



SCS Certification Standard for Veriflora® Responsibly Managed Peatlands

SCS-003



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SCSstandards



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Record of Revisions

Version	Release date	Remark/changes
V1.0	August 2017	Original Version
V2.0	April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Added clarification around language usage▪ Clarified Standard scope and limitations▪ Updated and streamlined definitions list▪ Removed select requirements around pest and nutrient management and agrochemical use and storage (limited need for pest or nutrient management in peatland management)▪ Updated requirements around GHG inventory and discontinued use of stand-alone GHG policy for the Standard▪ Added requirements and guidance around claims associated with the Standard▪ Added requirements for entities seeking to make claims relating to purchased peat

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 The purpose of the Veriflora® Responsibly Managed Peatlands Standard (hereinafter “SCS-003” or “Standard”) is to establish a comprehensive framework and common set of environmental, social, and quality requirements by which to identify and encourage responsible peat moss harvesting practices and to stimulate continuous improvement in the peat moss industry.

1.1.2 This Standard seeks to:

- Encourage a growing segment of the peat moss harvesting sector to implement best management practices in terms of environmental, social, and quality performance;
- Stimulate innovation and promote continuous improvement over time;
- Provide a uniform standard and assessment methodology that can be applied when evaluating the performance of a diverse array of approaches to responsible peatland management;
- Reduce the environmental footprint of peat moss harvesting and enhance the degree to which peat moss harvesting operations restore carbon accumulating wetland ecosystems;
- Promote sound and responsible working conditions and ensure adequate health and safety measures for workers’ protection;
- Encourage peat moss producers to be good neighbors in their engagement with the surrounding community;
- Raise public awareness about the issues and solutions associated with peat moss harvesting; and
- Stimulate consumer purchases that reinforce responsible peatland management.

1.2 Intended Users

1.2.1 Intended users of this Standard are peat moss producers of all sizes, located around the globe. Any producer of peat moss (hereafter, “Producer”) may apply for Veriflora® Responsibly Managed Peatlands certification.

1.3 Language

1.3.1 The verb “shall” is used in criteria to indicate a requirement of the standard. The term “should” is used to indicate a recommendation. The verb “can” is used to express an ability to perform an action. The verb “may” is used to express permission to perform an action that is not a requirement. The verb “might” is used to express a condition that could potentially exist.

2. Scope and Limitations

2.1 Scope

- 2.1.1 The Standard applies to all processes and inputs under the Producer’s management related to the harvesting and handling of peat moss, including facilities involved in the screening of peat materials and creation of peat mixes.
- 2.1.2 This Standard is applicable to stages of peat harvesting, including peatland opening, harvesting, and restoration and rehabilitation activities that occur after cessation of harvesting activities. The Peat Moss Harvesting Operation (hereafter, “Operation”) may include several non-contiguous areas that are in different locations or sites. All open and closed peatlands are included in scope, as well as adjacent land designated as buffer zones, donor sites, and/or High Conservation Value areas.

2.2 Limitations

- 2.2.1 This Standard is voluntary and is not intended to replace the legal or regulatory requirements of any country in which peat moss products are produced, handled, or sold.
- 2.2.2 This Standard aims to support responsible harvesting of peat and restoration of the landscape post-harvesting and does not extend to the use phase of the extracted peat. Uses of peat that generate climate pollutants, e.g., peat burning for heating or electricity generation, are discouraged, but a full life cycle assessment of the environmental impacts of peat, i.e., use and end of life, is not within the scope of the Standard.

3. Conformance

3.1 Conformance to the Standard

- 3.1.1 In order to be considered conformant to this Standard, the Producer shall comply with all applicable requirements according to the following timeline:
- The majority of the Standard requirements shall be met by the time of initial certification (“Year 0”).
 - Any requirements specified “Year 1” in the Standard shall be met within one year of the initial certification audit, i.e., are applicable by the time of the first annual surveillance audit.
 - Any requirements specified “Year 2” in the Standard shall be met within two years of the initial certification audit, i.e., are applicable by the time of the second annual surveillance audit.
 - Year 2 and beyond, all requirements in the Standard are applicable and shall be met by the Producer and assessed starting at the time of the second annual surveillance audit and for all years thereafter.

- 3.1.2 In the event that the Producer acquires a new, non-certified peat harvesting area, the area may be excluded from the certification scope for up to one year from the date of acquisition.
- 3.1.3 In the case that an applicable local or national law or regulation is stricter than the requirements in this Standard, the law shall prevail; in the case that the requirements of this Standard are stricter, the requirements of this Standard shall prevail.
- 3.1.4 The Producer shall undergo audits against this Standard by an SCS Standards-approved certification body that follows the SCS-003 Certification Body Requirements.

3.2 Complaints and Appeals

- 3.2.1 A Producer has the right to appeal a certification decision within 30 days of receiving the final report. Appeals shall be submitted to the certification body for evaluation and resolution.
- 3.2.2 Complaints shall be handled directly by the approved certification body. If a satisfactory resolution is not found, a complaint may be elevated to SCS Standards.

4. Normative References

4.1 Normative References

- SCS Standards Certification Body Approval Requirements
- SCS-003 Certification Body Requirements

4.2 Supporting Documents

Additional documents are available for Producers seeking certification, either on the SCS website or to be delivered once the certification process has been initiated. Documents include, but are not limited to:

- Certification Manual: Describes the procedures for achieving and maintaining certification.

5. Terms and Definitions

Best Management Practice: A production technique that may be regionally and habitat specific, and that has been demonstrated to have the least environmental and human health impacts of the currently available methods to accomplish a given production outcome, while being economically viable.

