

PPWR.HOW / BLOG / COMPOSTABLE PACKAGING

ARTICLE 9 · COMPOSTABLE

Compostable packaging under PPWR Article 9: what must, may and may not be compostable

From 12 February 2028, tea and coffee bags, soft single-serve pads and fruit stickers must be industrially compostable; Member States may require compostability for capsules and thin carrier bags; and everything else, biodegradable plastics included, must be designed for material recycling. Here is the three-way split and how to prove it.

PUBLISHED 16 OCT 2026 · 4 MIN READ · ART. 9 · ART. 3(1)(1)(F)-(G) · ART. 12(1)

MANDATORY FROM	2028-02-12
STANDARD USED NOW	EN 13432
HOME-COMPOST STD REQUEST	2026-02-12
OTHER PACKAGING	Recyclable
LABEL RULE	With Art. 12



SHORT ANSWER

Article 9 sorts packaging into three groups. **Must be compostable** by 12 February 2028: permeable tea, coffee and other beverage bags, soft single-serve units such as pads, and sticky labels on fruit and vegetables — compatible with industrial composting, and with home composting where a Member State requires it. **May be required to be compostable** by a Member State: non-metal beverage capsules and lightweight plastic carrier bags. **Everything else**, including biodegradable plastics, must be designed for material recycling by the same date.

Who this applies to: makers of tea bags, coffee pads and capsules, produce stickers and carrier bags, and anyone marketing “compostable” or “biodegradable” packaging. **What it changes:** compostability stops being a general green claim and becomes a route reserved for a short list of formats.

The three groups

GROUP	PACKAGING	REQUIREMENT	ARTICLE
Mandatory compostable	Permeable tea, coffee or other beverage bags; soft after-use single-serve units containing a beverage (Art. 3(1)(1)(f)); sticky labels on fruit and vegetables	Compatible with industrial composting in bio-waste facilities, and with home composting where the Member State requires it, by 12 Feb 2028	9(1)
Optional, by Member State	Non-permeable beverage system single-serve units for machines (Art. 3(1)(1)(g)) not made of metal; very lightweight and lightweight plastic carrier bags	A Member State with suitable bio-waste collection and treatment may require them to be compostable	9(2)(a)
Optional, legacy	Other packaging a Member State already required to be compostable before the PPWR applied	May keep that requirement	9(2)(b)
Everything else	All other packaging, including biodegradable plastic polymers and other biodegradable materials	Designed for material recycling under Article 6, without harming other waste streams, by 12 Feb 2028	9(3)

Article 9(1) is material-neutral. The Commission’s guidance confirms it covers permeable bags and soft single-serve units made of any material, paper-based pads included — so a paper coffee pad must also be designed for composting by 12 February 2028.

SOURCES

- [Regulation \(EU\) 2025/40, Articles 3, 9 and 12 — EUR-Lex](#)
- [Commission guidance document C\(2026\) 3702, sections 8 and 9](#)
- [European Commission — packaging waste policy page](#)

Interpretation current as of 16 Oct 2026. Commission guidance is not legally binding; the Court of Justice has the final word.

[ALL ARTICLES →](#)

Member State options

A Member State may use Article 9(2) only where it allows compostable waste to be collected with bio-waste and has the collection and treatment infrastructure to make sure compostable packaging actually enters the bio-waste stream. The guidance adds that:

- Member States could decide on additional compostable formats beyond Article 9(1) and 9(2)(a) only until 12 August 2026, and only as *industrially* compostable;
- they should publish explicit lists of formats they require to be compostable or home-compostable, and notify the Commission;
- they may require home-compostability even before a harmonised home-composting standard exists.

The practical consequence: the same plastic or paper-based capsule may need to be compostable in one country and recyclable in its neighbour. Metal capsules are outside this option and stay on the recycling route. Check national lists market by market.

Proving compliance

QUESTION	POSITION TODAY
Which standard?	EN 13432 (industrial composting) can be used as guidance until new harmonised standards are adopted
Presumption of conformity?	Not yet. It returns only once a decision listing the new harmonised standards is published in the Official Journal
Home composting?	Existing national standards and certification schemes may be used as evidence, but do not create a presumption of conformity
New standards	The Commission had to request updated compostable-packaging standards and a new home-composting standard by 12 Feb 2026 (Art. 9(6))
Where it is recorded	The technical documentation under Annex VII (Art. 9(4))

Article 9(6) also asks that the new standards reflect real conditions — retention times, temperatures and stirring in home composts and bio-waste plants, including anaerobic digestion — and verify full conversion to carbon dioxide or methane, mineral salts, biomass and water.

Labelling

Once the harmonised label applies under Article 12(1), packaging in Article 9(1), and where applicable Article 9(2), must state that the material is compostable, that it is not suitable for home composting, and that it must not be discarded in nature. That label follows the Article 12 timetable, which depends on the delayed implementing act — see our note on the [labelling delay](#).

What to do now

1. **Classify each format** into one of the four rows above.
2. **For mandatory items**, obtain EN 13432 evidence for the whole unit — filter material, seams, strings, tags and inks.

3. **For biodegradable plastics outside Article 9**, plan a recyclable design; “compostable” will not satisfy Article 6.
4. **Review claims.** “Biodegradable” or “home compostable” statements must be substantiated and must not mislead (Article 12(8)).
5. **Track national lists** for capsules and carrier bags in each market you serve.

Frequently asked

Are coffee capsules required to be compostable?

Not EU-wide. Non-metal capsules may be required to be compostable by a Member State under Article 9(2)(a). Otherwise they must be recyclable.

Can I still sell a compostable plastic bag for produce?

Only where a Member State requires lightweight or very lightweight carrier bags to be compostable. Elsewhere, packaging outside Article 9(1) must be designed for recycling.

Does a certification label count as proof?

Certification against EN 13432 is good evidence, but until new harmonised standards are listed in the Official Journal it does not give an automatic presumption of conformity.

Next: see how [Article 6 recyclability](#) applies to everything outside Article 9, or check your formats in the [checker](#).

KEEP READING

16 OCT 2026 · 4 MIN READ

The six PPWR packaging format bans from 1 January 2030 (Annex V)

From 1 January 2030, Article 25 bars six packaging formats for specific uses: plastic multipack wraps, plastic for small fresh-produce packs, single-use plastic for dine-in HORECA, HORECA portion packs, hotel miniatures and very lightweight plastic bags. Here is each point, its exceptions, and the 5 % plastic rule from the Commission's guidance.

ART. 25

ANNEX V

ART. 70(4)

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Empty space in sales packaging from 12 February 2028: PPWR Article 24(4) explained

From 12 February 2028, whoever fills sales packaging must keep empty space to the minimum needed for function and product protection. There is no fixed percentage for sales packs, void fill counts as empty space, and settling products are judged at filling. Here is how Article 24(4) differs from the 50 % rule for transport and e-commerce packaging.

ART. 24

ART. 10

ANNEX IV