

A Sweet Solution - written by Grace Tatlock

You probably already aware that **corn starch** (glucose) has been used with polymerised aliphatic materials such as PLA, PHBV or PCL to produce a replacement for plastic products i.e. fast food trays, plates, cutlery, plates, cups and Belu water bottles etc. This product is biodegradable within 72 days and decomposes in 180 days. I have a pen which has been made from corn starch but you can buy a whole raft of products from rulers, bin bags to golf tees.

ECOVER who is manufacturer of ecological detergents and cleansing agents has come up with a new packing product.

The first 20,000 renewable and recyclable bottles from **sugar cane** will be produced this year and ECOVER aims to use a this product in all it's bottles from 2011.

The ultimate vision is for all packaging to be a blend of renewable and recycled, dropping the virgin petrol-based variety from it's chain altogether. Unfortunately the technology isn't advanced enough yet to use 100% recycled plastic. The only reliable source of plastic is milk bottles but the grade isn't compatible with detergents. They are in separate recycling streams. ECOVER did launch a refill system in 2009, and continues to expand this service.

Note of caution: even though sugar is a low carbon alternative to petrol-based plastic, it does depend on where and how it's grown and harvested. If the plantation destroys rain-forests and relies on the slash and burn technique then it's not the right choice. ECOVER however used plantations who are well established sugar cane producers.