Bog: A peatland primarily derived from decomposed *Sphagnum* moss, where the surface is typically isolated from ground water.

Buffer Zone: A physical strip of land, typically vegetated, that is created and/or preserved to prevent activities on one side of the zone from impacting the area on the other side. Such zones may protect

plants, soil, and/or the environment from threats posed by various sources including pests, weeds, disease, wind, and agrochemicals. In the context of peat operations, this typically refers to a strip of land surrounding the harvest area designed to mitigate the effects of peat harvesting operations on neighboring High Conservation Value (HCV) areas, including wetland and riparian zones.

Carbon Sequestration: The biochemical process by which atmospheric carbon dioxide is taken up by living organisms, such as trees, grasses, *Sphagnum* mosses, and other plants through photosynthesis and stored as carbon in biomass (e.g., trunks, branches, foliage, and roots), peat, and soils.

Certification Body: An SCS Standards-approved third-party organization authorized to conduct independent audits to assess conformance with this Standard.

Certified Product: A peat-based product, including its ingredients, that is in full conformity with the requirements of this Standard.

Chain of Custody: The network of entities that take legal and/or physical possession of a product from its point of production to the end consumer.

Child Labor: Any work performed by a person under the age of 15, or the minimum employment age required under local or national law, whichever is older, in accordance with International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 138.

Claim: Oral, written, implied, or symbolic representation, statement, or advertising or other form of communication presented to the public and/or buyers of peat moss products that relates to the certification status as Veriflora® Responsibly Managed Peatlands certified.

Compost: A mixture of decaying organic matter, as from leaves and manure, used to improve soil structure and provide nutrients.

Compostable: The ability of a product to break down into natural elements in a compost environment, leaving no toxicity in the soil.

Diaspore: Any parts of a plant capable of growing as a new plant, such as seeds and spores, roots, stems, leaves, branches, etc.

Discrimination: The unfair or unequal treatment of a person based on the basis of race, color, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, age, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin, or other personal characteristics.

Donor Site: A designated area of the peatland assigned specifically for collecting *Sphagnum* moss or other plant material(s) to be used for restoration or rehabilitation activities described in the Rehabilitation Plan.

Ecosystem: A biological community of organisms, including plants, animals and micro-organisms,

interacting in a physical environment within a defined geographic area (e.g., streams, ponds, wetlands, forests, grasslands).

Energy Efficiency: The relative amount of electricity or fuel used per unit of peat moss product produced.

Equal Opportunity: The policy of treating job applicants or employees equally without regard to the person's race, color, gender, pregnancy, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, age, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin, or other personal characteristics.

Erosion: The breakdown, detachment, transport, and redistribution of soil particles by forces of water, wind, and/or gravity.

Excessively High Noise Level: A noise level capable of causing permanent damage to the ears. 85 decibels (dB) or higher is considered dangerous with extended exposure (e.g., 8 hours); 100 dB can cause damage after 15 minutes; and 120 dB can cause damage immediately.

Fen: A peatland primarily derived from decomposed sedges and brown moss species, where the surface is typically not isolated from ground water.

Forced Labor: Any work or service that a person is coerced into performing, under involuntary servitude or otherwise under the threat of punishment.

Greenhouse Gas: Any gaseous emission that affects net global radiative forcing and contributes to climate change, including carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride.

Grievance: A complaint raised by a worker about a workplace-related issue or incident.

Hazardous Material: Any material that has the potential to cause harm to humans, animals or the environment if not properly managed, treated, stored, and disposed of.

High Conservation Value Area: Spaces that hold significant ecological, social, and/or cultural value. Places may be identified as HCV area on the basis of six categories: species diversity, landscape-level ecosystems and mosaics, ecosystems and habitats, ecosystem services, community needs, and cultural values (Source: HCV Network).

Monitoring: To test or sample, especially on a regular or ongoing basis, to evaluate compliance with a given standard or regulation.

Particulate Matter: A complex mixture of extremely small particles and liquid droplets, made up of any of a number of components, including acids (such as nitrates and sulfates), organic chemicals, metals, and soil or dust particles. Particulate matter includes dust and smoke, or can form in the atmosphere from other pollutants, such as ammonia, nitrous oxides, and volatile organic compounds.

Peat: Organic material composed mainly of dead plant matter in various stages of decomposition that is accumulated in a water-saturated environment and in the absence of oxygen.

Peatland: A wetland ecosystem in which the production of biomass has exceeded its decomposition, resulting in the accumulation of organic matter from plant debris. Also, an area with or without vegetation, with a naturally accumulated peat layer at the surface.

Peat Moss: A type of peat consisting primarily of various mosses of the genus *Sphagnum*, accumulating in peatlands.

Peat Moss By-Products: Roots, wood, dust, peat moss sift residues, and other low-value products.

Peat Moss Harvesting Operation: An enterprise engaged in the harvest and use of the peat moss. Also referred to as “Operation” in this Standard.

Peat Moss Harvesting Plan: The written document, or collection of documents, that describes the protocols and procedures used by the Peat Moss Harvesting Operation in carrying out its functions.

Peat Moss Products: Products derived from peat moss that can be packaged and commercially marketed or blended with other material to create media for planting or growing plants and for other biological and biomechanical uses.

Potable Water: Drinking water that is free from microorganisms, chemical substances, and radiological hazards at levels that constitute a threat to a person’s health, and is of an acceptable color, odor, and taste, as defined by applicable laws, or by the international norms of the World Health Organization, whichever are more stringent.

Processing: The transformation of raw ingredients into products, including cooking, baking, curing, heating, drying, mixing, grinding, churning, separating, extracting, cutting, fermenting, distilling, preserving, dehydrating, freezing, and chilling.

