

The Contribution of OMICS Publishing Group to the Topic of Marine Litter and Micro Plastic Studies

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The environmental problem of marine litter is gaining even more scientific attention as more data are becoming available on its occurrence, abundance and geographical distribution. Due to its versatile chemical structure, plastic is extensively exploited in several industrial, commercial and medical applications. Approximately 50 percent of total production is made up of goods disposed of within one year of purchase and breaking down in the environment at an uncontrollable rate. Macroplastic litter (>5 mm, NOAA) often undergoes to mechanical, chemical and photo-degradation reaching microscopic size and thus harming marine organisms as it can be easily ingested or filter-fed. Given the continual fragmentation of plastic items, particle concentrations are likely to increase with decreasing size. This poses the attention on the emerging toxicological implications of even higher environmental concentrations of even smaller "microplastic" compounds. Too little is known about the environmental occurrence, food web bioaccumulation and final fate of such diverse classes of emerging contaminants. Therefore, major efforts are needed to understand microplastic biotransformation processes, route of exposure, toxicological implications like i.e., that related to the "trojan horse" effect by which microplastics can help transfer potentially dangerous chemicals to marine organisms.

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