



AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation
Waste Management & Prevention Division, Solid Waste Program
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AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOODS & MARKETS

Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets
Water Quality Division
Public Health & Agricultural Resource Management Division
116 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620
www.VermontAgriculture.com

December 27, 2021

RE: Food Waste and Potential Contamination

Dear Farm-based Compost Operations and Anaerobic Digester Operations,

The recent July 1, 2020 requirement to divert food scraps from the landfill in Vermont has increased the volume of food scraps and depackaged materials entering Vermont's composting and anaerobic digestion operations. As a participant in food scrap management, we want to provide you with the latest information we have on plastic contamination in food scraps and depackaged materials.

Contamination from inorganic packaging is a concern within the food recycling system, particularly particles and compounds that could impact organisms or the environment but can't be seen by eye, such as microplastics and coatings used in packaging and some single-use service ware products. Currently, there is a lack of information about the long-term and cumulative impacts of these substances on human health, livestock health or the environment when they are utilized in the landscape via compost or digestate. It is unknown what background levels already exist in the environment, or how compost or anaerobic digestate derived from these materials compares with existing environmental conditions.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (AAFM) are coordinating a sampling program focused on quantifying microplastics and PFAS (per and polyfluoroalkyl) compounds in raw feedstocks, finished compost, anaerobic digestate, and in soils. The Vermont Legislature passed a law granting the Department of Health (VDH) rulemaking authority to prohibit manufacturers from using PFAS chemicals in packaging sold in Vermont and the EPA has recently set out a roadmap to inform State regulation of GenX and PFAS compounds.

ANR and AAFM support gathering information to make informed decisions about the specific management requirements of food scraps. The Agencies will rely on the data from our sampling program and the guidance from VDH and EPA to ensure that the agricultural community, its land, and its products are not adversely impacted by managing food scraps. As the State implements the sampling efforts you may be contacted to participate in that process. We thank you in advance for your support and we will reach out directly as more information becomes available on this topic.

Should you have any questions, please contact either Morgan Griffith of AAFM (morgan.griffith@vermont.gov) or (802) 279-9395) or Josh Kelly of ANR (josh.kelly@vermont.gov) or (802) 522-5897).

Sincerely,

Cary Giguere Director,
Public Health, Agricultural Resource Management
Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Matt Chapman, Director
Waste Management and Prevention
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