

Product Decision Matrix

When reusables are not available, how do you find the most ocean friendly single-use product? Use this **tool to review products and avoid greenwashing**. If you can answer **yes across the board** – then the product is likely a **good option**.

Guidance	Specific Qualities	What it Means if the Answer is “No”
Product is made completely of naturally occurring materials	All product ingredients are clearly listed on the product website (if not right on the packaging)	Be wary as transparency is a must in this industry. Too often companies sneak plastics, plastic derivatives, or harmful chemicals (like PFAS!) into their products. Reach out to the company to get more information.
	Product looks and feels different from plastic	This product could have had its natural ingredients chemically altered to be identical to traditional plastics, taking years (or decades+) to fully breakdown, or designed in a way that only breaks down in industrial composters. It can also cause confusion for users on how best to dispose. As companies innovate in this industry there may be products that look and feel like plastic but answer ‘yes’ across the board in other categories and are promising options.
	Product is certified as 97-100% bio-based (e.g. USDA Biobased)*	Be wary as this can mean that fossil-fuel based plastics, plastic derivatives, or harmful chemicals have been added to the product, and it is therefore not “made of completely naturally occurring materials.”
Product is able to breakdown in the natural environment	Product does not require industrial composting facilities to fully breakdown	This means that the product will only fully breakdown *if* it gets to an “industrial composting facility.” Very few of these exist, and there are rarely distribution channels to get waste from your home or business to the facility. Some products certified as industrially compostable don’t breakdown in the desired timeframe, resulting in pieces of partially degraded plastics being included in compost.
	Product is certified as home compostable (e.g. TUV OK Compost Home)**	This means that the product has not been confirmed to be able to fully breakdown in a home compost pile by a third-party certification. While certifications aren’t perfect, they provide some assurance that the product will break down in the conditions stated, over a specified timeframe, and won’t cause any toxicity. This last bit is extra important since many natural seeming products can be lined with toxic chemicals like PFAS.
Bonus! Product materials are born of the waste stream	Product materials are upcycled, and would otherwise be discarded	Some of the materials in this product were “purpose-grown” meaning you’ll need to consider the embedded emissions and environmental impact that went into growing the source material (e.g. land clearing, habitat loss, fertilizers, pesticides).

*97-100% Biobased or brand is willing to provide full list of product ingredients to allow for due diligence.

**Certified Home Compostable or made completely from a single, unprocessed, or minimally processed natural material that’s undergone toxicity testing.