MATERIAL FACT SHEET

The plastic challenge

A cornerstone of food safety is the requirement that any plastics likely to come into contact with food and food-contact surfaces must be food-contact compliant. In Europe, this requirement is detailed in EC Regulations 10/20111, 1935/20042, 2023/20063 and 178/20024. In the USA it is covered within the FDA's CFR Title 215.

Consequently, the Vikan products designed for use in contact with food and food-contact surfaces must live up to these regulations.

Unfortunately, sustainable sources of the plastics required for our food contact tools (primarily polypropylene, PP) are not currently available. Because of this, legally we must produce these tools from virgin plastic material. However, there is a significant push among industry and regulators to change this legislation and it is our ambition to have all our plastic products made of recycled or renewable materials by 2030.

WHAT IS "GREEN" PLASTIC"?

'Green plastic' is used as an umbrella term and often includes and/or refers to bio-based, biodegradable, recycled, regenerated, and recyclable plastics. We explain the difference between the various terms below.

Bio-based and biodegradable plastic

Traditional plastic is made from fossil-based raw material, e.g., oil. Biobased plastics are fully or partially made from biological resources e.g., sugar cane, corn, and cellulose. However, they are not necessarily biodegradable or compostable.

'Bio-degradable plastic' refers to plastic that is designed to break up when exposed to the presence of microorganisms under specified conditions. Biodegradable or compostable plastics can be produced from either bio-based or fossil-based raw material. Therefore, bio-based and biodegradable materials are not necessarily the same.

None of the current standards for plastics labelled as bio-based, biodegradable or compostable make them suitable for disposal in the open environment. The Danish Plastic Federation recommends avoiding the use of biodegradable plastic for packaging, since the properties required to make them biodegradable negatively affects the quality of the plastic for recycling. As of 2023, Vikan does not have access to food contact compliant bio-based PP.

Regenerated plastic and own scrap

The term 'regenerated plastic' can cover post-consumer waste, meaning plastic that has been discarded and recovered after use, from which Vikan can mold new products. A subversion of this is 'pre-consumer waste', such as industrial scrap from the production of plastic parts, which is waste handled by a third-party company that turns the industrial scrap into granules from which new products can be produced.

The definition of 'own scrap' is scrap from production at the molding company, which is then used in the products, without having left the company. Own scrap cannot be recognised as regenerated material - but is still a very good local effort to reduce plastic waste.

Recyclable plastic

Most plastics can be recycled and are thus recyclable. Products made from mono-materials, such as pure PP, are more easily recycled than those made from multi-materials, as they often require separating prior to recycling.

WHICH MATERIAL WITH A LOWER CARBON FOOTPRINT CAN VIKAN USE?

Transport product range

The plastics used in our Transport range of cleaning tools must comply with REACH6 but don't need to be food contact compliant (technical grade). This means we can use recycled or regenerated plastic for these tools, and we are doing this today.

Classic product range

Our Classic range mainly consists of wood and plastic that don't need to be food contact compliant. Vikan always uses FSC®-certified wood (FSC C163353) and as much recycled plastic as possible in our Classic products.

Hygiene product range

As explained above, the materials we can currently use for our Hygiene range of cleaning and food handling tools are strictly regulated. However, we are always looking for safe ways to use recycled or regenerated plastic in these products.

One initiative that we have already implemented is in the production of our Ultra-Slim cleaning brush. The block of this brush is made using the virgin, food contact compliant polypropylene offcuts from our other products. It's just one of the many small steps we are taking on our sustainability journey.

References:

1. EC Regulation 10/2011
2. EC Regulation 1935/2004
3. EC Regulation 2023/2006
4. EC Regulation 178/2002
5. FDA CFR Title 21
6. EC Regulation 1907/2006