



**VRA Member: Craig Coker, Marshall Hall
Committee: Policy
Approved/Revised Date: 3/20/2020**

ORGANIC WASTE POLICY

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Virginia Recycling Association (VRA) to support efforts by public and private entities across the Commonwealth to recycle the organic fraction of solid wastes into a humus-rich soil amendment by composting and/or into a renewable energy biogas by anaerobic digestion.

Reason for Policy

The organic fraction of solid wastes, when landfilled, contributes to the formation of methane and nitrous oxide, both harmful greenhouse gases, and this fraction decomposes prior to the initiation of landfill gas recovery systems in active landfill cells. Preventing these organics from being landfilled is the only responsible method to avoid the formation of these greenhouse gases.

Who is/will be affected

Members, Public, Government, Suppliers, Manufacturers, Distributors, Retailers, Recycling and Solid Waste Industries, Farmers

Supporting Information

Organic materials make up roughly 1/3 of the municipal solid waste stream, mostly in the form of food scraps and yard trimmings. When sent to a landfill, these organics take up unnecessary space and generate methane and nitrous oxide which are potent greenhouse gases. Diverting these materials for the purpose of composting and anaerobic digestion is a better choice for the environment.

Both food scraps and yard trimmings can be easily diverted from the municipal solid waste stream. Twenty-four (24) states now ban the landfilling of yard trimmings and there are now over 2,600 yard trimmings compost facilities in operation in the U.S. There are over 270 food scraps diversion and collection programs and six states and five cities have banned the landfilling of food scraps. Over 800 composting facilities in the U.S. are permitted to accept food scraps.

Over 12.7 million tons of food scraps are managed annually in 184 anaerobic digestion facilities in the U.S. The product of digestion, biogas, can be combusted on-site to make electricity that can be fed into the utility grid, or it can be cleaned up for injection into fossil-

fuel natural gas transmission pipelines or used as Renewable Natural Gas in properly-equipped vehicles.

Definitions

Anaerobic Digestion

A sequence of processes by which microorganisms break down biodegradable material in the absence of oxygen. The process is used to manage waste and to produce fuels

Biogas

The mixture of gases produced by the breakdown of organic matter in the absence of oxygen, primarily consisting of methane and carbon dioxide.

Compost

A biologically stable material derived from the composting process.

Composting

The biological decomposition of organic matter through a process that inhibits pathogens, viable weed seeds, and odors, accomplished by mixing and piling so as to promote aerobic decay, anaerobic decay, or both aerobic and anaerobic decay.

Humus

The organic component of soil, formed by the decomposition of organic material by soil microorganisms.

Organic

Relating to or derived from living matter.

Soil Amendment

Any substance or mixture of substances intended to improve the physical, chemical, biochemical, biological, or other characteristics of the soil.

Contacts

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Document History

- Policy Origination Date: 2/17/20
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Who Approved This Policy

- VRA Committee 3/20/2020
- VRA Board 5/15/2020
- VRA Members (Meeting)
- VRA Members (online vote)