Producer: The legal entity responsible for the harvesting and sale of peat moss as well as the subsequent restoration and/or rehabilitation of peatlands. A Producer may also be involved in handling functions, including product packaging, blending, and shipping operations.

Record: Any information in written, visual, or electronic form that documents the activities undertaken by a Producer to demonstrate conformance with this Standard.

Rehabilitation: The rebuilding of peatland ecosystem structure and processes such as productivity and ecosystem functions and services, that may or may not involve the re-establishment of the pre-existing biotic integrity in terms of species composition and community structure. Rehabilitation is a means of working towards restoration.

Rehabilitation Plan: A plan that outlines peatland rehabilitation activities to be undertaken including

restoration, rewetting, wetland and wildlife management, tree and shrub planting, and other means of rehabilitation.

Restoration: The final outcome of the rehabilitation process in which a degraded ecosystem has been returned to a state of ecological equilibrium, where ecosystem functions have been restored and native species dominate. In the case of peatland restoration, the goal is to re-establish self-regulatory mechanisms that will lead back to functional peat accumulating ecosystems.

Safety Data Sheet (SDS): A document providing detailed information about the properties and uses of a chemical product or formulation, the nature of the product's hazards, appropriate safe handling procedures and emergency instructions. May also be referred to as Chemical Safety Data Sheet.

Scope 1: Direct emission sources that are owned or controlled by a reporting company, for example, emissions from combustion in owned or controlled boilers, furnaces, vehicles, etc. or emissions from chemical production in owned or controlled process equipment (Source: GHG Protocol Corporate Standard).

Scope 2: Indirect emission sources from the generation of electricity, heat/cooling, or steam that are consumed by a reporting entity client but are generated by sources owned and controlled by another entity (Source: GHG Protocol Scope 2 Guidance).

Sphagnum Farming: The cultivation of *Sphagnum* mosses from peatlands to produce biomass of non-decomposed *Sphagnum* fibers on a cyclic and renewable basis.

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): The step-by-step instructions compiled by the Peat Moss Harvesting Operation to help employees carry out routine operations.

Stakeholder: Any person, organization, company, or other party that affects or is affected by peatland management and the handling and use of peat and peat-related products.

Threatened or Endangered Species: Flora or fauna species that have been listed as threatened or endangered by the legal state or provincial jurisdiction within which peat moss harvesting is being conducted, as well as in international listings, such as the Red List of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature or NatureServe¹.

Trafficked Labor: Any work performed by a person who has been recruited, transported, harbored, or obtained by means of the use of threat, force, coercion, or deception for the purpose of exploitation.

Water Bodies: Bodies of water that exist naturally, such as lakes, ponds, lagoons, rivers, streams, and wetlands (marshes, and shallow open water wetlands).

Water Quality Management Plan: A plan that outlines water quality management activities to be

¹ <http://www.natureserve.org/>

undertaken by the Producer including goals, mitigation strategies, description of practices and timetables, and a monitoring plan.

Watershed: An area of land that feeds water to a river, draining through the landscape into tributaries and main river channels. Also known as catchments, drainage basins, or river basins.

Wetland: Seasonally or permanently water-logged areas characterized by hydric soils and vegetation adapted for life in saturated or flooded conditions. Wetlands can be stagnant systems (e.g., bogs), slow flowing (e.g., fens, swamps), or have fluctuating water levels (e.g., marshes, shallow open water).

6. General Requirements

6.1 Legal Compliance

- 6.1.1 The Producer shall attest that, to the best of their knowledge, the operation is compliant with its policies and all applicable legal requirements pertaining to:
- a. Environmental protection (i.e., air quality, pest management, water quality management and drainage, erosion control, land alteration, vulnerable habitat and species protection, waste management);
 - b. Worker protection (i.e., worker recruitment and hiring, use of labor intermediaries, wages and benefits, work hours and overtime, leave and termination, occupational health and safety, accidents and exposures to hazardous materials, grievances, child labor and forced labor prohibitions); and
 - c. Financial reporting and record keeping.
- 6.1.2 The Producer shall have all necessary permits, certificates, and/or licenses required by applicable laws and regulations.
- 6.1.3 The Producer shall demonstrate legal tenure for the land, including donor sites, and legal permission for peatland harvesting.

6.2 Quality Management System

- 6.2.1 The Producer shall design, document, implement, and maintain a Quality Management System that is proportionate to the purpose, size, and complexity of the Producer's operation and that is designed to support conformance with this Standard.
- 6.2.2 The Producer shall conduct monitoring and analysis of the Quality Management System to determine conformance with procedures, identify opportunities for continuous improvement, and identify preventative and corrective actions needed.
- 6.2.3 Documents and records shall be stored securely and shall be accessible for review for a period of at least three years, or for a duration of time in line with local legal requirements, whichever is greater.

6.3 Economic Sustainability

- 6.3.1 The Producer shall have a methodology for measuring the financial health of its operation, including an annual financial plan.
- 6.3.2 The Producer shall set aside funds on an ongoing basis to finance the rehabilitation process that will occur following the closure of any certified peat harvesting site.

6.4 Peat Moss Harvesting Plan

6.4.1 The Producer shall establish and maintain a written Peat Moss Harvesting Plan, to be reviewed annually and updated as necessary, which describes its operations and activities as a means of ensuring that the product conforms to the requirements of this Standard.

