



**The Baltic Peat Producers Forum
September 2022**



Growing Media Ireland

Who is Growing Media Ireland?

- GMI represents the majority of horticultural peat producers in Ireland, large and small
- GMI members are committed to best environmental practice in horticultural peat harvesting and the responsible use of peat for both professional horticulture and the retail market

GMI members only harvest horticultural peat on non-designated bogs

Irish Horticultural Peat Sector

- 1,700 hectares – 0.13% of total Irish peatland
- CO2 emissions from horticultural peat is 0.16% of projected total Irish emissions
- 6,600 direct and 11,000 indirect employees in the Irish Horticultural Sector
- € 497m – employment value – (2018)
- € 437m - total output (2018)

Legal and Planning Problems

- Pre September 2012 – Peat Harvesting “exempted development”
- April 2013 – An Bord Pleanála decision, no longer “exempted development”
- April 2013 – February 2018 – Judicial Review Process
- March 2018 – December 2018– Leave to Appeal - Refused
- January 2019 – Legislation amended by Statutory Instruments
- July 2019 – Friends of the Irish Environment granted Injunction
- September 2019 – High Court quashed Statutory Instruments
- Still awaiting Government action

Current Regulatory Process

- Apply to An Board Pleanála for leave to apply for substitute consent (recent cases over 24 months waiting for decision)
 - If granted then:
- Apply to an Bord Pleanála for Substitute Consent (18 – 24 months)
 - If granted then:
- Apply to Local County Council for Planning Permission (18 – 24 months)
 - If granted then:
- Apply to EPA for a licence (24 – 30 months)

Government Action since September 2020

September 2020 announced Working Group to review the role of Peat Moss in Irish Horticulture

March 2021 first meeting of Working Group in total twelve meetings

September 2021 report presented to the Minister

January 2022 Government publishes the report and announces Series of Actions.

September 2022 still awaiting the results

- Working Group agreed 2030/35 target for phasing out of peat.
Just Transition with Irish peat available over the short term in sufficient quantities
- Explore exempt development provisions: <30ha , already worked bogs, drained prior to 21/1/2002
- There should be a change from dual consent system to a single consent system
- Some of this peat should be available for the retail sector in the short term.
- Horticultural bogs in Ireland that have been used for years with very few yet having ditches blocked for rehabilitation could be used for peat extraction.
- A study should be made on the total quantities of biomass available in Ireland.
- A life cycle analysis should be carried out on all these materials including Irish peat.
- Funding – R&D, Alternatives, Just Transition

Series of Proposed Actions January 2022

Short term

Appoint experts in relation to stocks and publish guidelines on planning

Medium Term

Commission experts to provide free legal advice to those wishing to achieve regulatory compliance for peat extraction on areas less than 30ha.

Longer Term

Support research in the development of alternatives to peat for horticulture
€ 1.69m awarded to Teagasc for research into using organic bio-resources.
National Parks and Wildlife Services provide assistance and support on the restoration and rehabilitation of bogs

Proposed GMI Solution

The proposed solution reflects the fact that the Government will not allow harvesting on areas in excess of 30ha and is not complicated:

1. Individual sub 30 hectares bogs must be treated as individual bogs and not be aggregated with other areas in the same ownership – this should allow the County Council grant Section 5 exemptions.
2. Where an already existing bog production site exceeds 30 hectares, a sub 30 hectares area should be permitted for harvesting horticultural peat, provided the remainder of the area is appropriately isolated and set aside for rehabilitation and restoration or other environmentally acceptable activity.

This is clearly a “win win” situation for both the Irish horticultural industry and the Government – no more peat harvesting on any areas over 30 hectares and an acceleration of the bog rewetting programme.

Thank you for your
attention

Growing Media Ireland CLG

☎ 087 261 8290

Chairperson: John Neenan

