



Eco farmers avoid 228.6 km of plastic mulch by switching to biodegradable version

For the fourth consecutive year and thanks to the collaboration with Mallorca Preservation Fund, APAEMA has once again coordinated a grouped order of biodegradable plastic mulch for use, basically in organic vegetables.

This year 2022, 21 farms have taken part. The balance is 228.6 kilometres of biofilm (weighing 4,020kg), which avoids its equivalent in conventional plastic, mostly polyethylene.

The Mallorca Preservation Foundation has assumed a percentage of the extra cost of this plastic compared to conventional plastic. Without this action, the use of this non-polluting material is not very profitable due to the extra cost of the biodegradable version, as opposed to conventional plastic, which is much more affordable. Thanks to MAPF's financial support, the farmers have obtained a competitive price that has allowed them to make the switch.

Plastic is used in professional vegetable production as a technique for weed control, which lowers labour costs, facilitates work and increases yields. The main problem is the subsequent management of this plastic once it has been used and turned into waste. Not everyone takes on the cost and time involved in folding it up and taking it to an authorised point, but it is either burnt inside drums or is capped with the milling machine, leaving thousands and thousands of small fragments that no one will ever be able to remove from the piece. Within conventional plastic there is still a variant called oxo-degradable plastic, a formulation that facilitated the reduction into microplastics, so that the farmer had almost no more pieces in sight and felt that a good job had been done. In some communities it is now banned, and rightly so, because they are an environmental hazard.

With biodegradable plastic this problem is eliminated, as it melts and becomes incorporated by the soil in a matter of months. There is no reduction in size, but a complete disappearance, thanks to being made from organic materials. In theoretical terms, the initial cost increase is offset by the subsequent savings from not having to invest in removal.

In these years of the project, some twenty eco farms have benefited from the aid and in total have avoided more than 548 kilometres of plastic, replacing it with 10,293 kg of biodegradable, GMO-free biofilm.

This initiative, in increasing demand every year, is very much appreciated by the farmers; in their words, once it has been used, it tastes bad to go back to the conventional one, with all the damage and costs that this implies in the end.