

LIFE MULTIBIOSOL PROJECT

First materials tested in Aitiip's mulching technology development in Spain / Biodegradable film also improves soil and crop properties



Spain's **Aitiip Technology Centre** (Zaragoza; www.aitiip.com) has developed mulching technology, as part of the "Life Multibiosol" (www.multibiosol.eu) project that has been installed at agricultural facilities in Zaragoza, where tomato, pepper and cucumber are grown. In mulching, plastic films are installed on agricultural land. Small holes are made in the film where the crop is planted. The film layer reduces water loss and growth of weeds is prevented – bringing a clear saving in water and herbicides. However, plastic mulching has a number of drawbacks, including recyclability and disposal of the film.

Multibiosol is part of the European Union's "LIFE" programme on agricultural practices (Photo: Multibiosol)

The aim of the project is to address technological and ecological challenges, developing a biobased, biodegradable film that also improves soil properties. For this, Aitiip tested 10 materials, adding trace

elements that improve plants. *Carolina Peñalva*, Multibiosol project coordinator, said: "This mulching does not need removal once the plant or fruit is harvested since it is degraded in the soil and also provides trace elements improving land quality. It is easy, ecological and useful."

Tests on 648 m² of biomulching materials began in May, when 18 rolls of 10 different polymers, of a thickness of about 20 microns were installed. The tests will establish levels of resistance, biodegradability and the effects of trace elements on the plant and soil. In the next stage of the project, apple and peach trees will be covered with biodegradable plastic bio-bags. Samples of the plastic will be laboratory tested to check the degree of biodegradability. Harvested products will then be analysed to determine quality levels.

The "Multibiosol" project, coordinated by Aitiip, is part of the European Union's "LIFE" programme, which has the objective of demonstrating that sustainability and efficiency of agricultural practices can be achieved by introducing innovative, economically viable and fully biodegradable plastic that eliminates waste completely.

The project will be implemented in Spain, France and Belgium by a multinational team of seven partners from three member states of the EU – Spain, Italy and Belgium.

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