6.4.2 The Plan shall provide, at a minimum, descriptions of:

- a. Management objectives, including goals for improving environmental, social, and economic performance;
- b. Most recent known prior use of the land currently being used or planned for use in the Peat Moss Harvesting Operation;
- c. Each step in the process of harvesting and handling the Peat Moss product(s);
- d. Description of peat resources, including peat type (e.g., *Sphagnum* peat, sedge peat), degree of decomposition, and other peat conditions (e.g., peat depth);
- e. Mapping of all past, present, and planned harvesting areas (see 6.5);
- f. Estimation of total harvestable peat and annual harvest volumes for each mapped harvested area;
- g. Description of harvesting techniques; and
- h. Restoration objectives and timelines.

6.5 Mapping of the Operation

6.5.1 The Producer shall provide maps with legends that include:

- a. Operation boundaries;
- b. Harvesting area boundaries;
- c. Restoration and rehabilitation areas;
- d. Buffer zones;
- e. Donor sites;
- f. High Conservation Value areas;
- g. Surface and groundwater sources (e.g., ponds, rivers, and streams) with indication of water flow direction, where applicable;
- h. Drainage ditches with indication of water flow direction;
- i. Sedimentation basins;
- j. Buildings and other structures within the area of operation;
- k. Air and water quality monitoring stations such as sediment traps, if applicable;
- l. Access roads; and
- m. Any other areas outside of the Operation boundary that could be adversely impacted by the activities of the Operation.

6.6 Traceability / Chain of Custody

6.6.1 The Producer shall ensure traceability of certified product during all steps of harvest and post-harvest handling, processing, and storage for as long as the product is in the Producer's custody. The product is considered to have left the Producer's custody when it is sold to an intermediary or to a final customer. The traceability system shall include the following elements, at a minimum:

- a. Auditable records of the amount and types of certified product harvested, the amount in storage inventory, and sales of certified product;
- b. Auditable shipping records (e.g., purchase order numbers, shipping invoices, bills of lading, order documents) indicating the types, volumes and recipient of peat products shipped, including separate accounting or designation of certified and non-certified products, where applicable;
- c. Oversight of and traceability through downstream facilities, including those outside of the Producer's ownership and/or management, for as long as the product is in the Producer's custody;
- d. Physical separation (i.e., segregation) between certified and non-certified products in storage, during transfer to shipping, and in shipping;² and
- e. Mechanisms to ensure that the peat content in a certified product is always a minimum of 75% certified peat.

6.6.2 Where mixing of certified and non-certified material occurs, the Producer shall keep auditable records of mixing processes and ratios.

6.6.3 If the certified Producer is selling certified peat moss to a buyer for processing and/or resale, the certified Producer shall inform the buyer that, in order to make a claim with regards to the certified peat, the buyer shall:

- a. Request approval from the certification body for all intended claims and only make claims pursuant to the requirements in this Standard;
- b. Complete the SCS Handler Affidavit form and may be subject to a third-party audit; and
- c. Not mix certified and non-certified peat without undergoing a third-party handler audit at the point of mixing.

² Physical separation of certified and non-certified product must be maintained within the Operation, for example, where certified and non-certified peat are produced by the same operator as per 3.1.2.

7. Responsible Peat Moss Harvesting

7.1 Water Quality Management and Drainage

- 7.1.1 The Producer shall develop and implement a written Water Quality Management Plan for all areas, which adheres to applicable federal and state/provincial legal requirements, at a minimum, and takes into account the life cycle of the peatland³ and the future needs for restoration, rehabilitation, and the surrounding wetland environment. The plan shall include at least the following:
- a. Water quality goals for each area of operation, including parameters such as pH and suspended solids;
 - b. Drainage policies and procedures that serve as a primary technical aid in the design and implementation of the Rehabilitation Plan, with consideration for the relative sequence of rewetting different sections of the peatland for rehabilitation activities;
 - c. Concrete strategies to mitigate the operational impacts on water quality;
 - d. Clear argumentative support for the choice(s) of the mitigation strategies for each area of operation;
 - e. Flow diagram, maps, and/or description of practices and procedures used to ensure that water quality goals are achievable;
 - f. Timetable and methods for achieving water quality goals for each area of operation;
 - g. Monitoring plan that includes sampling and analysis procedures; and
 - h. Written design and operational criteria for mitigating the operational impacts on water quality, including methods such as sediment basins and overland flow.
- 7.1.2 The Producer shall demonstrate that its personnel are qualified to carry out their responsibilities in accordance with the Water Quality Management Plan.
- 7.1.3 The Producer shall initiate water quality monitoring prior to peatland opening and continue monitoring during the harvesting time period. The Producer may monitor the water quality at decreasing intervals over the life cycle of the peatland, provided that the water quality goals are being met.
- 7.1.4 The Producer shall maintain auditable records of water quality monitoring that are based upon a written protocol for water sampling and analysis. The sampling protocol(s) shall emphasize more frequent sampling at the opening of the peatland and a reduced sampling frequency commensurate with water quality improvements over successive years.

³ The life cycle of the peatland includes opening, harvesting, and rehabilitation.

7.2 Air Quality Management

- 7.2.1 The Producer shall develop and implement written air quality management policies and procedures in order to limit the impacts on air quality during peatland harvesting and peat harvesting activities. At a minimum, these policies and procedures shall include the following:
- a. Particulate matter controls at harvesting sites and in handling/processing facilities;
 - b. Air quality monitoring procedures (meeting local or regional regulations, as applicable);
and
 - c. Where real or perceived public impacts have been noted, a written plan with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) shall be instituted for operators to remediate impacts on air quality.
- 7.2.2 Year 1: The Producer shall maintain auditable records of air quality monitoring that are based upon a written protocol for air sampling and analysis.

