



Global Meeting Advances Transition to Certified Compostable Produce Stickers *Worldwide Leaders of Fresh Produce & Compost Industries Propose a Global Roadmap towards a Certified Compostable PLU Sticker Standard*

AUSTRALIA 9 October 2024 - An unprecedented agreement has been reached between the fresh produce industry and composting organisations to accelerate the transition to certified compostable Price Look Up (PLU) stickers. This intent was reached at a first-ever worldwide meeting in Niagara Falls, Canada, on 1 October, with the discussions leading to the agreement to develop a multi-phase framework to support this transition through the development and adoption of a global standard for compostable PLUs. The planned transition to certified compostable PLUs in the European Union (EU) by 2028 provides the added momentum to accelerate a worldwide adoption to this collective goal. Additional meetings within the fresh produce and composting sectors are planned in the coming months to expand engagement and finalise the action plan by the end of 2024.

"Moving to a certified compostable format for PLUs is a priority for organics recycling facilities," said John McKew, National Executive Officer, Australian Organics Recycling Association, and member of the International Compost Alliance (ICA). "The current plasticised format is not compatible with producing quality compost, nor can the stickers be easily removed during the organics recycling process and can result in the collected organics being sent to landfill or incineration, contributing to climate change, and diminishing a crucial resource to build soil health. Because of the global sourcing network for produce, the members of the International Compost Alliance applaud the produce industry in recognising the importance of this transition and its timeliness to ensure both our industries can positively contribute to food production and supply as well as take care of the health and well-being of our soils.

"CPMA is delighted to see the fresh produce and composting industries work together towards a global standard for compostable PLU stickers. Given PLUs are an integral part of global fresh produce supply chains, this global dialogue is a must," said CPMA President Ron Lemaire. "Accelerating the adoption of compostable PLUs is a global priority given the risk that compostable PLU requirements will increasingly diverge from country to country. The coming together of fresh produce and composting industries will help reduce the burden on complex fresh produce supply chains, while also ensuring that food waste is increasingly recycled into value-added products."

The meeting was jointly organised by the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) and the Compost Council of Canada, with the support of the Government of Canada. In-person and virtual attendance included representatives of the fresh produce industry, including members of the International Federation of Produce Standards – IFPS (the International Fresh Produce Association, United Fresh New Zealand, CPMA, Fruit

and Vegetable Growers of Canada), Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (OFVGA), as well as technical experts from leading global PLU manufacturers. The global compost industry was represented through the International Compost Alliance (ICA) with in-person representation from Australia, the United States, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Italy, the European Union, and Canada. Government representatives from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) were also in attendance.

The meeting provided a unique opportunity for the fresh produce industry and composting industry to better understand their respective positions on PLU stickers. This included the fresh produce industry outlining the critical role PLUs play in helping accurately and effectively identify fresh produce for enhanced traceability, inventory control and pricing at retail. The composting industry outlined the impacts of discarded PLU stickers accompanying fresh produce waste sent to organics recycling, including consumer-sourced, commercial, and business organic waste sources. Given most PLU stickers are currently non-compostable and difficult to remove, physically contaminating the organics recycling process and adversely impacting the finished compost quality and value, the meeting provided a strategic opportunity to identify a way forward which recognises each industry's respective priorities.

Through open and collaborative dialogue, industry representatives acknowledged the need to accelerate the development and adoption of certified compostable PLUs. Given the global nature of fresh produce supply chains, and the potential regional variability of industrial composting processing requirements, industry representatives acknowledged the benefit of working together to develop and adopt a single global standard for compostable PLU stickers that is compatible with compost standards around the world. It was also recognised that these efforts could help promote the increased recycling of organic materials, helping contribute to the reduction of food loss and waste.

Outcomes of the meeting included identifying a draft framework to move forward, including the draft elements of a global compostable PLU standard, comprised of compositional as well as in-field testing requirements. A draft multi-phased roadmap towards timely and global adoption of a standard that reflects the evolving global regulatory landscape was also identified.

Next steps include broader engagement of industry representatives with their respective regional and global counterparts to disseminate the meeting's key findings. This will include broader engagement with fresh produce stakeholders in the EU and other key markets where PLU requirements are rapidly evolving. A Compostable PLU Standard Action Plan will be developed and launched by industry stakeholders before the end of 2024, leading to actions to promote and accelerate the development and adoption of certified compostable PLUs starting in 2025.

For more information, please contact:

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About Australian Organics Recycling Association (AORA)

The Australian Organics Recycling Association (AORA) is the peak industry body and national voice for businesses across the organics recycling supply chain. AORA envisions a future where recycling and reuse of organic materials within a circular economy is widely understood and supported by all Australians. AORA works to facilitate an operating environment which maximises the recycling and reuse of organic materials, and promotes the benefits of compost, soil conditioners and mulches across the Australian community and business.

About the International Compost Alliance (ICA)

The International Compost Alliance is comprised of:

[The Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology \(REA\)](#)

[The Australian Organics Recycling Association \(AORA\)](#)

[The Compost Council of Canada \(CCC\)](#)

[European Compost Network \(ECN\)](#)

[International Solid Waste Association \(ISWA\)](#)

[CRÉ - Composting and Anaerobic Digestion Association of Ireland](#)

[WasteMINZ \(Waste Management Institute of New Zealand\)](#)

[The United States Composting Council \(USCC\)](#)

[The Compost Research & Education Foundation \(CREF\)](#)

The purpose of the alliance is for organics recycling organisations around the world to work collaboratively to maximise the recycling of organic wastes and advance the manufacturing of certified, high-quality compost to benefit the environment, society, and our members.

Currently, over 83 million tonnes of biowaste are recycled every year around the world. Not only does this recycle over 1 million tonnes of plant macro-nutrients, but, through storing carbon in soil and offsetting fertilizer use, it reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 9 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents – an equivalent of driving an average car for 36 billion kilometres (23 billion miles); almost 95 thousand times the distance between the earth and the moon!

Despite our current success globally, our annual potential could be increased over 12-fold if all the world's unavoidable organic residuals were collected separately and composted.