

## EU bioplastic projects join forces in efforts to protect nature and environment from plastic waste

*Hamburg, 29 April 2021 – The two European projects BIO-PLASTICS EUROPE coordinated by Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, Germany, and SEALIVE coordinated by Instituto Tecnológico del Embalaje, Transporte y Logística (ITENE) based in Valencia, Spain are joining forces. Together, they aim to advance the research and development of bio-based plastics in the European Union (EU) and thus protect nature and the environment from global plastic waste pollution.*

The Earth is facing many problems caused by human activity, including pollution from vast amounts of plastic waste. Researchers are increasingly working together across borders, to tackle this issue and to find environmentally friendly solutions.

One example is the cooperation of two European research projects on plastics – BIO-PLASTICS EUROPE and SEALIVE – to utilize synergies for the production and use of bioplastic materials. Both projects are developing sustainability strategies and solutions for bio-based products, supporting the EU Plastics Strategy. The aim is to explore circular technology and end-of-life solutions to develop sustainable bio-based plastics and reduce plastic waste and pollution on land and in the oceans.

Dr Jelena Barbir, lead project manager of BIO-PLASTICS EUROPE at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, underlines the need for the cooperation: “Both project teams want to work together to influence EU policy on bio-based plastics more efficiently.” To this end, researchers from both teams will get together online twice a year, to discuss the progress in the field of bio-based plastics.

The first joint meeting under the title “Opportunities and constraints in EU policy for bio-based and biodegradable plastics” will take place on **29 June from 10 am to 12 pm CET** in an online format. Interested parties can sign up for the meeting on the website of BIO-PLASTICS EUROPE <https://bioplasticseurope.eu/> and SEALIVE <https://sealive.eu/about/>. The sites also provide further information on both projects.

BIO-PLASTICS EUROPE with 22 project partners from 13 countries, started in October 2019. Since then, eleven research papers on bio-based plastics have been published, work on a safety protocol, to ensure the safe use and end-of-life management of biobased and bio-degradable plastics, has started and five prototypes of bio-based plastics have been developed. These prototypes are currently being tested in laboratories and in field trials to assess properties like safety and biodegradability in detail. First results are expected by the end of 2021 and will be used to evaluate safety of these new materials in products like reusable cutlery, toys, soft and rigid packaging, agricultural films, and geo-membrane as well as fishing baits and fishing crates. Final aim of the project is to provide bio-based, biodegradable, sustainable and safe materials for production of these products.

SEALIVE (Strategies of circular Economy and Advanced bio-based solutions to keep our Lands and seas aLIVE from plastics contamination) was launched in October 2019 and brings together 24 partners and five linked third parties from eleven countries spanning Europe and South America. The consortium forms a mix between applied research, enterprises, industry, and NGOs that have a track record in the plastics, recycling, and biopolymer industries. The project aims to boost the use of biomaterials and bring innovative bio-based plastic solutions to the market by offering viable alternatives to conventional plastic products. Eight bio-based plastic solutions will be upscaled and demonstrated in six geographical regions, all of them with high potential to reduce pollution in terrestrial and aquatic environments. Currently, SEALIVE partners are examining products such as single use plastic clutter, agricultural films and traditional fishing nets and designing bio-based versions. Miriam Gallur, SEALIVE project coordinator: “The importance of all the SEALIVE developments will be measured in terms of technical viability which will be validated at industrial scale by end users and retailers and in terms of environmental impact testing with different waste management companies the prototypes to demonstrate the most appropriated end of life strategy for each one.”

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