7.3 Fire Prevention and Emergencies

- 7.3.1 The Producer shall develop and implement a written fire prevention and emergency contingency plan for protecting peatlands and processing facilities from fire. At a minimum, the plan shall address:
- a. Goals for peatland and facility protection;
 - b. Identification and training of human resources in case of a fire event;
 - c. Measures to limit the risk of fire (e.g., equipment inspection, water storage, checking wind speed at harvesting, and public awareness);
 - d. Procedures for monitoring the temperatures of harvested peat to avoid spontaneous combustion;
 - e. An assessment of the area effectively covered by the fire prevention policies and procedures; and
 - f. Description of the use of firefighting resources, including but not limited to:
 - i. Access roads;
 - ii. Water sources;
 - iii. Human resources;
 - iv. Firefighting equipment;
 - v. Communications;
 - vi. Emergency preparedness; and
 - vii. Community and/or regional interagency cooperation.

7.4 Chemical Use

- 7.4.1 For each chemical input used for peat storage and/or peatland management (e.g., for weed control as part of rehabilitation activities), the Producer shall maintain auditable records including a safety data sheet (SDS) and records showing evidence of usage following the SDS instructions.
- 7.4.2 The Producer shall select and apply any fertilizers used on the Operation in a manner that minimizes the risks of runoff and leaching.

7.5 Restoration and Rehabilitation

- 7.5.1 The Producer shall have a written Rehabilitation Plan prior to the opening of any new peatland area as well as for all currently harvested areas and closed areas. The objective of the Rehabilitation Plan shall be to work towards the long-term goal of ecological restoration.⁴
- 7.5.2 The Rehabilitation Plan shall be reviewed annually and updated as necessary.
- 7.5.3 The Rehabilitation Plan shall include, at a minimum:
- a. The goals for rehabilitation, including measurable targets for vegetation species composition and cover;
 - b. Clear argumentative support for the choice(s) of the rehabilitation goals based on:
 - i. Current scientific research,
 - ii. Site specific characteristics (e.g., hydrology, presence of fen plant species re-establishment, topography), and,
 - iii. In the case of peatlands that are to be closed or are near the end of extraction activities, consideration of remnant peat conditions (e.g., physio-chemical properties);
 - c. Description of practices and procedures used to ensure rehabilitation success;
 - d. Details on management of drainage ditches following cessation of harvesting activities;
 - e. Estimated timetable for cessation of harvesting activities;
 - f. Timetable and methods for rehabilitation; and
 - g. Estimated yearly costs of implementing the Rehabilitation Plan and final costs for rehabilitation for each planned area.
- 7.5.4 The Producer shall demonstrate that rehabilitation activities commence as soon as technically achievable following cessation of harvesting activities.

⁴ For the purposes of this Standard, restoration is considered to be the long-term goal of returning the peatland to a state of ecological equilibrium in which ecosystem functions have been restored and native species dominate. In the case of peatland restoration, the goal is to re-establish self-regulatory mechanisms that will lead back to functional peat accumulating ecosystems. Rehabilitation is the process of making progress towards this goal, i.e., by providing necessary inputs/support to reestablish ecosystem functions.

- 7.5.5 The Producer shall monitor the area(s) targeted for rehabilitation to demonstrate progress towards meeting the goals of the Rehabilitation Plan. Monitoring of the area(s) targeted for rehabilitation shall include, at a minimum:
- a. Evaluation of hydrological shifts, beginning the first year following commencement of rehabilitation activities, with regular frequency thereafter (at least every three years); and
 - b. Vegetative surveys, beginning the first year following commencement of rehabilitation activities, with regular frequency thereafter (at least every three years).
- 7.5.6 The Producer shall review and update the Rehabilitation Plan based on monitoring data, as necessary.
- 7.5.7 The Producer shall demonstrate that personnel in charge of rehabilitation activities are qualified to carry out their responsibilities.
- 7.5.8 The Producer shall ensure, to the extent possible, that the Rehabilitation Plan is fully executed, even in the situation where the Producer will no longer play an active role in the management of the site.

Note: When the area of operation has been fully restored or rehabilitated according to the goals of the Rehabilitation Plan, it no longer falls under the purview of the Rehabilitation Plan requirements of this Standard, provided that the Producer has documented evidence that the goals have been met.

- 7.5.9 The Producer shall demonstrate that they have established a donor site or sites representing at least 10% of the peatland harvested areas. In cases where the donor site(s) represents less than 10% of the peatland harvested areas, the Producer shall provide written justification and evidence demonstrating that they have sufficient diaspores for rehabilitation (e.g., from a new site that will be opened).
- 7.5.10 The donor sites shall have, at a minimum, the following characteristics:
- a. A species composition that supports the restoration or rehabilitation goals; and
 - b. The ability to provide diaspores in sufficient quantity and viability.

Note: Donor sites may include donor sites that have already been used, restored sites, or *Sphagnum* farming sites, and may be included in the buffer zones.

- 7.5.11 The Producer shall monitor the continued viability of donor sites to provide sufficient diaspores needed for rehabilitation in accordance with the timetable established in the Rehabilitation Plan.
- 7.5.12 If monitoring of donor inventory reveals that the donor site viability is insufficient, the Producer shall take steps to expand the donor site or select alternative sites.

- 7.5.13 The Producer shall manage donor sites in such a way that ensures the continued integrity of the site's vegetation and species composition, with the exception of cases where donor material is taken from a peatland site that is in the process of being opened.

8. Ecosystem Monitoring and Protection

8.1 Baseline Description of Flora and Fauna

- 8.1.1 The Producer shall provide a baseline description of flora and fauna within the boundaries of the Operation prior to peatland opening, or if harvesting operations are ongoing, a baseline representing the time of the initial certification.

