

Question for written answer E-003404/2026

to the Commission

Rule 144

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Subject: Scientifically neutral use of the term ‘sustainability’ for growing media

The EU’s Ecolabel criteria for growing media categorically state that a product may not contain intentionally added peat.¹ However, a scientific article dating from 2026, with researchers from NIBIO, SLU and elsewhere, stresses that sustainability is not an inherent characteristic of an individual material, but must be assessed at system level and encompass environmental, economic and social consequences.² Therefore, the fact that a product is ‘peat-free’ does not in itself show that its overall sustainability is better.

In light of the above:

1. What scientific basis justifies the categorical exclusion of peat from the EU Ecolabel, rather than it being assessed on the basis of actual life-cycle performance?
2. In light of new research, does the Commission intend to review the approach where ‘peat-free’ is used as an indirect indicator of sustainability?
3. Going forward, will the Commission distinguish more clearly between responsibly produced horticultural peat and energy peat, and take into account function, transport, resource consumption and the environmental impact of the alternatives?

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¹ Commission Decision (EU) 2022/1244 establishing the EU Ecolabel criteria for growing media and soil improvers, Annex, criterion 1, OJ L 190, 19.7.2022.

² Aurdal et al., The challenge of defining ‘sustainable growing media’: why the term is used incorrectly and what needs to be done about it, doi: 10.3389/fhort.2026.1800902.