

# Swap or Scrap – Making Europe’s New Biopolymers in its Existing Assets

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The transition to biomaterials in Europe is no longer limited by science. Many biomaterial technologies are technically mature and ready for industrial scale. The main challenge today is how to scale production quickly, economically, and with low environmental impact, to accommodate the market’s so-called “willingness to adopt”. Building new factories is slow, expensive, and resource intensive. A faster path is to use the industrial assets that already exist, making use of unique know-how and mature developments that have been made over the last years.

We propose a scale-up model called “*Scrap or Swap*” (**S.O.S.**).

The principle is simple: produce biomaterials in Europe’s underused factories instead of abandoning them. This approach enables CAPEX-light scale-up by converting idle or declining plants into bio-based production sites. It protects existing buildings, reduces construction emissions, and accelerates time to market.

The S.O.S. model also preserves industrial ecosystems. Companies keep their people, their plants, and their operational expertise. Regions retain their industrial identity and economic activity. At the same time, companies gain access to new markets and additional profitability through high-value biomaterials. Scale-up becomes an opportunity for renewal rather than shutdown.

Implementation follows three steps. First, identify fit-for-purpose industrial sites that can host biomaterial production with minimal retrofitting. Second, enable technology transfer and licensing agreements to deploy proven processes. Third, guide producers toward secure agreements with launch customers to stabilize early production. Together, these steps reduce scale-up risk and shorten commercialization timelines.

Using existing infrastructure also lowers lifecycle environmental impact. It avoids the material and energy cost of new construction and makes better use of Europe’s industrial footprint. This strategy links climate goals with industrial resilience. It turns dormant capacity into a driver of the bioeconomy.

At a time when global priorities appear fragmented, scaling sustainable production remains urgent. Continuing on a fossil-based trajectory is not compatible with long-term economic or ecological stability. Pioneering biomaterial companies show that change does not require waiting for perfect market conditions. By activating existing assets, Europe can scale faster, strengthen industrial sovereignty, and build momentum for smarter regulation that rewards sustainable innovation.

The convergence of technical readiness, available infrastructure, and urgent climate need creates a rare window for action. The question is no longer whether biomaterials can scale. The question is how fast we choose to do it.