**Summary of BS EN 13432: ‘Compostable’ criteria**

**Key tests and Pass / Fail criteria are:**

* **Disintegration – the packaging sample is mixed with organic waste and maintained under test scale composting conditions for 12 weeks after which time no more than 10 % of material fragments are allowed be larger than 2 mm.**
* **Biodegradability - a measure of the actual metabolic, microbial conversion, under composting conditions, of the packaging sample into water, carbon dioxide and new cell biomass.  Within a maximum of 6 months, biodegradation of the test sample must generate an amount of carbon dioxide that is at least 90 % as much as the carbon dioxide given off from the control / reference material.**
* **Absence of any negative effect on the composting process.**
* **Low levels of heavy metals (Potentially Toxic Elements) and no adverse effect of the quality of compost produced. Upper limits, in mg/kg of dry sample, are: zinc 150, copper 50, nickel 25, cadmium 0.5, lead 50, mercury 0.5, chromium 50, molybdenum 1, selenium 0.75, arsenic 5 and fluoride 100.**
* **The composted packaging material must not have adverse effect on the bulk density, pH, salinity (electrical conductivity), volatile solids, total nitrogen, total phosphorus, total magnesium, total potassium and ammonium nitrogen characteristics of the compost.**

**Each of these tests is undertaken according to internationally agreed methods of test, as specified in BS EN 13432.  Independent laboratory test results are then compared with the strict pass / fail limits set in the standard.  Only if a material passes every ‘compostable’ test requirement is it proven to be ‘compostable’.**