

For nearly 40 years, Ecover has taken great pride in acting as green pioneers and looking at new ways to take inspiration from nature and support a more sustainable planet.

Recently, we have received some criticism about a trial that our European Ecover team conducted using algal oil as an alternative to petroleum and palm oil-based ingredients. It is for this reason that we decided to lead a phase of consultancy with key NGOs and stakeholders to have an informed, science-based discussion about the responsible use of biotechnology. Only after this debate has happened will we then decide what our future plans are regarding the possible use of specific types of biotechnology.

The criticism we have received to date infers that the algae is produced by a process known as “synthetic biology,” that the process causes deforestation and potentially dangerous environmental release, and that better alternatives exist. Several of these claims are factually inaccurate, others are misleading, and all of them unfairly characterize Ecover as irresponsible. We have addressed the primary inaccuracies below.

What is true is that we are evaluating a new ingredient, algal oil, because it has the potential to greatly reduce the environmental impacts of a key cleaning ingredient and solves one of the most difficult and protracted issues in our industry: the use of palm oil as a feedstock. Specifically, our European Ecover team has produced a 6,000-bottle batch of product available only in the UK to evaluate the viability of this new algal oil ingredient. This ingredient is not in any Ecover products in North America.

1. Synthetic Biology

The assertion that the algal oil we used at trial used “human-altered DNA” or “synthetic biology” is factually incorrect. Synthetic biology is the process of creating DNA from scratch or inserting human-made DNA into an organism. This is not what is being done. The genetic modification process used by the supplier of our algal oil employs the natural mutation process of algae and standard industrial fermentation. Our supplier uses microalgae strains that have been in existence longer than we have, and they work within their natural oil producing pathways using decades-old molecular biology techniques to produce algal oil.

2. Deforestation

The implication that Ecover is using sugar that causes deforestation is untrue. The sugarcane used in the process is certified sustainable by [Bonsucro](#). Bonsucro certification ensures that the sugarcane is grown on existing agricultural land, and that no new land is converted to agriculture. We are not, however, claiming that sugarcane is the ultimate alternative to palm oil and a diversification of crop sources will still be needed in the near future.

3. Environmental Release

The assertion that Ecover and our suppliers release algal oil into the environment is untrue. Both Ecover and our supplier have full chain of custody over the algae from start to finish of the process, meaning, from raw material to final product the algae are fully contained. After the algae produce

algal oil, they are incinerated in a cogeneration facility that produces power. This process is fully traceable.

4. Better Alternatives

Ecover believes coconuts are best used for their highest value use—food. Global demand for coconuts is rising and that will continue regardless if they are used to make chemicals. We believe we need to rethink the chemical supply chain from resource use by using ingredients, like algal oil, that do not compete with food. We believe that continuing to put hectares of land under cultivation for chemical production while ignoring technologies that significantly reduce environmental impacts is unrealistic and irresponsible. That is why we think that our efforts in identifying sustainable agricultural sources, like sustainable coconut oil, locally grown rapeseed oil, and agricultural waste streams, are just as important as finding alternative sustainable technologies.

5. Transparency

Any implication that Ecover has “quietly applied” algal oil to its products is untrue. Ecover has been fully transparent about its intentions and efforts in pioneering algal oil as a replacement to palm oil. In April, our European Ecover team announced the trial of this new material in the UK in a press release, on its website, and discussed it in an [article](#) in UK's *The Guardian*.

6. Global Regulatory Framework

It has been suggested that synthetic biology should not be used until a global regulatory framework exists to govern it. While we are not using synthetic biology, as with any technology, we strongly support the development of proper oversight to ensure technology is used for societal benefit and does not create preventable risks. We disagree with the opinion that we should not investigate a new technology that can help solve some of the world's most difficult environmental problems while we wait for a global regulatory framework that will take decades to be realized.

Since its beginning, Ecover has operated in an industry that has no regulation or oversight whatsoever, and yet we've proven that with the right ethical framework, diligence, and scientific rigour, a company can create real, lasting environmental and social benefit through more sustainable product design and enlightened business practice.

Ecover remains committed, as we have always been committed, to pioneering a sustainable future. This is an important debate and we are happy to lead it and listen to all fact-based data. We ask that all parties are open to the same approach. We will listen and respond to all considered arguments as we progress along this journey.