



"Working for our members to be the voice of government on waste minimisation and recycling issues"

LOCAL AUTHORITY RECYCLING
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Paul Bretherton
Environment Agency
Richard Fairclough House
Knutsford Road
Latchford
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Cheshire
WA4 1HT

22nd January 2010

Dear Mr Bretherton,

Consultation Response – The Use On Land Of Compost-Like Outputs From Mechanical-Biological Treatment Of Mixed Municipal Solid Wastes

I am writing to present the LARAC response to the above consultation, which is given below, and I thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above consultation.

The comments below are sent on behalf of the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC). LARAC is an association comprising of the vast majority of the 440 local authorities across England, Scotland Wales and Northern Ireland whose waste management and recycling professional's co-ordinate and operate waste management services. Membership is drawn from all types of authority including statutory Waste Collection (WCA), Waste Disposal (WDA) and Unitary.

If you have any queries on this response or would like to discuss the matter further then please contact me on 01743 255936 or mark.foxall@shropshire.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Mark Foxall
Policy Officer



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In answer to the questions in the consultation document:

1. Does the guidance explain clearly how we regulate the recovery to land of compost-like outputs from the mechanical-biological treatment of mixed municipal solid wastes? (We refer to these outputs as MBT CLO.) If not, please what aspect(s) you consider not to be clear and why.

The majority of the guidance is clear, however it is unclear whether grazing land is included within the definition. Also the word 'future' used in the guidance is too vague and a quantified period of time should be considered.

2. Is the guidance clear about the additional information that operators will need to provide if they wish to carry out a trial? If not, please what aspect(s) you consider not to be clear and why.

Yes, the guidance is clear.

3. Are the technical standards and measures suited to carrying out large-scale trials in England and Wales? If not, please explain why.

LARAC is unqualified to answer this question and endorses the response provided by the Association for Organics Recycling (AFOR).

4. In Schedule 1 of the guidance we list the determinants (the key characteristics, including potential contaminants), to be measured in the MBT CLO, the soil and the crops. Is this list sufficient? If not, please identify any missing determinands that you consider should be included and why.

LARAC is unqualified to answer this question and endorses the response provided by AFOR.

5. Are the test methods that we specify for the determinands appropriate? If not, please identify the method(s) that you do not consider appropriate and why.

LARAC is unqualified to answer this question and endorses the response provided by AFOR.



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GREEN GLASS

6. Are the limits that we specify for the levels of determinands in the CLO appropriate? If not, please identify the limit(s) that you do not consider appropriate and why.

It seems that there is inconsistency in the concentrations of determinands proposed for CLO from MBT compared to those included in the proposed revision of BSI PAS 100. There should be consistency in the concentrations of determinands permissible for application to land regardless of whether the product being applied to land is CLO or compost. The determinand concentrations permissible should be based on the level of risk posed to agricultural land quality and human health, not the treatment method used.

7. Have we set appropriate Soil Limit Values for the levels of determinands in the soil? If not, please identify the limit(s) that you do not consider appropriate and why.

There should be consistency between the soil limit values set for soils that receive CLO from MBT and for soils that receive compost derived from other municipal waste streams.

8. In Appendix 2 we present the alternative limit values for metals in soils when wastes are applied to land. We refer to these limits as 'soil screening values' or SSVs. We present the derivation of these limits and some key arguments for and against their use. We also discuss the uncertainties with these SSVs and the statutory limits for sewage sludge.

What are your views on the SSVs and their technical basis?

Would they provide better protection of soil?

What practical problems would there be around their potential use for MBT CLO?

We would welcome references to other published scientific or technical evidence supporting or challenging these SSVs.

Please refer to the comments made at question 6 and the response to this question provided by AFOR.

9. Does the guidance clearly set out the scientific data and information that must be reported to us? If not, please explain why.

Yes, the guidance provided is clear.



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10. The guidance only applies to the outputs from treatment processes that include a biological treatment stage – aerobic composting or anaerobic digestion. Should our approach be extended to cover outputs from processes that do not involve biological treatment, such as the mechanical-heat treatment (MHT) of mixed municipal solid wastes through autoclaving? Please give reasons.

We believe that there is insufficient evidence to date to indicate that the outputs from autoclaving present health, safety or environmental risks. In general, the outputs from such plant have reduced levels of toxins due to the extreme temperatures involved. It would be appropriate to sample more of the outputs from such sites before adding additional regulation. The approach taken needs to be based on the risk posed to agricultural land quality and human health irrespective of the treatment method used.

11. In Appendix 3 we estimate the additional costs of collecting and analysing the prescribed samples for a typical trial, and how these may impact on the cost per tonne of CLO and on the cost per tonne of a typical crop. We have used reasonable but conservative assumptions on rates of CLO application and crop yield. Do you consider these to be reasonable and realistic estimates? If not, please explain why.

The estimated analysis costs are incredibly high and if correct are likely to prevent the application to agricultural land of CLO from MBT.

12. Any other comments?

A better evidence base is required for the determination of outlets for CLO from MBT. Against any negative impact of CLO application should be balanced the negative impact of landfilling that CLO or indeed landfilling that same waste source untreated. An unintended impact of reducing the options for application of CLO could be that the risk of potential harm could be increased.

What is concerning is the restriction to just one trial at any one time for CLO from a specified MBT plant, and the delays this will lead to in establishing a suitable evidence base.