

The BNQ announces the implementation of two new certification programs for compostable products

Québec, July 4th, 2024 — The Bureau de normalisation du Québec (BNQ) is now able to certify all manufacturers of compostable products to two new certification programs. These programs are based on the requirements of two international standards and they provide a framework for plastics or products made of plastic as well as other products such as cardboards or packaging that can be certified as “compostable”.

What is a compostable product?

Products are said to be “compostable” when they have the capacity to disintegrate and biodegrade via biological processes in presence of oxygen, and which degradation generates carbonic dioxide, water, inorganic compounds, and biomass. Depending on the degradation conditions, these products decompose at a rate consistent with other compostable materials such as food waste, without leaving visible, distinguishable, or environmentally toxic residues.

Among others, the international standards ISO 17088:2021 Plastics — Organic recycling — Specifications for compostable plastics and ISO 18606:2013 Packaging and the environment — Organic recycling set out requirements to be met by the products developed by the manufacturers to be suitable for recovery through aerobic composting. Thus, as interest in recovery for organic matters via composting grows, it is necessary to correctly identify products made of plastics or other products degrading satisfactorily under industrial composting conditions without leaving any persistent or toxic residues.

“The several uses of the terms “compostable” and “biodegradable” on packagings often are the results of self claims that are not verified by a third party; as a result, it definitely contributed to confuse consumers. When obtaining a certification by the BNQ, the manufacturers can declare that their products will be composted in appropriate industrial installations.”

- Isabelle Landry, Principal Director at Bureau de normalisation du Québec

“The time should be over when claims for compostability can be made without 3rd party verification. And for those who are making compostable claims within the Canadian marketplace, these claims must directly tie in with the compost quality standards regulated by Canadian governments – both federal and provincial/territorial – and managed through the processing dynamics of industrial-scale composting facilities across Canada. We value our working partnership with the BNQ which has existed for many decades, congratulating them on the advances to their standard which has been done through extensive consultation and deliberation by many.”

- Susan Antler, Executive Director at The Compost Council of Canada

BNQ's offer

The BNQ proposes to manufacturers of compostable packaging and products to evaluate their conformity to standards ISO 17088:2021 and ISO 18606:2013.

As part of the certification process, the enterprise is primarily responsible to have its products analyzed in accordance with the requirements of the applicable standard by an independent laboratory that is qualified to measure the disintegration level, the aerobic biodegradation, the effects of the compost ability to support plant growth as well as the maximum concentration of regulated metals and other toxic substances in the product to be certified. Then, as part of its certification process, the BNQ analyzes the test reports, and products deemed to be in conformity obtain the certification. To this end, a distinctive mark of conformity, which is recognized in Canada, is issued to certified enterprises so they can highlight this characteristic cross-checked by a third party.



Enterprises who wish to obtain the certification shall conform with the requirements of the ISO standard applying to their product according to the methods and frequencies specified in the documents *Certification Requirements ISO 17088* or *Certification Requirements ISO 18606*.

For more information on the requirements for the certification of compostable plastics or compostable products made entirely from plastics:

<https://bnq.qc.ca/en/standardization/environment/compostable-plastics.html>.

For more information on the requirements for the certification of other compostable products (packaging, packaging materials and other products):

<https://bnq.qc.ca/en/standardization/environment/compostable-products.html>.

These two new programs replace the program previously offered by the BNQ that was based on the Canadian adoption of the international ISO standard ISO 17088:2008, which is now withdrawn. Transition procedures for enterprises already certified or in the process of being certified are announced on our website.

About the BNQ

The BNQ, an administrative unit of Investissement Québec, is the reference organization for standardization and certification in Quebec. It develops consensus-based standards and certification protocols in accordance with the rules of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The BNQ is accredited by the Standards Council of Canada (SCC).

For further information on the BNQ: bnq.qc.ca/en

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