

The EPI CEO Joseph G. Gho

EPI (head office in Vancouver, Canada) is a high tech company exporting "Totally Degradable Plastic Technology" to 60 different countries all around world...

The EPI CEO Joseph G.Gho, recently visiting the İstanbul Packaging Fair (Türkiye), has given us an interview at the exhibition booth of 'Triosel'; the company's distributor and agent in Türkiye.

First of all, let's get familiar with EPI please...

EPI is a high tech company founded in 1991...A research center in Texas was founded at first, followed by the head office in Vancouver Canada. Now, besides the offices, there are many research labs in the wide area in Vancouver. EPI's main field of business is the production of additives which make plastics "Totally degradable" and "Environmentally friendly". Plastics are materials which have changed the course of human history; they're extremely durable and useful. But on the hand; if you just leave them in the environment on their own, they may stay there for centuries without totally degrading. EPI's activities have enabled us to control the lifetime of plastics.

In which retail products is the EPI technology utilized?

Wherever conventional plastics are used... The technology can be utilized at every station in the shop; from frozen food packaging to fresh food bags. Moreover, it can be used in the carrier bags. The shops can either buy the technology for their own operations or demand biodegradable products from the supplier.

How are the standards of the technology determined and by whom are they assessed?

There are obligations put forth both by the USA and the EU regarding the technology. USA has an extensive chain of rules and definitions on biodegradation of conventional plastics. These are also the rules held by EPI. Anyway, EPI is the pioneer in this field and complies with the highest standards. We cooperate with world famous specialists and scientists at production stage. Our research labs employ a wide and effective team of biochemists and technical experts.

What is the general structure of your production and distribution channels ?

We have production plants in Texas (USA) and Toronto (Canada). In Europe, we have production stations in England. There are EPI Storage and Logistics centers in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Malesia. Apart from these, we have agents in three countries including Türkiye. Right now we are able to distribute the technology to more than 60 countries all over the world.

How would you describe the "Biodegradation Process" for our readers in retail business?

This is a chemical process of oxidation. Every biodegradable material in nature degrades by the oxidation process. But plastics, due to their structural properties, hardly undergo such a process in nature. The EPI technology accelerates oxidation in controlled steps. It's a two-stage process. At the first stage, oxygen starts to damage the chain structure of the polyolefin when the shelflife of the product is over. The rate of degradation increases by impact of heat, sunlight, moisture and wind. The fragmented plastics is now the nutrition for the microorganisms in nature. At the second stage, bio-oxidation occurs: Plastics with nutritive properties are totally consumed by natural bacteria and microorganisms.



Which retail chains in the world use this technology?

In the USA we work with Wal – Mart. Wal – Mart extends the technology to all of its world scale operations. In England, Tesco utilizes our technology. In Türkiye Migros has recently started to use it. We are working with the biggest retail chain of Colombia and the biggest pharmaceutical warehouses of Canada. Major agricultural companies use EPI technology as well.

How is the technology used in agriculture?

There are two types of usage in agriculture. The vegetable and fruit producers who also package their products use biodegradable plastics. That is, the technology is used for packaging from field to market. The second type of usage however, is quite interesting: Until recently, the greenhouse soil was used to be covered by conventional plastics, so that the chemical properties of soil could be retained. The cover had to be removed regularly. Removing and respreading these covers, storage or renewal of the cover material is tedious work and loss of labor. It's also a loss of time. With the EPI Technology however, you just cover the soil with biodegradable plastics and it mixes with soil after some time. Thus, you're saved of removal-renewal costs. We sell this cover in great amounts in Asia, Europe and especially in Canada, which is an agricultural country. In California, the widest soil cover of North America is our product. Again, in France, the widest soil cover of Europe is produced by EPI.

The wide use of the technology in countries such as Canada and France, which have strict rules on food safety, should be an indication of the safety of your products. Do you agree?

We are applying the standards of the strictest auditing company in the USA. Our technology is subject to numerous tests, especially regarding toxicity. These countries have strict standards on toxicity. EPI products have been safely used over many years because we passed all tests with the highest score.

In Türkiye there is a conventional application of using carrier bags as bin liners. How do EPI products degrade in litter?

We have made our tests in a wide variety of countries. These tests were carried out by independent laboratories; directly in landfills and litter. Many tests are still carried out. Our products biodegrade in landfills and litters; under natural and environmental impacts. This has been a big problem for many countries. Even if waste food is reused for energy generation, separating plastics from the food material is a waste of time and money for the waste treatment facilities. By the extensive use of EPI's Oxo- biodegradable Products Technology, efficient work is carried out in these facilities and this is a contribution to public benefit.

What does EPI have to about the Turkish market? How did your association with Triosel enhance your job in Türkiye?

In Türkiye, due to public support, usage of environmentally friendly products have been ascending lately. Government is doing efficient work on this. They've been following especially our technology very closely. In retails, both the decision makers in retails and the producers are eager to learn the subject and are really investigating it. We are working very efficiently with Triosel, our associate in Türkiye. Triosel has a real good team of experts and anybody who seeks information on EPI Technology can reach them easily.

You have just mentioned Migros. Who else uses EPI's Technology in Türkiye?

Besides Migros; retailer trademarks such as Bim, Teknosa, Media Markt, Electro Wold, Macro Center, Mudo City, GNC, West Marine Yachting, Barçın Sports Shops have started using the technology. The public institutions and organizations such as the Peace Corps in Cyprus, Municipalities of Magosa (Famagusta) and Söke, Ministry of Environment and Forests-Zonguldak, Municipality of Denizli have started using oxo bio-degradable carrier bags. Gün Market in Denizli and Gizerler Market in Adana are among the local shops who have been using such products. The attention of local retail chains has reached a peak lately. In our opinion, the products shall be used increasingly.

And finally, what message would you like to give to the representatives of retail sector?

Retail sector must pioneer in social responsibilities and public health; because their leadership is of utmost importance and required in the first place for bringing about public awareness and encouraging the producers. The retailers have very similar competing criteria concerning product and service quality. They all try to do their best. Therefore, one of the distinguishing features of a

trademark has become the extent to which it fulfills social responsibilities. The consumers are alert on this. We advise that they use biodegradable, environmentally friendly bags.

This will increase their trademark value and is a responsibility concerning the society they serve. Any information required on the subject shall be provided by our Turkish representative, Triosel.