

The Florida Agricultural Handbook of Solid and Hazardous Waste Regulation: Composting¹

Michael T. Olexa and Ian Goldfarb²

How is the use of composting regulated?

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has established detailed regulations for the production and use of compost created from waste. These regulations exclude compost obtained from backyard composting and normal farming operations. Compost from these activities is exempt from regulation only if used on the property where it was composted, as part of the farming operation. Any compost that is sold must meet the requirements of the regulations.

Any facility that produces compost commercially must obtain permits from the DEP and comply with detailed DEP regulations. You should contact DEP for more information on these regulations if you intend to commercially market compost generated from your agricultural operations, as they are quite complex (<http://www.dep.state.fl.us>).

What wastes may be composted?

Wastes produced in "normal farming operations" (e.g., activities used in the production of poultry, livestock, or agricultural crops) may be composted. Normal waste from these operations includes organic waste, manure and wastes derived solely from agricultural crops, and normal household food wastes. Organic producers also should refer to the National Organic Program for regulations particular to organic agriculture.

What wastes may not be composted?

Any biohazardous wastes, mechanical wastes, chemical wastes, or asbestos-containing wastes, except in the small quantities normally found in household waste, may not be composted.

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2. Michael T. Olexa, professor, Food and Resource Economics Department; director, Center for Agricultural and Natural Resource Law, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL; and member, Florida Bar and Agricultural Law Committee of the Florida Bar; and Ian Goldfarb, graduate student, Levin College of Law and Hough Graduate School of Business, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

What uses of compost are prohibited?

Compost from solid waste may never be used as fill material in any body of surface water. In addition, DEP regulations prohibit any application of compost that would endanger public health or the environment.

What is expected of future regulations?

Current composting guidelines are under revision and will be available to the public after publication of this handbook. In the future, soil monitoring and more advanced forms of record keeping are likely to be necessary to maintain compliance.