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Spanish project tests biodegradable films for crop mulching

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The "Life Multibiosol" project, funded by the European Union.

An agricultural project in Spain is testing the use of biodegradable plastic films from different polymers with the aim of boosting plant growth while improving soil quality in crop mulching.

In mulching, film is laid around a growing crop in the field with a small hole for the plant. That helps to reduce water loss and prevents the growth of weeds, so cuts the cost of irrigation and herbicides.

But the project, being coordinated by Spain's Aitiip Technology Centre, aims to tackle mulching's residual challenges of recyclability and film disposal.

The "Life Multibiosol" project, funded by the European Union's "LIFE" sustainable agricultural practices program, is conducting trials on biomulching materials at agricultural facilities near the northern Spanish city of Zaragoza.

Since May, trials have been carried out on 648 square meters of bio mulching materials, using 18 rolls of 10 different polymer films, each up to 20 microns thick. The films are being

tested in fields with crops of tomato, pepper and cucumber.

Initial tests will establish levels of the film resistance, biodegradability and the effects of trace elements added to the film.

"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," commented 'Multibiosol' project coordinator Carolina Peñalva.

Under a second 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 and the quality level of the harvested products will then be analyzed.

The "Multibiosol" project will be implemented not only in Spain, but also in France and Belgium by a multinational team of seven partners from three member states — Spain, Italy and Belgium.

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