

EPAGMA UPDATE

May 2006

Waste from extractive industries – derogation for peat confirmed

An agreement between the European Parliament and Council on the Directive on the management of waste from extractive industries was formally approved by the European Parliament on January 18. The derogation for peat along the lines of the agreement reached in April by Member State governments was upheld. The new EU law will enter into force on 1 May. Member states have two years to transpose it into national law.

Eco-label for Growing Media

On 6 April the EU Eco-labelling Board and Regulatory Committee voted on the revised criteria for the eco-labels on growing media and soil improvers, and, as expected, decided to exclude products containing peat from the eco-label. EPAGMA has actively participated as a stakeholder in the process of the revision of the criteria, and has clearly and vocally indicated throughout the process that it supports the inclusion of (at least a certain percentage of) peat in eco-labelled products. Although the final vote result was not positive, EPAGMA's active involvement in this exercise has been very useful in terms of getting recognition for the superior quality of peat based GM and making the industry's voice heard at EU level.

Thematic Strategy on Prevention and Recycling Waste

On 21 December 2005 the European Commission adopted the Thematic Strategy on Waste which aims to overhaul EU's waste management policies. As regards biowaste, the Commission is not proposing a separate Biowaste Directive as had been planned previously. Instead, it will develop guidelines on applying life cycle thinking to biowaste management. The document also indicates that compost quality criteria will be adopted in the context of the Waste Framework Directive.

For more information on the Thematic Strategy, please see:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/waste/strategy.htm>

Thematic Strategy on Natural Resources

On 21 December 2005 the Commission published the Thematic Strategy on Sustainable Use of Natural Resources. The Strategy aims at de-linking economic growth and resource use from environmental impacts. It does not include benchmarks, targets, deadlines, nor does it put forward legislative proposals. The Strategy is meant to set out an analytical framework that will allow the environmental impact of resource use to be routinely taken account of in the policymaking.

For more information on the Thematic Strategy, please see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/comm/environment/natres/index.htm>

Biomass Action Plan

Following its 2004 Communication on the share of renewable energy in the EU, on 7 December 2005 the Commission adopted a new Biomass Action Plan. The Plan draws on consultations with stakeholders, in which EPAGMA also took part. It is designed to break Europe's dependence on fossil fuels, cut greenhouse gas emission and to increase the use of energy from forestry, agriculture and waste materials.

The Plan outlines measures in three sectors: heating, electricity and transport and announces more than 20 actions, most of which will be implemented from this year (2006) onwards.

For more information on Biomass Action Plan, please see:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/res/biomass_action_plan/index_en.htm

Security of Energy Supply

On 8 March the European Commission published a Green Paper on a European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy. The Green Paper identifies the major energy challenges and sets priority areas in the European energy policy including: security of supply; establishing a sustainable, efficient and diverse energy mix; global warming and developing energy efficient and low carbon technologies; develop common external energy policy. The Green Paper is a consultation document and it aims to stimulate discussion. On the basis of the response submitted by the stakeholders, the Commission will develop more concrete ideas on the energy issues. The consultation will be open till 26 September 2006.

For more information on the Green Paper, please see:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/green-paper-energy/index_en.htm

EPAGMA Study on Energy Peat Completed

The study on socio-economic impact of energy peat commissioned by EPAGMA and conducted by the Finnish Technical Research Centre VTT has been completed. The study covers 6 countries: Finland, Ireland, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and gives a comprehensive overview of the sector and its role in the European energy system. The results of the study will be communicated to the European Institutions.

Labelling Standards for Soil Improvers and Growing Media

All EPAGMA members present at the Directors' meeting on 22 March agreed and committed themselves to start using commonly agreed labelling standards on their professional horticulture products as soon as possible. Harmonized standards will ensure better transparency for the consumers. The standards will be available on the EPAGMA website.

International Purchase and Sales Conditions

All EPAGMA members present at the Directors' meeting on 22 March agreed to add a section (disclaimer) on microorganisms to the current International Purchase and Sales Conditions endorsed by EPAGMA. These Conditions are to be used voluntarily; they can be shared with national associations and translated into other languages than English (the English version will remain the official EPAGMA version). The revised version of the Conditions are available on the EPAGMA website.

Successful EPAGMA lunch seminar in the European Parliament

On 3 May, EPAGMA co-organised a very successful energy peat seminar in the European Parliament in Brussels. The lunch event, which was chaired by two leading members of the European Parliament, Reino Paasilinna from Finland and Lena Ek from Sweden, focused on peat as an important local source of energy and raised the problems that the sector has faced due to the EU's emissions trading scheme. The seminar attracted esteemed participants, including 10 MEPs and the Deputy Head of Cabinet from the European Commission's Environment Directorate. The keynote presentation given by Matti Hilli, EPAGMA's Chairman, triggered an interesting and lively debate. Other EPAGMA participants in the event were Håkan Bjur of Råsjö Torv, Magnus Brandel of the Swedish Peat Producers' Association and Kati Kaskeala from the EPAGMA Secretariat.

EPAGMA website registered on the .eu domain

On 7 April the .eu domain was opened to the public within the European Union, i.e. anyone could register an available .eu domain name. EPAGMA took this opportunity and registered its website. From now on EPAGMA website can be accessed through www.epagma.eu and, as so far, through www.epagma.org and www.epagma.com. EPAGMA e-mail address remains unchanged: info@epagma.org

EPAGMA meetings

- The EPAGMA Executive Board last met in Brussels on 7 February 2006. The next Board meeting is scheduled for 24 May 2006.
- The last meeting of all the EPAGMA members was held on 22 March 2006 in Brussels. The next meeting will take place on 21 June 2006 in Brussels.