Growing Media in France and Europe
Inventory and Current Perspectives

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Purpose
In France and more largely in Europe, the main constituents of growing media (GM) used in soilless culture are peats, due to their physical qualities (water retention, aeration, physical stability). But, this subfossil carbon resource is non-renewable or slowly renewable and societal demand and ecological policies aim to a wise use of peat and peatland (Strategy for Responsible Peatland Management, IPS, 2010; EPAGMA Code of Practice for Responsible Peat Management, 2009) and to promote renewable organic materials (bark, coir, wood, compost, etc.).

Commission II ("Utilization of peat and peatlands for horticulture, energy and other economic purposes") of the International Peat Society conducted a survey in order to evaluate the amounts of growing media constituents used in 13 major growing media producer countries in the EU (A=Austria, B=Belgium, DK=Denmark, FIN=Finland, F=France, D=Germany, IRE=Ireland, I=Italy, NL=Netherlands, P=Poland, S=Spain, S=Sweden, UK=United Kingdom). This survey was continued in more details in France for several years by the C.A.S.

Main results and Conclusions
Data show that there is an increase in the use of composted organic material in some countries, in particular for the hobby sector. Synthetic materials are of no importance in EU. Due to the specific properties of mineral materials, these are often applied in professional media. The availability and price of organic materials other than peat, i.e. bark or coir, often determine if a material is used as a constituent or not. Bog peat is still the overall predominant growing medium constituent in the EU. Peat-free growing media are highly esteemed by some stakeholder and user groups but still play an overall minor role in industrial production of growing media.

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