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Ensuring Hygienic Quality of Alternative Growing Media Components

PEATLESS Project
Practice Abstract No. 8

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The problem

Renewable and recycled raw materials can r**educe peat use**, but some components may introduce weed seeds, plant pathogens or biological contaminants if hygiene is not controlled. This is particularly relevant for **biologically active materials such as composts and recycled mineral fractions**.

The solution

Experience from peat-reduction projects shows that **alternative growing media components** can be used safely when they originate from controlled production processes and are supported by documented quality assurance. Hygienic risks can be reduced through appropriate processing, controlled composting, validated temperature management and **protection against recontamination during storage, transport and mixing.**

Benefits

Hygienically safe components support **reliable transplant quality and crop security** while enabling greater use of renewable and recycled resources.

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Practical Recommendations

- Source components from reliable suppliers and request documentation of hygienisation and quality assurance where relevant.
- Use mature, stabilised composts from controlled aerobic processes.
- Assess recycled materials before use, maintain full traceability of ingredients, prevent contamination during handling and mixing, and consider hygienic quality alongside physical and chemical substrate properties.
- Where hygienic safety is uncertain, use only material that has undergone an appropriate and validated hygienisation process, either by the supplier or another qualified processor.

About PEATLESS and this Practice Abstract

This practice abstract was elaborated in the framework of the PEATLESS project, based on the EIP AGRI practice abstract format. © 2023
Project dates: from May 2025 to April 2028.
Goal: To characterise sectorial needs at selected systems towards tailoring PEATLESS alternative substrate blends to overcome identified barriers for peat reduction in horticulture.

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