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## **Environmentally Friendly Plastic Cutlery Takes Step Forward with Contract Award to Metabolix**

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CAMBRIDGE, Mass., Nov. 4 /PRNewswire/ -- The reality of biobased, biodegradable disposable plastic cutlery has taken a major step forward with an award from the Defense Supply Center section of the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) to Metabolix, Inc. to prototype molding of PHA (polyhydroxyalkanoate) plastics products. As part of a federal commitment to move away from traditional petrochemical plastics for disposable items, the project will help bring cutlery and other biodegradable disposable molded products through the demonstration stage into commercial production. Metabolix will work with Innovative Mold Solutions, Inc., of Leominster, MA to optimize mold design and conduct the molding trials.

Switching to renewable PHAs will reduce the detrimental impact of persistent plastics on the environment. The federal government currently procures more than half a billion single-use cutlery items each year. Other candidates for conversion to renewable, PHA materials include disposable items such as paper cups and plates.

"The Defense Logistics Agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Army Natick-Sustainability Directorate are deeply involved in working together to introduce biobased/biodegradable products. This effort will help optimize Metabolix's work," says John Woloszyn of the Defense Supply Center. "Demonstrating molding times on par with existing plastics will reduce the ultimate cost of biobased utensils, and help DLA introduce utensils -- and eventually other molded items -- into the government's daily supply chain and encourage their ultimate adoption into the commercial marketplace."

"This project is another important milestone in Metabolix's commercialization of PHAs," says Dr. Robert Whitehouse, the company's director of applications development. "Single-use items are a large opportunity for PHA plastics. Metabolix will use this program to prototype the manufacture of these items, show their cost-effectiveness, and demonstrate on commercial-scale equipment fast cycle times for the injection molding of PHAs."

Upon the successful completion of this project, Metabolix will work with Signature Works of Hazelhurst, MS (a Division of LC Industries of Durham, N.C.) to run trials for full-scale manufacturing. Signature Works is the exclusive provider of biobased, biodegradable cutlery to the Government. "We look forward to the successful completion of this project," said Jeff Easterling, Vice President of Signature Works. "We are committed to producing large volumes of biodegradable, biobased cutlery for both federal and commercial customers. Reduced cycle time for injection molding will help lower manufacturing costs and make it easier to introduce this type of cutlery into our markets."

Metabolix's PHAs are a broad and versatile family of plastics ranging in properties from rigid to highly elastic, making them suitable for film, fiber, adhesives, coatings, and molded goods. Although PHAs are stable to hot liquids such as coffee or tea, they will biodegrade in fresh and marine water, soil and composting environments, and even under anaerobic conditions once their use is over, making them ideal candidates for this application.

Innovative Mold Solutions, Inc. specializes in the development of technologically advanced high performance injection molding systems that are engineered to provide the absolute lowest manufacturing cost platform. Founded in 1992, Metabolix, Inc. uses sophisticated biotechnology to produce environmentally friendly performance plastics and specialty chemicals from renewable resources. Metabolix is the world leader in applying the advanced tools of metabolic engineering and molecular biology to efficiently produce PHA bioplastics in microbial systems and directly in non-food plant crops. The company is currently commercializing fermentation-based PHAs in applications where they provide unique performance benefits.

For more information on Metabolix, visit [www.metabolix.com](http://www.metabolix.com).