

# \$20 MILLION FUND FOR MSW COMPOSTING

**A**T ITS ANNUAL shareholders meeting last month, Procter & Gamble chairman and CEO Edwin Artzt announced the company would commit \$20 million to advance municipal composting worldwide. At the same time, P&G described plans to change materials in its disposable diapers "to make them more compostable."

According to Richard Nicolosi, group VP for P&G's paper products, disposable diapers with compostable backsheets instead of plastic will be tested in 1991. "Assuming a favorable reception from consumers, we aim to expand the new diapers broadly over the next few years as municipal composting facilities become more and more widely available," says Nicolosi.

The hitch, however, is that municipal composting is in its infancy relative to the full-blown maturity of disposable diaper production. As described elsewhere in this issue, there are nine operating plants (plus one pilot project) producing and successfully marketing compost in Minnesota, Delaware and Florida. More than 80 others are presently in various stages of planning, design and construction.

While these facilities are hardly capable of receiving and processing more than a small amount of the Luvs, Pampers, *et al* jumping off supermarket shelves, the new P&G initiative plays an important role in boosting the nation's composting infrastructure. At a time when public monies for research are drying up, the new \$20 million composting fund will be especially significant. It could well serve as a model for private sector followup actions — which is a result P&G seeks in setting up the fund.

"We see the creation of this fund as a rallying point for others in the paper and food industry to help change the infrastructure of managing large segments of solid waste," explains Robert Greene, who is coordinating

*To help compost more solid waste and solve the specific challenge of recycling disposable diapers, Procter and Gamble sets up R&D support effort.*

the composting effort for P&G globally from corporate headquarters in Cincinnati, Ohio.

## FUND OBJECTIVES

While specific criteria are still being formulated for awarding money, P&G says it will focus on projects that demonstrate how composting fits into integrated solid waste management plans, develop compost end uses and further advance composting technology. The fund will help selected communities analyze their waste streams and then develop projects to integrate composting into waste management.

P&G will also fund projects that demonstrate the values of compost as a fertilizer and soil conditioner. Currently the company is in the initial phase of a five-year research project with the U.S. Bureau of Mines to test compost use to reclaim land around open pit iron ore mines. Other tests at the University of Giessen, Germany are probing crop growth in compost-enriched soils.

"The biggest opportunity for reducing solid waste in landfills has yet to be tapped," declares Artzt. "It's municipal solid waste composting. Up to 60 percent of the waste going into landfills today is organic compostable material and about half of that amount is wood pulp based — that is, newspapers, magazines, telephone books and paper and cardboard packaging."

When P&G, in a press release last spring, touted its billions of diapers as "compostable," they were chided for letting its PR department get way out in front of reality. With the creation of its \$20 million support fund, P&G has taken a giant step to shortening the time discrepancy in the case of the prematurely compostable diaper. —J.G.■

*Communities or other groups that want more information on Procter & Gamble's composting program can address questions to Composting Solutions, PO Box 24009, Cincinnati, OH 45224.*