8.2 High Conservation Value Areas and Threatened Species

- 8.2.1 The Producer shall provide a description of areas of High Conservation Value and a list of any threatened or endangered habitats or species within the property boundaries of and bordering the Peat Moss Harvesting Operation, as listed by applicable laws and by international organizations (e.g., the Red List of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature), and federal and state/provincial agencies.
- 8.2.2 The Producer shall not clear High Conservation Value areas or engage in other activities that negatively impact the identified threatened or endangered habitats or species without a plan to restore the areas at a later date.

8.3 Impacts on the Surrounding Ecosystem

- 8.3.1 The Producer shall develop and implement written monitoring policies and procedures, which include, at a minimum:
- a. Status of and impact on non-exploited peatlands and other wetland types designated as buffer zones, donor sites and/or High Conservation Value areas, at least every five years;
 - b. Vegetation surveys, including specification of any changes to plant species composition and structure of the surrounding ecosystem from the baseline description.⁵ The frequency of the vegetative surveys shall be established by the Producer and justified in writing; and
 - c. Status of erosion control and ongoing monitoring of areas subject to erosion (e.g., steep slopes, gullies, roads).
- 8.3.2 Year 1: The Producer shall begin identifying and implementing mitigation techniques in response to ecosystem monitoring, if negative impacts have been identified.

⁵ Structural ecosystem changes may include, but is not necessarily limited to, changes to the height of trees as a result of the peat harvesting operation.

8.3.3 Year 2: The Producer shall provide an assessment of the efficacy of any mitigation measures implemented.

8.4 Buffer Zones

8.4.1 The Producer shall maintain buffer zones adjacent to water bodies in watershed recharge zones, and between peat operations and HCV areas.

8.4.2 The characteristics of the buffer zones shall adhere to applicable federal and state/provincial legal requirements, at a minimum.

8.4.3 The Producer shall establish and implement a monitoring program to determine buffer zone effectiveness in protecting water quality and reducing soil erosion, as well as in providing other benefits such as wildlife corridors, as applicable.

8.5 Contaminant Discharges

8.5.1 The Producer shall develop and implement written policies and procedures for identifying and tracking its principal contaminants and their sources (e.g., oil, hydraulic fluid, organic matter leachates).

8.5.2 The Producer shall provide a description of any current or historic land use practices that present risks for the discharge of contaminants into surrounding water bodies and wetlands, and/or pose risks for the buildup of contaminants in soils, run-off into surface water, or percolation into groundwater.

8.5.3 The Producer shall implement policies and procedures that include at least the following:

- a. Minimization of the potential for contamination;
- b. Remediation of contaminants, where present; and
- c. Monitoring of water and soil via testing, based contamination risk and/or evidence, with adequate frequency and documentation.

8.5.4 If media mixes involve organic or synthetic materials that pose a risk to the environment, the Producer shall demonstrate that the operations do not discharge these materials from the blending/product mixing facilities to the environment.

8.6 Ecosystem Protection Activities

8.6.1 The Producer shall implement ecosystem protection activities intended to reduce negative impacts of peat harvesting on surrounding areas and shall provide descriptions of each activity. Examples may include maintenance of forested wetlands, maintenance of buffer zones, and/or planting of windbreaks.

Note: Ecosystem protections have the additional benefits of supporting terrestrial carbon stabilization and GHG sequestration and may contribute to achieving GHG targets (see 9.2).

8.6.2 The Producer shall demonstrate that ecosystem protection activities are supported by scientifically tested methods.

9. Resource Conservation and Energy Efficiency

9.1 Energy Management, Consumption, and Efficiency

9.1.1 The Producer shall provide a summary of electricity and fuel consumption activities, and records of fuel and electricity used for harvesting processes, screening and mixing operations, and administrative facilities.

9.1.2 The Producer shall develop written protocols and procedures to reduce energy consumption in operations (e.g., fuel, electricity, transportation), including energy efficiency targets and timetables.

9.1.3 Year 1: The producer shall implement and maintain protocols and procedures to reduce energy consumption in operations and document their efficacy.

9.2 Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Target

9.2.1 The Producer shall develop an accurate baseline GHG inventory in accordance with the GHG Protocol Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard (Revised Edition), the GHG Protocol Land Sector and Removals Guidance, and industry best practices. The inventory shall be expressed in terms of metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) and shall include Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions.

Note: Within this Standard, scope 1 emissions for peat operations are understood to include the following:

- Mechanical sources, specifically, direct and indirect emissions linked to mobile or stationary machinery as well as fugitive emissions of the refrigeration and air conditioning equipment; and
- Non-mechanical sources, specifically, GHG emissions and carbon sequestration due to peatland use and development (emission factors related to drained areas, stockpile, restoration or rehabilitation areas, etc.).

9.2.2 The Producer shall use the baseline GHG inventory as the basis to develop GHG targets and strategies to reduce the GHG emissions and/or increase GHG sequestration, with timetables for implementation.

9.2.3 Year 1: The Producer shall track and document progress toward meeting the GHG target.

9.3 Packaging Resource Minimization

- 9.3.1 The Producer shall document the following with regard to packaging:
- a. Amount of material used for packaging and shipping (weight)⁶, and
 - b. Opportunities for prioritization of materials that are reused, recycled, recyclable, compostable, or made from sustainably sourced materials.
- 9.3.2 Year 1: the Producer shall develop and implement a plan to minimize packaging-related waste, including timelines and performance benchmarks, by one or more of the following methods:
- a. Reducing the volume of packaging per unit of product delivered;
 - b. Increasing the proportion of material that is reusable, recyclable, compostable, or certified recycled; and/or
 - c. Obtaining materials from certified sustainable sources.

