

European Growers Associations: Peat is the most important constituent for Growing Media

The horticultural sector has partly changed from field grown crops towards more of protected cultivation. This change underlines the necessity to secure the availability of raw materials for growing media suitable for this type of production. Two major organisations have now agreed on a common way forward with a “Joint Action” plan.

In their statement, the two organisations conclude that industry experts and scientists expect the demand for Growing Media (GM) to quadruple until 2050. To meet this exceptional need for raw material, the two organisations RPP, Responsibly Produced Peat, and GME, Growing Media Europe, have agreed on a common “Joint Action”. The foundation Responsibly Produced Peat has developed a certification programme with specific principles and criteria for responsible management of peatlands during and after production of peat. The goal of the RPP certification is to ensure that peat as raw material for GM is derived from responsibly managed sources. The certification system is currently undergoing a planned revision and the version 4.0 will be put into practice in January 2025.

The other organisation Growing Media Europe, GME, is an international, non-profit organisation for producers of GM and Soil Improvers at a European level. The main objectives are to work for optimal legislation for manufacturing and promoting free and fair trade within Europe for this industry.

In the “Joint Action” they state that the development contributes strongly to healthier crops, higher yield, less emission to air, soil and water and a reduction in the use of fertilizers and chemical plant protection. In addition, the demand for growing media is driven by trends in architecture (green cities), large-scale afforestation goals as well as end consumers’ increasing interest in gardening, urban farming, and similar trends.



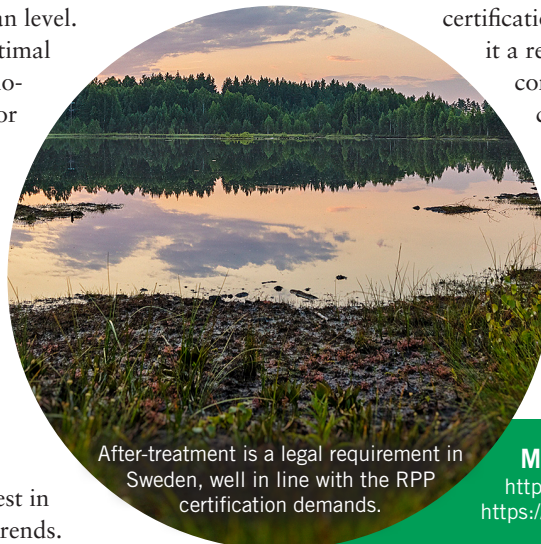
Peat has a decisive role for Sweden and EU when it comes to food production. A knowledge platform for responsible peat use will soon be launched by the organisations RPP and GME.

“While the share of circular and renewable components is increasing and research into new materials is ongoing, peat is still the backbone of growing media production. Peat counts for roughly 80 % of the European growing media production volume, while less than 10 % of all growing media are fully peat free.

GME states that “peat is the most crucial component for growing media from a perspective of quality, safety and availability”.

RPP and GME promise that they will develop a knowledge-platform to identify best practices for after-use to minimize environmental impact. Focus will also be directed to the possibilities for the industry to deliver sustainable peatland restoration and other potential after-uses such as paludiculture crops as for example Sphagnum needed for the increasing raw material demand for the expanding horticultural sector.

Today several Swedish peat production sites are certified by RPP. Since the Swedish environmental legislation is very rigorous, many of the principles in the RPP certification are already addressed. This makes it a relatively smooth process for Swedish companies who see the benefits of the certification, to enter the system. All sites that have a certificate, including the Swedish ones, can be found on the RPP website. It is totally almost 23.000 hectares, corresponding to double the size of the total Swedish peat harvesting area.



After-treatment is a legal requirement in Sweden, well in line with the RPP certification demands.

More information:

<https://www.responsiblyproducedpeat.org>
<https://www.growing-media.eu/>