

One thing we have learnt this week – plastic waste is everywhere

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This week I listened to a report on plastic waste and increasing

the rate of recycling in England on the radio news. What is horrifying is where plastic gets into everyday products in unexpected ways. Its now in teabags. This was a real shock. Teabags I thought were formed only of paper. Apparently they used to add vegetable matter I think to hold them together better but now have replaced this with plastic. So putting your teabags on the compost heap only adds to the plastic waste in the environment. (In addition the thought of the plasticisers in the plastic dissolving in your tea is not an appetizing one). The discussion moved onto cucumbers. Shrink wrapped in plastic to protect them. None of this is simple but I'd rather have the food waste, than the plastic going into the environment. Recycling rates have stalled in England (Wales does really really well) supposedly due to the fact that all the easy to collect places have been done. Flats are much more difficult to collect recycling from. (Although Wales has managed to collect very much higher levels?!) The government wants to make recycling uniform over England and part of me can see this is a good idea (rural areas being really behind throughout the UK). Part of me thinks this takes no account of local conditions. One thing is for certain the government needs to cut plastic use fast. Luckily there alternatives coming on fast. A company in the next lab to where I work is developing biodegradable plastic wrap made from shellfish. Neil

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