9.4 New and Emergent Technologies

- 9.4.1 Year 1: The Producer shall assess new technologies when available, including whether adoption of new technologies is justified based on the potential for operational efficiency and/or a reduction of the Operation's environmental footprint.

10. Integrated Waste Management

10.1 Management of Organic and Inorganic Wastes

- 10.1.1 The Producer shall store and dispose of wastes in accordance with local and national laws and regulations.
- 10.1.2 The Producer shall provide a quantitative annual report detailing the volumes or weights of organic and inorganic waste materials, including production, packaging, industrial, construction, and other wastes that are recycled, re-used, composted, and/or sent to landfill.
- 10.1.3 The Producer shall develop written policies and procedures for waste management, including goals and timelines to minimize the quantity of organic and inorganic materials sent to the landfill.
- 10.1.4 Year 1: The Producer shall implement waste management procedures to meet waste diversion goals and timelines and shall report on such goals annually.

⁶ The generation of waste that occurs during the packaging and shipping process is considered in the Integrated Waste Management requirements (section 10).

- 10.1.5 The Producer shall properly segregate inorganic wastes to facilitate recovery for recycling, reuse, repurposing, or disposal in appropriate designated facilities either on or off-site.
- 10.1.6 The Producer shall store waste in a manner that does not negatively impact the Peat Moss Harvesting Operation or the surrounding environment (e.g., leaching, waste dispersion).
- 10.1.7 The Producer shall not burn organic or inorganic waste.

10.2 Hazardous Materials Storage

- 10.2.1 The Producer shall store hazardous materials in compliance with local and national building codes and guidelines and shall ensure that storage areas are not susceptible to flooding.
- 10.2.2 The Producer shall ensure that areas where hazardous materials are stored and mixed are clearly marked, have appropriate signage, and are equipped with readily accessible emergency equipment that includes, at a minimum:
- a. Sawdust, sand, or other appropriate absorbent material for spills;
 - b. Empty containers and bags to repack damaged or leaking containers;
 - c. Shovel and broom;
 - d. Fire extinguisher;
 - e. Emergency protective gear;
 - f. Water supply;
 - g. An eyewash kit; and
 - h. Posted emergency procedures.
- 10.2.3 Hazardous materials are stored in their original marked containers or are otherwise properly labeled and identified, and are segregated to facilitate proper storage, handling, transportation, and disposal.
- 10.2.4 Visibly damaged, leaking, or weathered packing materials shall be removed from storage areas and contents transferred to empty containers that are labeled accordingly.

10.3 Handling and Disposal of Hazardous Materials

- 10.3.1 The Producer shall identify one or more individuals responsible for the storage and handling of hazardous materials as well as the training all relevant employees in safe handling procedures.
- 10.3.2 Transport of hazardous materials shall be conducted by trained workers and in a way that avoids damage to containers and prevents contamination risk to workers or worker equipment not designed specifically for hazardous material use.

- 10.3.3 The Producer shall dispose of used chemical containers that may contain hazardous residues in accordance with label instructions.
- 10.3.4 Pressure-treated lumber shall be handled as hazardous waste and not be burned, composted, or mulched.
- 10.3.5 Appropriate corrective action shall be taken for all incidents involving any hazardous material that could negatively impact workers or the environment (e.g., spills) consistent with the Producer's emergency procedures.

11. Fair Labor Practices

11.1 Hiring and Termination Practices

- 11.1.1 The Producer shall have written work agreements (e.g., employment contract) describing the terms of hire with all workers before they enter employment, in a language that is understandable by the worker.
- 11.1.2 The Producer shall not require HIV, genetic, or pregnancy tests as a condition of hire, or thereafter.
- 11.1.3 The Producer shall not retain identity papers or other original personal documents or require workers to pay deposits as a condition of employment.
- 11.1.4 The Producer shall post, or otherwise make accessible to all workers (e.g., in an employee handbook or manual), written policies pertaining to hiring and employment, occupational health and safety, non-discrimination and sexual harassment, grievances, child labor, workplace conditions, freedom of association, and collective bargaining.
- 11.1.5 Workers shall have the right to terminate their employment after reasonable notice.
- 11.1.6 The Producer shall maintain auditable records in personnel files describing causes for termination and shall demonstrate that any termination of employment has been carried out in accordance with local and national laws.

11.2 Contract Labor

- 11.2.1 The Producer shall only use licensed labor intermediaries that are compliant with legal requirements, as well as applicable regulations in the workers' country(ies) of origin, consistent with ILO Convention 143 [Ref. 9].
- 11.2.2 The Producer shall not engage in recruitment and hiring practices that avoid obligations to workers under applicable labor or social security laws and regulations.

11.2.3 When contract labor is used, the Producer shall develop a written policy requiring its contractors to uphold the practices outlined in 11.1 of this Standard.

11.3 Non-Discrimination

11.3.1 The Producer shall provide equal opportunity and shall not discriminate in recruitment, access to training, work duties, benefits, working conditions, or other employment-related activities on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, age, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin, or other personal characteristics.

11.3.2 The Producer shall provide workers with equal pay for equal work, regardless of gender, unless contracts stipulate otherwise (e.g., based on seniority), as per ILO Convention 100 [Ref. 9].

11.4 Wages

11.4.1 The Producer shall pay workers at least the cash equivalent of the national minimum legal wage or a wage that is consistent with local industry standards, whichever is greater.

11.4.2 Consistent with ILO Convention 110, the Producer shall make wage deductions only under conditions and to the extent prescribed by national laws or regulations or fixed by collective agreement. Workers shall be informed of the conditions under which and the extent to which such deductions may be made [Ref. 9].

