

## **EVERYBODY NEEDS VOTES AND SUPPORT FROM THE "GREEN"**

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**The EU has hit upon the idea how to get rid of the agricultural surpluses and how to make additional profit out of this, and how to make the rich even richer. A lot do they care anyway for the poor and for the nature!**

The boost in the production of ethanol has reduced the world stocks of corn, claims *Vjesnik* (23 January) and continues: »The prices of corn have reached the highest levels in more than ten years, stimulated by the US government to increase the production of ethanol as alternative fuel for automobiles«.

»How stupid and green one has to be when one listens to the arguments against atomic energy«, wrote one of the most distinguished editors-in-chief of the journals which cover the field of polymers, Dr. H. Gupta in the issue of February 2007 of Journal GAK.

The article in *Vjesnik* made us consider once again the "green" stories as well as the pressures for producing anything and everything "natural".

Recently, we could read the following: "This wild fruit". And the fruit was just picked, which means really natural fruit. Is there anything today that is really natural, e.g. roses? These are exclusively cultivated, artificially grown products. "Cultivated" originates from the word "culture" – and artificial growing (cultivating) is one of the most important meanings of the term. We can often hear – "we want natural materials". Today, this may refer to stone. All the rest is not natural, regardless of whether cultivated or synthesised. Why should materials made by humans by synthesis or some other chemical reaction be inherently worse than the merely refined cultivated raw materials?

Recently there was a discussion about the "green story" whether energy stored in the polyethylene bags (in no way nylon or the PVC ones) should be reused. Or whether to accept in good conscience one more very perfidious way of realizing maximum profit by introducing biodegradable bags according to the directives adopted in some countries of the European Union? At the end of last year the Italian government included an item in the budget for 2007 which foresees elimination of non-degradable bags from the market by the beginning of 2010. After several weeks of discussions about the very disputable finances for the realization of this intention, this budget item was accepted and the bill adopted. At the beginning of April 2007 a national programme is planned to start which will allow the reduction of the usage of non-degradable bags, and for its implementation, the budget plans »not less than a million euro«. There is a similar situation in France, and now also in Great Britain. Fortunately, not yet in other countries of EU we have the same ideas. But what are the arguments for the implementation.

Biodegradable bags are no novelty. They appeared as early as the end of the 1980s of the last century. In the marketing sense they are very attractive, especially if their promotion includes the excellently instructed "greens". A superficial view of the details gives an impression that the biodegradable bags are an excellent idea, especially from the aspect of solving the problem of waste. However, a deeper insight into all the advantages and drawbacks results in completely different conclusions. There are several types of degradable bags on the market – ones that degrade biologically during composting (degradation time is about two to three months), others degrade by the action of micro-organisms over a certain time (degradation time is two to three years at the waste disposal site), and the third ones are of conventional plastics with additions which make polymer chains degradable under special conditions such as ultra-violet radiation, humidity and heat (e.g. at 50 to 60 degrees Celsius, at 55 per cent humidity), and the degradation time is from 18 months to two years. The use of compost with chemical residues from biodegradable bags may lead to pollution of water, soil and agricultural crops.

For instance, the degradation of starch-based plastics consumes oxygen in the water, which results in hypoxia which contributes to the fast growing of algae and dying of the life in the submarine world. The public believes that a biodegradable plastic reduces the negative impact on the waste disposals. However, the basic idea in the disposal of such bags is the existence of a central place where waste is degraded in the shortest time possible. Slower degradation of biodegradable bags does not contribute to this goal, and often causes additional problems with the strained waters. They are very difficult to separate from the waste flows, and combining of biodegradable bags in the recycling system of conventional plastic bags results in the recycling products that are useless for further application. That is, unlike polyethylene bags, they are not reusable for several times over a longer period of time. Finally, for their production and transport a similar amount of energy is spent as for the production of conventional bags. Said with caution, their impact on the environment and nature is more dangerous than the advantages they offer.

What does this mean for Croatia? Instead of importing bags that store the energy and that may be reused (and for which Croatia paid in 2006 almost 10 million US dollars), the biodegradable bags will certainly cost a lot more, although it is difficult to foresee how much. This will certainly raise the price of food. And they will contaminate, and not just pollute the nature as is the case with the non-degradable (they also have their life-cycle). Why is the tendency to push forward the biodegradable bags? Because in the EU has hit upon the idea how to get rid of the agricultural surpluses and to make additional profit out of this. As well as how to make the rich even richer and to pay little care for the poor anyway. Nor do they care for the nature, which results from the presented data. Since this is a pressure from the "aware protectors", this is even more convenient for the authorities: everybody needs votes and support from the "green".

The question is: the population has grown dramatically, the number of transport vehicles has exploded and a lot of fuel is necessary, e.g. ethanol. The roads have occupied a lot of arable land. If we continue to insist on the products that have been produced one way or another in the "field", will there be any areas for food at all?

Therefore, the claim: »Reduction of excess stocks of US corn in combination with strong demand for this grain in the Chinese fast-growing industry, have caused doubling of prices of corn in the previous year to the highest level since July 1996« sounds terrifying. The price of food is growing, fewer and fewer people can afford it, more and more people are exposed to hunger...

Maybe this is after all a strategic objective of some. This paragraph had been written some twenty days before Dr. Heinz Gupte's idea: »I can imagine that for the substantial production of bio-fuel, such as bio-diesel or ethanol, vast agricultural areas will be needed. This will mean a loss of areas for the production of human and cattle food. The explosion of prices and even famine will be the consequence«. No comment is necessary.

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