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EU Plastics Strategy misses chance to fully embrace the benefits of bio-based and biodegradable plastics

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The European Strategy for Plastics, published on Tuesday by the European Commission, sets clear goals to curb plastic waste, increase resource efficiency, and to create job growth in Europe, but falls short on presenting a comprehensive approach by limiting the focus of the strategy on mechanical recycling. Concrete steps towards reducing the dependency on fossil feedstock by linking the circular economy with the bioeconomy and supporting innovative bio-based plastics solutions have been further postponed. The contributions of biodegradable plastics to a circular economy are recognised but concrete measures are still missing.

"Plastics made from renewable raw materials are a sustainable alternative for many plastic products", says François de Bie, Chairman of European Bioplastics (EUBP), the association of the bioplastics industry in Europe, and adds: "While the increase of recycled content in plastics is important to reduce virgin fossil feedstock, alternative sustainable feedstocks such as bio-based feedstocks need to be encouraged as well in order to defossilise the plastics economy." At the same time, the use of EU-grown biomass for the production of bioplastics would provide impulses for jobs and growth in the bioeconomy sector.

EUBP welcomes the importance the Commission has given to biodegradable plastics and their role in separate collection systems for organic waste in order to improve clean waste streams and recycling quality. "EUBP looks forward to collaborating with the Commission on identifying applications and measures to stimulate innovation and drive market development in this field", says de Bie and adds: "We also strongly welcome the decision of the Commission to restrict the use of so-called oxo-plastics in the EU and to make a clear distinction between biodegradable plastics and oxo-plastics that falsely claim to biodegrade."

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