

Memorandum of Understanding  
Regarding  
the Reduction of Peat Use in the Production,  
Supply and Consumption of Packaged Soils  
for End Users in Switzerland

between

the Swiss Confederation,  
represented by the  
Federal Office for the Environment

and

Coop, Ernst Meier AG, JardinSuisse,  
Jumbo-Markt AG, Landi Schweiz AG,  
Lidl Schweiz AG, ökohum gmbh,  
Ricoter Erdaufbereitung AG

signed on 29 June 2017

## Background

Since 1987, moors and wetlands of special beauty and national importance in Switzerland have been protected. Under Article 78 paragraph 5 of the Swiss Federal Constitution (BV; SR 101), no buildings may be built on them and no changes may be made to the land, which is tantamount to a general ban on peat extraction. Furthermore, due to peat's growth-promoting properties as a substrate component, it is highly prized for cultivating gardens, ornamental plants, vegetables, and fruits. The estimated annual demand for peat in Switzerland is approximately 524,000 m<sup>3</sup>, which is met almost entirely through imports.

Since this contradicts the ban on peat extraction in Switzerland, the Federal Council was mandated in the postulate 10.3377 Diener Lenz to study measures to reduce peat imports and peat use in Switzerland and develop a peat exit plan. In fulfilment of the postulate 10.3377 Diener Lenz concerning the "peat exit plan", the Federal Council issued a report in which it argued for a steady reduction in peat use.

The Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) and the undersigned companies and industry associations agree that peat imports and their related environmental impacts must be reduced. With an annual peat consumption of 171,000 m<sup>3</sup>, retailers and garden centres are the largest market for peat sales in Switzerland in terms of volume. More specifically, 99,000 m<sup>3</sup> of peat is used for packaged soils, another 58,000 m<sup>3</sup> of peat is used for plants, and 14,000 m<sup>3</sup> is used for seedlings in the retail business.

In recent years, thanks to individual initiatives by various plant production stakeholders, substantial advances have been made in developing substrates that can be used as substitutes for peat in packaged soil products. In the interest of a consistent implementation of the peat exit plan, this Memorandum of Understanding focuses on approaches already used in the industry. Cooperation is focused particularly on a coordinated reduction of the production, supply and use of peat in packaged soil products sold on the market by retailers and garden centres.

## Aims of the Memorandum of Understanding

*The signatories intend to:*

1. work continuously toward a steady reduction in the use of peat in all sectors, to the extent technically and economically possible;
2. reduce the percentage of peat in packaged soil products\* (measured on the basis of total volume) for end users to a maximum of 5% by 2020;
3. provide the FOEN with information on imported and locally purchased volumes of peat so that data can be collected regularly for the purpose of measuring progress toward the agreed goals.

*\*including pure peat supplies and excluding covering materials, such as bark mulch and wood chips*

## Roles of the Stakeholders

- Companies (retailers, garden centres and soil manufacturers)  
Implement the transition to peat-free and low-peat soils. They are also responsible for raising the awareness of their specific end consumers.
- Industry associations  
Act as supporters. They will raise awareness among their members of the steady reduction of peat use in Switzerland and assist them in implementing the goals agreed upon in this Memorandum of Understanding.
- Swiss Confederation  
The FOEN will lead the implementation of the peat exit plan. It will coordinate the “Peat reduction in Gardening” working group and involve other federal offices as needed. The FOEN is responsible for reporting and involving other market participants. The FOEN will promote the availability of practical peat substitutes, for example, by providing financial support to research projects in this area.

## Types of Cooperation

- Consultations between the various parties
- Bilateral meetings
- Seminars and workshops on specific themes with other partners and research institutes
- Joint research projects
- Discussions with representatives of scientific, business, consumer protection and non-governmental organisations, etc.
- Creation of new working groups to coordinate peat reduction in other markets and peat application areas

## Implementation Review

In the context of the Green Economy Report and to monitor the effectiveness of efforts to implement the Memorandum of Understanding, the FOEN will collect data with the assistance of the undersigned companies and industry associations. If possible, other companies and associations that are active in the peat sector should be involved as well.

The first data collection, which will be focused exclusively on reducing the use of peat in packaged soils, is scheduled to be carried out in the summer of 2018. The details and steps of the data collection process will be determined by the “Peat reduction in Gardening” working group. The provisions of Swiss data protection legislation will be respected.

Should it be determined that one of the goals agreed upon in this Memorandum of Understanding will not be achieved by one of the undersigned parties, the FOEN will contact the party concerned directly in order to seek suitable solutions together.

## Responsibility and Costs

All activities should be carried out by mutual agreement. Each party is responsible for its costs, unless otherwise agreed.



Jumbo-Markt AG

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Head of Category Management GARDEN & HOME

Landi Schweiz AG

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Randy Honegger  
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René Burri  
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Reto Ruch  
Chief Commercial & Marketing Officer

Nora Meier  
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.....  
Res Schilling  
Chief Executive Officer

Ricoter Erdaufbereitung AG

.....  
Beat Sutter  
Head of Sales

Appendix GLOSSARY

<b>Term</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Berry production	Operations that specialise in the production of berries
Black chernozem	Raw material from mires, which consists of heavily decomposed mosses and grasses, with a fine structure
Covering material	Products used to cover the ground for the purposes of weed prevention, soil protection and decoration
Fruit production	Operations that specialise in the production of fruit
Garden mould	Trade name of an industrially manufactured substrate
Gardening, landscaping	Operations that specialise in the transformation, maintenance and creation of gardens
Manufacturer's brand	A branded product, i.e. a company's own product brand, from the perspective of an individual manufacturer
Mulch	See covering material
Ornamental plant production	Operations that specialise in the production of ornamental plants
Packaged soils	Industrially produced soils and substrates that are packaged in bags
Peat	Organic raw material created in mires
Potting soil	Classic term for an industrially produced and universally applicable gardening substrate
Raw material	Basic materials used to produce industrial substrates and soils
Seedlings	Young plants in a specific stage of growth
Store brands	Products commissioned by intermediaries to be manufactured for them and bear their brand label
Substitute	Raw material used in place of a different raw material
Substrate	Soil manufactured according to a formula
Tree nurseries	Operations that specialize in the production of bushes and trees
Vegetable production	Operations that specialise in the production of vegetables
White peat	Raw material from mires, which consists of slightly less decomposed mosses and grasses, with a coarse, highly fibrous structure
Young plants	Plants in a young stage of growth that are further cultivated