

Keenan Recycling Case Study

The Problem

Keenan Recycling carried out a 'Quality Compost' project to reduce the level of plastic contamination within the compost produced through the in-vessel composting process. The main sources of plastic were identified to be from commercial food waste collections (especially when multiple establishments are sharing the waste service) and kerbside collections. Although the compost was complying with the PAS100 limits, there was still some 'visible' plastic and there were various risks identified, these mainly were around customer perception and the potential for plastic to build up and lead to a non-conformance.

What was done?

1. Don't bring contamination to site in first place

- Communicated with suppliers what materials are acceptable.
- Training with customers.
- Training materials/ information provided to council teams and facilities management teams to train and educate householders and staff.
- Clear labelling on bins, posters and leaflets.
- Food waste collection checks (drivers lifting lids on bins) and reporting contamination issues to customer through waste transfer notes comments.
- Feedback when loads part contaminated or rejected.
- Rejected loads procedure.
- Duty of care audits carried out at customer sites.
- Site tours of process for customers with an emphasis on contamination issues.

2. Remove contamination before it goes through process

- Ensure packaged waste separately where possible to allow it to be properly processed.
- Waste inspection and acceptance procedure.
- Loads spread in reception area and contamination manually removed.
- Litter picker for low level contamination.

3. Remove plastic from oversize prior to re-introduction to process

- Litter picker stationed at product and oversize belts when screening compost.
- Screening equipment with windsifter and magnet.
- Using windsifter when compost is as dry as possible.
- Picking station attached to screen to further clean up oversize.

4. Remove litter from around site

- Screening carried out outdoors and plastic can blow about causing litter.
- Regular litter picking around site.



FOOD & ORGANICS (COMPOSTABLES)

- Raw and Cooked meat ✓
- Fruit and Veg ✓
- Plate Scrapings ✓
- Coffee Grounds and Tea Bags ✓
- Bones ✓
- Blue Roll ✓
- NON-glossy paper ✓
- Skewers and cocktail sticks ✓
- Compostable cups and liners ✓

- Plastic ✗
- Metal ✗
- Glass ✗

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Results

All the above measures resulted in an improvement in the quality of compost produced with a reduction in the levels of visible plastic. The measures taken to prevent contamination arriving at the site were easiest to implement and most cost-effective way of minimising contamination. Measures to deal with the contamination in the compost were effective but more

resource intensive and costly.

Communications around quality and minimising contamination are on-going and must be carried out regularly to ensure that users of the organics recycling services are constantly reminded of the importance of keeping contamination out.

