

Regulation of Outputs from Composting Processes

Background

Composting is the autothermic and thermophilic biological decomposition and stabilisation of biodegradable waste under controlled aerobic conditions that results in a stable, sanitised material that can be applied to land for the benefit of agriculture, horticulture or ecological improvement.

This guidance sets out the circumstances in which compost produced from waste ceases to be waste and replaces SEPA's end of waste position of September 2004.

Regulation of Compost Outputs

Waste derived composts are normally regarded as wastes and their use is controlled under waste management legislation. However, if it complies with the guidance below SEPA will consider it to be fully recovered and not require waste regulatory control.

Note that in all cases the composts can only be used where their use will not pose a risk to human or animal health or the environment.

The use of the composts must comply with all other regulatory controls and must be in accordance with best practice. For use in agriculture, such requirements include:

- CAR Diffuse Pollution General Binding Rule (DP GBR)18: Fertiliser storage and application¹
- Prevention of Environmental Pollution From Agricultural Activity Code of good practice (PEPFAA code)
- Four Point Plan
- Nitrate Vulnerable Zones Regulations (NVZ regulations).

SEPA's End of Waste Guidance for Compost

SEPA considers that where waste derived compost production and use complies with the conditions listed below it ceases to be waste.

1. The facilities that produce the compost from waste must have the relevant environmental authorisation and operate in compliance with that authorisation.
2. The process and any compost produced must be certified to conform to the standards contained in BSI PAS100:2011 Specification for Composted Materials², the Additional Scheme Rules for Scotland and additional quality standard in Table 1.

Table 1: Quality standards and implementation timescale

Date	Parameter	Limit
From 1 December 2018	Plastic	0.08% (66% of current PAS100)
From 1 December 2019	Plastic	0.06% (50% of current PAS100)

¹ Information on the Diffuse Pollution regime including copies of General Binding Rules is available on SEPA's website at http://www.sepa.org.uk/land/land_publications.aspx

² A copy of the specification is available from the WRAP website: <http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/bsi-pas-100-compost-specification>

3. Input materials shall be source segregated biowastes and/or source segregated biodegradable³ materials. These include, but are not restricted to, the wastes listed in Appendix B of the Compost Quality Protocol⁴.
4. The compost must meet PAS100:2011 without having to be blended with any other materials including other composts, digestates, materials, products or additives.
5. The PAS100:2011 certification process must be carried out by a third party accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service to carry out this certification. (Composts from facilities which have not yet completed the certification process will be regulated as waste until full certification is achieved.)
6. Steps must have been taken to exclude potentially polluting or toxic materials or products from the feedstock. This includes invasive plant species such as Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and toxic species such as Ragwort and Yew.
7. The composts are produced for a specific market and must be used without requiring any further processing or recovery operations. (Use as a 'raw material' in a manufacturing/blending process is acceptable providing the certified compost is not mixed with any waste material.) They must not be used in quantities or reapplied on the same land at frequencies that will endanger human health and without using processes or methods which could harm the environment and in particular without risk to water, air, soil, plants or animals; causing nuisance through noise or odours; or adversely affecting the countryside or places of special interest.
8. The compost has been dispatched to the end user and there is certainty of use for that material. Compost which meets the conditions above but is being stored in intermediate storage (either on or outwith the site of production) with no identified end user will be regarded as waste.

Composts from processes which do not comply with the above conditions will be subject to full waste regulatory controls. Any compost that is subsequently discarded or mixed with other waste materials will also be subject to full waste regulatory controls.

Limitations

This guidance applies only in Scotland. The terms of this guidance may be subject to periodic review and be changed or withdrawn in light of technological developments, regulatory or legislative changes (including European end of waste criteria), future government guidance or experience of its use. SEPA reserves its discretion to depart from the position outlined in this statement and to take appropriate action to avoid any risk of pollution or harm to human health or the environment.

Useful Links:

For further information and guidance on good practice for the use of compost see:

[Land publications](#)⁵: information on the Diffuse Pollution regime including copies of General Binding Rules

[Agricultural waste](#)⁶: specific information relating to the management of agricultural waste

[PEPFAA Code](#)⁷: The purpose of this Code is to provide practical guidance for farmers and those involved in agricultural activities, including farm advisers, on minimising the risks of environmental pollution from farming operations.

[Guidelines for Farmers in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones](#)⁸: Guidance from Scottish Government providing step by step advice on all the rules that apply in the revised Action Programme for Nitrate Vulnerable Zones.

³ From PAS100:2011 "biowaste" is a waste of animal or plant origin which can be decomposed by micro-organisms, other large soils borne organisms or enzymes and "biodegradable" means capable of undergoing biologically mediated decomposition.

⁴ A copy of the Compost Quality Protocol is available on the Environment Agency website: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/sectors/142481.aspx>

⁵ http://www.sepa.org.uk/land/land_publications.aspx

⁶ http://www.sepa.org.uk/waste/waste_regulation/agricultural_waste.aspx

⁷ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/37428/0014235.pdf?lang=e>

⁸ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/12/12134339/0>