



Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) Position Paper

Key Considerations

1. AORA and the recycled organics industry is committed to generating high-quality compost outputs that promote the protection of the environment and human health.
2. Minimising contamination in feedstock is critical to enable efficient and effective processing of organics into high quality end products.
3. AORA supports a national target of less than 2% contamination in source separated Organics.
4. Consistent education and messaging across Industry, Councils and Government is vital to achieve behaviour change and support a sustainable Organics industry.

Who We Are

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.

Introduction

This document has been prepared by AORA to provide a guidance framework for the key issues and considerations for the recycled organics industry throughout the transition from household Garden Organics collections to the mandated Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collections, and the delivery of Food Organics (FO) and FOGO collections for businesses by 2030¹. It works in concert with

¹ National Waste Policy Action Plan 2019 (updated 2022), Action 6.04.

AORA's national strategy roadmap, *Vision 2031: The 10 Year Roadmap for Australia's World Leading Organics Recycling Industry*, which states:

Amongst those ambitious objectives is a national target of less than 5% of organic waste to landfill by 2031. This document also addresses the greatest industry challenge, which is contamination of the feedstock. AORA supports a greater state and national focus on systemic and behavioural improvements to achieve better source separation. We support national bans on all non-compostable single-use plastics and persistent chemicals – the sooner the better. Above all, this industry vision calls for genuinely integrated decision making by all governments, reflecting the needs of a production cycle in a circular economy, and with greater long-term certainty around supply, operations, and demand.

The recycled organics industry is committed to generating high-quality compost outputs that promote the protection of the environment and human health, specifically through the diversion of organic material from landfill. The success of household and business FOGO mandates and the circular economy relies on materials being accepted in the dedicated FO or FOGO stream, being not only theoretically compostable, but responsibly compostable within existing operations.

Guiding Principles for FOGO

1. The recycled organics industry has been producing high-quality and high-performing compost products that are safe for application to land and safe to human health for decades and is committed to continuing to do so.
2. The supply of quality feedstock to the processor gate is the key component of the organics recycling supply chain. Source separated feedstock without plastics, chemicals, and other contaminants (from all organic feedstock sources including household, commercial, agricultural, forestry, water treatment, etc.) is central to the growth of organics recycling rates and production of high-quality outputs.
3. AORA expects most organics processors to be able to process source separated kerbside FOGO and commercial food wastes with up to 2% physical contamination (by weight), and as such AORA supports a national target of less than 2% contamination. Hazardous materials cannot be accepted as physical contamination under any circumstances. Whilst it is possible to process organics with greater than 2% contamination to a Compost Order and Australian Standard, this will come at a higher cost associated with the additional infrastructure required and the disposal of contamination. As the industry matures and government support improves, AORA expects the 2% target for contamination to be lowered over time as consistent communication and education efforts instil improved community understanding and behavioral changes.
4. Wherever possible, all participants in the Australian resource recovery supply chain, in particular, State and Local governments, should deliver a common message on materials to

be recovered by organics processing facilities. This should be supported by appropriate education material that is consistent, clear, and recurring.

5. AORA advocates for the introduction of a recognised training program available to all participants within the organics recycling supply chain (i.e., Foundations of Compost training course). This training program should aim to help the industry achieve consistent product quality as Australia transitions to mandatory source-separated FOGO collections by ensuring that key staff involved in promoting and performing FOGO services are across the regulatory settings and understand the implications of each key composting process step.
6. The shift towards a successful circular economy model – rather than a linear waste model - requires federal and state governments to commit to a high reach, long-term broadscale public awareness campaign to inform individuals of the circular pathways for their unwanted materials. Individuals and business operators must have a baseline understanding of the process of manufacturing recyclable products from clean materials, and value the crucial role they play in source separating their unwanted materials for recycling, to affect the behaviour change needed to support the transition to FOGO collections and halve food waste to landfill by 2030.
7. AORA supports the use of certified compostable caddy liners as part of the transition to food organics (FO) within a FOGO stream. Certified compostable bin liners offer an effective solution for households and commercial entities to manage food waste efficiently. These liners make it easier for consumers to collect and transport food scraps, increasing participation rates in organics recycling programs. Furthermore, they help maintain cleanliness and hygiene, reducing barriers to participation in these programs.

Certified compostable packaging guiding principles for FOGO inputs

AORA recognises that “certified compostable packaging” may play a part over time in helping to achieve Net Zero targets through composting and landfill avoidance of packaging, particularly food packaging. AORA understands that viable commercial pathways for these products and their ability to be successfully and safely composted within the commercial organics recovery system are needed for a circular economy to flourish longer term.

However, existing organics processing facilities will need the time and resources to safely trial, pilot and develop new resource recovery initiatives within existing processes to allow for the safe and effective composting of any new, proposed “certified compostable packaging.”