



BioPak was recognised at the Stewardship Excellence awards 2022 for Excellence in Emissions Reduction through Product Stewardship for their Compost Connect initiative. Their initiative connects food service businesses directly with industrial composters, to divert food waste and compostable packaging from landfill and into soil improvement products that help to grow plants and therefore sequester carbon.

In awarding BioPak for the initiative, the judges commented that they were impressed with BioPak's approach to the design of its compostable packaging and to reducing methane emissions relative to food waste going to landfill, whilst cycling nutrients via compost. Judges noted that the application emphasised the need for a national, consistent approach to compostable packaging and food recovery.

Compost Connect is a product stewardship initiative designed to create a geographical map that allows food-service businesses that opt into the program to connect with organics recyclers. The participating businesses are provided with a starter pack, including customer education material, window signage, and a cardboard composting bin to kick-start their organics composting.

"One of the biggest challenges is getting accurate data," said Ms Maguero, Head of Sustainability at BioPak Global. "We introduce the two parties, then they connect and set up an agreement. To be able to track how many businesses have taken up composting their food waste and certified packaging, we created the map. It lists all the businesses that have used Compost Connect to find a recycler and when they come back to register on the map, they receive the starter pack."

Another emerging challenge for the initiative is the changing national landscape for organics recycling and the introduction of curb-side Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) bins. The changes mean certified compostable packaging will not be allowed in FOGO bins in some jurisdictions.

The compost Connect initiative has been rolled out across Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, and has diverted more than 2000 tonnes of organic waste from landfill, has created more than 1460 tonnes of compost and has avoided 1060 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. BioPak has also reduced its own emissions through more sustainable material selection for their products and through the sourcing of renewable energy for their facilities.

When talking about BioPak's own carbon reductions and sustainability efforts, Ms Maguero, said "there's been a real evolution. One example is PLA lids. PLA is a bioplastic that is compostable but needs to be industrially composted and takes quite a bit of energy to manufacture. We're transitioning to pulp lids which are PFAS-free, home-compostable, potentially recyclable and have a lower carbon footprint. We also used to sell a lot of PLA cutlery, and we realised wood cutlery has a negative carbon footprint. As a result, we've been moving our cutlery to wooden products. It's something that we've pushed that has been helped by the single-use plastic bans."

"It's definitely a very significant achievement for us," said Ms Maguero, when asked about winning the award. "We've always been committed to sustainability and being a responsible company. We feel it recognises our efforts to minimise our carbon footprint and the impact we have on the environment, from both a material and end-of-life perspective. We hope that this will inspire other companies like us to take responsibility for the end-of-life of their products."