYAL INSTITUTION

Michael Laurier, CEO of Symphony Plastic Technologies Plc gave the Ralph Anderson Memorial lecture yesterday (10 Nov) at the Royal Institution in London.

Speaking in the auditorium where some of the world's greatest scientists have announced their discoveries, he explained what oxo-biodegradable plastic is and what it can do. He said:

"Plastic is a familiar component of modern living, but whilst the benefits of low cost, light weight, strength, imperviousness to gas and water, transparency, sealability, and printability are highly regarded, the very strength and durability which makes it such a useful and economic material becomes a major problem when disposal is required.

Science has now found the answer to this problem at little or no extra cost.

If collected, oxo-biodegradable plastic products can be recycled, composted, incinerated with energy recovery, or landfilled, **but if not collected they will degrade and disappear, leaving no harmful residue.**

A small amount of a special additive is put into the manufacturing process of normal plastic, so that after it has reduced the molecular structure the plastic will be consumed by bacteria and fungi. The process continues until the material has biodegraded to nothing more than CO₂, water, and humus.

He explained that there is another type of biodegradable plastic, based on starch, but it is at least three times more expensive, it will not degrade unless in a microbial environment such as a compost heap, it cannot be used in fast machines, and it emits methane (a potent greenhouse gas) as it degrades. Nor is it really renewable, because it contains about 40% of an oil-based plastic, it uses a large amount of hydrocarbon energy to make the fertilisers and pesticides, to grow, harvest and transport the crops, and to power the autoclaves which polymerise the material.

Oxo-biodegradable plastic is now being used to make a wide range of products, including carrier bags, refuse sacks, wrappers, mulching films, bottles etc. and has been certified as safe for direct contact with food.

The length of time it takes for oxo-biodegradable plastic products to degrade can be 'programmed' at the time of manufacture and can be as little as a few months or as much as a few years. They can be vacuum-packed for delivery and will not degrade in the absence of air, until needed for use."

The lecture was organised by the Horners Company, the City Livery company founded in the Middle Ages by people who made products from animal horn – which is the original biodegradable plastic.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION contact Lynette King on 020 8207-5900

