Should biodegradable food packaging be allowed in certified organic compost?

[Colorado organic fruit farmer Steve] Ela knows first-hand how central compost is to his organic farm—and all organic agriculture. It helps increase yields and the nutrient content of crops, reduce synthetic fertilizer use, and improve soil health and water retention, among other benefits. But he’s concerned that a new proposal to rewrite U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) compost rules could dramatically change the meaning of organic compost for farmers.

The USDA’s National Organic Program (NOP) currently requires compost to be derived from plant and animal materials, such as manure, food scraps, leaves, and straw. Newspapers or other recycled paper without colored inks are the only synthetic feedstocks allowed.

The proposal, filed by the nonprofit certification and advocacy organization Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) in November, asks the USDA to allow synthetic, biodegradable food packaging and service ware as a feedstock for certified organic compost produced at commercial and municipal compost facilities.

Follow the latest news and policy debates on sustainable agriculture, biomedicine, and other ‘disruptive’ innovations. Subscribe to our newsletter.

SIGN UP

Regardless of NOSB’s decision, it’s unlikely that many organic farmers will accept compost from facilities that take in packaging. “It’s not like organic growers are saying, ‘Hey, we want compostable synthetics in our compost.’ In fact, we’re hearing the opposite,” said Ela.

This is an excerpt. Read the original post here