



**CORTEC**  
CORPORATION

Environmentally Safe VpCl®/MCl® Technologies



**NEWS ALERT NEWS ALERT NEWS ALERT NEWS ALERT**

## **Taiwan Ban Opens New Market for Biodegradable Films**

### **Summary:**

A ban implemented in July of 2002 has not only helped to reduce plastic bag pollution in Taiwan, but also has created a surge in demand for innovative biodegradable film technologies. The ban was initially intended to change the littering habits of the Taiwanese and targeted government-owned shops and restaurants. In January of this year the ban was expanded to supermarkets, department stores, shopping malls, convenience stores and restaurant chains.

As more and more Taiwanese are forced to live without traditional petroleum based, non-degradable plastics, a handful of companies have begun introducing PLA (polylactic acid) and other biodegradable plastic technologies to the Taiwan market. Many of these technologies have been proven effective at reducing pollution in the United States and Europe for many years. (*Chemical & Engineering News October 27, 2003, page 28*).

### **Cortec Solutions:**

Cortec Corporation is proud to introduce two technologies designed specifically for the growing biodegradable films market. Eco Film™ and Eco Works™ are two product lines specifically designed to offer the performance of traditional plastics, but convert harmlessly into carbon dioxide and water once disposed of.

The product lines offer a wide range of flexible film formulations designed to replace LDPE (Low Density Polyethylene), LLDPE (Liner Low Density Polyethylene) and HPDE (High Density Polyethylene). All formulations have certification by the International Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) based on ASTM D 6400-99.

Eco Film and Eco Works are available today in standard and custom sizes and formulations. Please call today to see how Cortec can fulfill your biodegradable product needs.

### **Additional Information:**

#### **Cortec Corporation**

Phone: (651) 429-1100

Fax: (651) 429-1122

Web: [www.cortecvci.com](http://www.cortecvci.com) [www.ecofilm.com](http://www.ecofilm.com)

Email: [info@cortecvci.com](mailto:info@cortecvci.com)



#### **Chemical & Engineering News**

Web: [www.cen-online.org](http://www.cen-online.org)

4119 White Bear Parkway • St. Paul, MN 55110 USA  
Phone (651) 429-1100 • (800) 4-CORTEC • Fax (651) 429-1122  
E-mail [info@cortecvci.com](mailto:info@cortecvci.com) • Internet <http://www.cortecvci.com>

ASIA

# THROW-AWAY CULTURE

## Taiwanese ban on plastic bags enrages industry, inspires other countries to take action

**T**o LIMIT CONSUMERS' USE OF plastic bags, last year Taiwan began implementing a controversial ban on plastic bags and polystyrene food trays. More than a year later, Taiwan's Environmental Protection Administration is still committed to the ban and other countries are considering similar restrictions.

The ban began in July 2002 when government-owned shops and canteens, of which there aren't many, stopped providing their customers with plastic bags and tableware. In January 2003, the ban was extended to supermarkets, department stores, shopping malls, convenience stores, and restaurant chains.

There are many loopholes. Retailers can freely hand out paper bags or sell, for about 3 cents apiece, plastic bags thicker than 0.06 mm, which authorities believe are rarely discarded. Moreover, for hygiene reasons, Taiwan's numerous food-stall operators in night markets remain free to provide their customers with any type of plastic bag or disposable tableware.

Although the ban is far from airtight, it still outrages the chemical industry Jack J. H. Hsieh, director of the Petrochemical

Industry Association of Taiwan, says the government should tackle Taiwan's littering problem by promoting recycling. He asserts that the manufacture of paper bags pollutes far more than the production of plastic bags. He further claims that the jobs of 100,000 plastics industry workers are threatened by the ban.

Chang Hsu Chang, director of waste management at Taiwan's Environmental Protection Administration, considers the ban a success. He says the ban's main objective is not to completely obstruct plastic bag usage, but rather to curb the littering habits of the Taiwanese. He notes that consumers who have paid 3 cents for a bag are not being heavily taxed, yet they are more likely to consider that plastic bags have value. The Taiwan EPA does not promote the use of paper bags, he insists.

**MORE IMPORTANT,** Chang disputes the number of jobs affected by the ban. The Taiwan EPA has set up a job retraining program for plastics industry workers harmed by the new policy. So far, Chang says, only 122 people have applied, and all have been retrained. He adds that owners of plastic bag factories, many of whom

had threatened to relocate to China, were given grants to get into new businesses.

Taiwan's policies are good news to some companies. Last November, Wei Mon Industry signed a long-term supply deal with Cargill Dow to obtain the joint venture's Nature Works, a degradable plastic, generically named polylactide, that is made from corn sugar. Wei Mon spokeswoman Lillian Lai says the plastic can be turned into food trays used, for example, to sell take-out sushi.

In Asia outside Taiwan, she says, there is more and more demand for biodegradable packaging, even if it costs more. The company is therefore trying to convince Taiwanese plastic processors affected by the ban on plastic bags and disposable tableware to process polylactide instead.

Nicknamed a "toxic island" because of its heavy pollution, Taiwan appears to be a leader in a global movement to curb plastic bag usage. In March 2002, a few months ahead of Taiwan's measures, Ireland began taxing plastic bags, and now Australia is considering emulating the move. South Africa, Bangladesh, and a few states in India have implemented or are considering the introduction of various policies to restrict the use of plastic bags.

But petroleum-based plastics are hard to do without. As severe acute respiratory syndrome was spreading throughout the world earlier this year, Taiwan considered whether it should relax its ban on plastic bags and disposable tableware to help limit the spread of the virus.—JEAN-FRANÇOIS TREMBLAY