

NIIST develops biodegradable tableware

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Scientists at the CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST) at Pappanamcode have developed a technology for manufacturing 100% biodegradable tableware, including dishes and cups, from wheat bran.

Billed as an eco-friendly alternative to single-use plastics, the use of which are on the rise, wheat-bran tableware is affordable and has a long shelf life and is resistant to fungus and bacteria, NIIST officials said.

It can also be safely used in microwave ovens and is capable of holding water content for a reasonable amount of time, the CSIR institute said.

NIIST has transferred the technical knowhow to Aura Exim, a Kochi-based company, for immediate commercial production.

Apart from the manufacture of disposable plates, soup bowls and cups, the technology can also be used to make take-away boxes for food delivery. The products can be customised with different colours and flavours, NIIST said.

An added advantage is that these products also find application as feed for cattle, poultry and fish or as organic manure.

"To make the product more attractive for the market, it is also possible to incorporate natural immunity boosters, nutritional supplements and organic edible flavours," NIIST officials said.

With the use of single-use plastics being discouraged, there is a huge potential demand for alternatives that are biodegradable in nature.