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NAPCOR CALLS FOR RESTRAINT IN THE USE OF DEGRADABLE ADDITIVES IN PET PACKAGING

PET Trade Organization Has Yet to See Data to Substantiate Claims

May 28, 2009, Sonoma, CA -- The National Association for PET Container Resources (NAPCOR) today urged restraint in the use of degradable additives in PET packaging. NAPCOR, the trade organization for the PET packaging industry, is concerned that no data has been made publicly available to substantiate or document: 1) the claims of degradability of PET resin products containing degradable additives; 2) the effect of degradable additives on the quality of the PET recycling stream; 3) the impacts of degradable additives on the products made from recycled PET; and 4) the true impact on the service life of these products.

“We urge manufacturers of PET resin and packaging to refrain from introductions of degradable additive-containing products until data is made available for review and verification so we can better understand these products and their potential ramifications,” said Tom Busard, NAPCOR’s Chairman.

In 2007, 1.4 billion pounds of PET post consumer containers were recycled in the United States. The post consumer recycled PET infrastructure depends on the quality of the recyclate and its suitability for a variety of next-life product applications. The value of recycled materials, such as PET, is an important economic driver for curbside recycling programs throughout the country.

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“Without the testing and data necessary to understand the potential impacts of degradable additives in PET, it’s not an overstatement to say that they could potentially put the whole PET recycling system at risk,” said NAPCOR Executive Director Dennis Sabourin. “We don’t yet understand the impacts that these additives could have on the quality of the PET recycling stream, let alone the impacts on the safety and functionality over time of next-use PET products like recycled-content PET packaging, carpeting, or strapping.”

Aside from the potential impacts on recycling, NAPCOR questions the value of the concept itself. Whether or not it’s proven that packaging will safely degrade in landfills, or as roadside or marine litter, the value of the inherent energy used in the manufacture of plastic packaging is lost, not recaptured as it is through a recycling and re-manufacturing process.

“Even if a package were to disappear or fragment – and we’ve not yet seen this evidence – it would not make the package sustainable, nor does it provide any positive impacts in terms of greenhouse gas emissions or resource conservation,” said Mr. Sabourin. “Degradable plastic provides no useful nutrients to the soil, and the impacts to soil and sea of reducing the plastic to molecules using degradable additives is unknown.”

NAPCOR calls for restraint: proper testing and verification must be conducted before degradable additives are introduced into the consumer product stream. Moreover, NAPCOR calls on brand owners and decision makers to fully consider the impacts behind the use of degradable additives in light of the larger issues of sustainability, climate change and resource conservation.

Founded in 1987, NAPCOR is the trade association for the PET plastic industry in the United States and Canada. NAPCOR is committed to being the credible voice and champion of the PET industry; to facilitate solutions to PET recycling; and to provide education on the benefits of PET packaging.

For more about NAPCOR, or to contact NAPCOR staff, visit www.napcor.com.