



Yale University  
School of Forestry & Environmental Studies

2011-12

Industrial Environmental Management Speaker Series:  
PRODUCERS, PACKAGING, AND PUBLIC POLICY  
Presents

**Biodegradability and Packaging: Finding Facts in Fiction**

*Burke Auditorium, 195 Prospect St. New Haven CT*  
*Lecture 1:00-2:00PM, February 10, 2011*  
*Free and Open to the Public, Light Lunch Provided*

Anne Johnson, Director of the Sustainable Packaging Coalition, will speak at the Yale University School of Forestry & Environmental Studies on Thursday, February 10<sup>th</sup> at 1:00PM in the Burke Auditorium, 195 Prospect Street. Her talk, entitled “*Biodegradability and Packaging: Finding Facts in Fiction*” is organized by the Industrial Environmental Management (IEM) Program.

The talk is the second of a special 2011/2012 IEM Speaker Series sponsored by Nestle Waters North America. In its 21st year, the IEM Lecture Series brings speakers from companies and organizations to the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies to discuss the relationship between business and the environment. This year’s lecture series, *Producers, Packaging and Public Policy*, explores the topic of extended producer responsibility (EPR) and packaging. Nestle Waters, an industry leader in exploring EPR issues, is the primary sponsor of this special lecture series. The goal of the lecture series is to explore the advantages and disadvantages of the application of EPR to packaging waste and municipal solid waste more generally in the U.S.

EPR is a policy strategy that makes producers responsible for their products when they become waste. Ms. Johnson’s talk on packaging and biodegradability is one of several in this year’s series that will set the context for debates over public policy towards plastic packaging. Ms. Johnson’s presentation will examine biodegradability claims in packaging and tease out where the environmental benefits may lie.

The Sustainable Packaging Coalition (SPC) is an industry working group of over 200 companies from across the packaging supply chain. Ms. Johnson led the effort to develop a consensus-based definition of sustainable packaging for the SPC. She has been involved in a wide variety of projects at the SPC including the development of design guidance for packaging, environmental technical briefs on packaging materials, indicators and metrics for sustainable packaging, and a comparative package design software application called COMPASS, which uses life cycle metrics and packaging attributes to evaluate the environmental impacts of packaging across its life cycle.

Given the wide range of chemical additives that can now be used to make traditionally non-degradable materials “biodegradable”, the landscape of claims is far more complex and often as misleading as it is innovative. Making sense of biodegradability claims requires analysis of packaging materials in different end of life scenarios, knowledge of what really happens in landfills, familiarity with Federal Trade Commission Green Guides, and understanding of the relevance of conditions found in the field to emerging standards and specifications.

This year’s IEM Lecture Series, *Producers, Packaging and Public Policy*, is supported with major funding by Nestle Waters North America, the market leader in bottled water in North America and a division of Nestlé S.A., the global food and beverage company. Nestle Waters is seeking to significantly improve the recycling of beverage containers and, as part of that effort, is supporting discussion and debate over the feasibility and effectiveness of EPR in the U.S.

The *Producers, Packaging and Public Policy* Lecture Series will feature a series of live presentations and webinars. A schedule of events for the lecture series can be located at the following (<http://cie.research.yale.edu/lecture-series/2011-epr-lecture-series.html>).

Keep America Beautiful (KAB), a U.S. nonprofit organization promoting litter and waste reduction, and Resource Recovery Forum, a UK-based international non-profit network organizations interested in sustainable waste management, are assisting in publicizing the lecture series on EPR.

Ongoing funding for the IEM Lecture Series is provided by the Joel Omura Kurihara Fund. For more information about the lecture series, please contact Melanie Quigley, program coordinator, at 203.432.6953 or [Melanie.quigley@yale.edu](mailto:Melanie.quigley@yale.edu).

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