

## **Clarification about peat use in substrates for the German market**

March 2024

### **Peat can still be extracted and used**

The Federal Government has been trying to implement a peat reduction strategy for some time. With the revision of the Lower Saxony Nature Conservation Act (NNatschG) in December 2023, despite considerable constitutional concerns, peat extraction was banned if it was applied for after December 20, 2023. The policy approach has led to uncertainty in industry, trade and commercial horticulture. Therefore, Industrieverband Garten (IVG) e.V. (German Garden Industry Association) briefly summarizes the discussion below.

### **Lower Saxony: peat extraction is still possible**

The revised law only prohibits granting new extraction permits. The permits that have been granted to date and applied for before the law comes into force, as well as their extensions, are not affected by this. This was also made explicitly clear in the explanatory memorandum to the draft law.

### **Peat as a raw material can continue to be used in soils and substrates -**

#### **There is no ban on the processing and use of peat**

The revised law affects neither the processing of peat that has already been extracted nor the use of peat-containing soil and substrates. Peat can still be used in horticulture, both consumer and professional horticulture. The same applies to further agreements and strategies at federal and state level: There are no bans on use in either the federal-state target agreement on climate protection through peatland protection or in the peatland protection strategy of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV).

The German “peatland protection strategy” sets the goal of reducing peat use as far as possible on a voluntary basis, but does not provide for a ban. Accordingly, there are no legal regulations on compliance with the target quotas from the peat reduction strategy. The supply of peat-containing soils for end consumers will therefore continue beyond 2026.

**A sudden switch to peat-free soils while maintaining the usual quality is not possible due to insufficient availability of other raw materials and unresolved application problems.**

### **Growing media industry focusses on alternative raw materials**

The members of IVG are actively working to further increase the use of alternative raw materials in their products. The goals from the industry's voluntary commitment to increase the use of alternative raw materials in soils and substrates from 2020 still apply and are the industry's benchmark:

According to this by 2030 at the latest, the proportion of peat in soils in the consumer sector will be reduced to 30 per cent and in professional substrates to an average of 70 per cent.

This all happens in a globalised world with international trade and under the premise of maintaining the competitiveness of German industry. In order to accelerate the process, policymakers would have to create the appropriate framework conditions. The peat reduction achieved to date was achieved by industry only without any political support.

### **Conclusion**

IVG is in constant dialogue with policymakers at federal and state level in order to develop together a feasible strategy that significantly improves the availability of alternative raw materials.

Also in the interests of professional and private gardeners, quality and cultivation safety have priority over strict adherence to goals required for political reasons. Gardening success and the fun of gardening while at the same time producing the most sustainable products possible are our top priority.