11.4.3 The Producer shall pay workers regularly in accordance with national law, in cash or cash equivalent (e.g., check, direct deposit).

11.4.4 The Producer shall ensure that payments of wages are made in cash in the local currency, or cash equivalent (e.g., direct deposit), either directly to workers or through legitimate services (e.g., banks, payroll companies).

11.4.5 The Producer shall issue written pay records to workers that clearly state the wages, taxes, and other withholding deductions.

11.4.6 The Producer shall provide workers with access to their complete personal earnings records and other employment records.

11.4.7 The Producer shall maintain complete written earning records for workers which at a minimum itemizes all wages and deductions in a form that can be audited.

11.4.8 The Producer shall establish policies for worker pay increases and promotions that take into consideration work performance, seniority, and level of training on an equitable basis.

11.5 Working Hours and Overtime

- 11.5.1 The Producer shall not require workers to work more than the maximum total hours per week specified by applicable national laws. If there are no national laws specifying hours of work, then the Producer shall not require workers to work more than 48 hours per work week, excluding overtime, except when a written agreement exists between the Producer and its workforce specifying an upper limit.
- 11.5.2 The Producer shall compensate workers for overtime hours at a rate specified by local or national laws, or as determined by a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), when applicable.
- 11.5.3 Overtime work shall be voluntary. Workers shall not be discriminated against nor denied employment if they are unable or unwilling to work overtime.
- 11.5.4 The Producer shall demonstrate, and workers confirm, that overtime does not exceed 12 hours per week, or amount to 16 consecutive total work hours in a 24-hour period.
- 11.5.5 The Producer shall permit workers, at a minimum, 24 consecutive hours off in every seven-day period or what is required by local law, whichever is greater, except during peak harvest periods, provided such a period does not exceed 30 days and that workers are paid for overtime.
- 11.5.6 The Producer shall demonstrate the implementation, frequency, and duration of breaks during working hours.

11.6 Freedom of Association, Right to Organize, and Collective Bargaining

- 11.6.1 The Producer shall acknowledge in writing the workers' right to freedom of association, in accordance with ILO Convention 87 [Ref. 9].
- 11.6.2 The Producer shall state in writing that both the employer and workers each have the right to establish organizations, to draw up the rules of the organizations, to elect representatives, and to formulate programs and activities aimed at benefiting workers and their families, in accordance with ILO Convention 98 [Ref. 9].
- 11.6.3 The Producer shall acknowledge in writing the workers' right to collective bargaining, in accordance with ILO Convention 98 [Ref. 9].
- 11.6.4 The Producer shall not terminate or enact punitive measures against any worker for involvement in union organization activities, or engage in anti-union activities, in accordance with ILO Conventions 98 and 135 [Ref. 9]. Any workers subject to punitive action or terminated for such activities shall be reinstated or receive appropriate compensation.

- 11.6.5 The Producer shall not subject worker representatives to discrimination, harassment, or administrative oversight, and shall provide worker representatives with access to all workplaces necessary to enable them to carry out their representation functions, as per ILO Conventions 98 and 135 [Ref. 9].
- 11.6.6 The Producer shall ensure the right of workers to gather to discuss workplace grievances without fear of reprisal or other negative consequences.
- 11.6.7 The Producer shall demonstrate a process through which workplace issues and the negotiation of working conditions are resolved in a timely manner.
- 11.6.8 The Producer shall recognize a democratically elected workers' association, if such an association has been formed.

11.7 Child Labor

- 11.7.1 The Producer shall not accept employment of any persons under the age of 15 or whatever age is required under local or national law, whichever is older, in accordance with ILO Convention 138 [Ref. 9].⁷
- 11.7.2 The Producer shall demonstrate that age verification is required at the time of hire.
- 11.7.3 The Producer shall not allow workers under the age of 18 to handle potentially harmful chemicals or undertake jobs that inherently have the potential to jeopardize health and safety as per ILO Convention 138 [Ref. 9].
- 11.7.4 The Producer shall observe all legal requirements for the work of authorized minors, including, but not limited to, those pertaining to hours of work, wages, and minimum education and working conditions.
- 11.7.5 The Producer shall maintain the following documentation for all workers who are legal minors under the age of 18:
- a. Name;
 - b. Date of birth;
 - c. Current address;
 - d. Name of parents or legal guardian;
 - e. Employment authorization signed by parents or legal guardian;
 - f. Type of work being conducted;
 - g. Number of hours assigned and worked; and

⁷ Exceptions to this requirement may be made for family businesses that do not regularly employ hired workers, to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

- h. Salary.

11.8 Voluntary Labor

- 11.8.1 All work shall be voluntary, without threat of penalty or sanction.
- 11.8.2 The Producer shall not use forced labor, compulsory labor, trafficked labor, slave labor, bonded labor, indentured labor, convict labor, or other forms of undue pressure or coercion.
- 11.8.3 The Producer shall ensure that workers have not received loans from the Producer or the labor intermediary that are subject to unreasonable terms and conditions, such as excessively high interest rate.
- 11.8.4 The Producer shall ensure that workplace and worker-provided housing safety and security policies do not impinge upon workers' freedom of movement (i.e., ability to come and go).
- 11.8.5 The Producer shall establish clear procedures for identifying and remediating forced labor violations including, at a minimum:
 - a. Implementing a confidential reporting mechanism;
 - b. Protecting whistleblowers from retaliation;
 - c. Documenting all remediation actions including:
 - i. Nature of non-compliance;
 - ii. Remediation steps taken;
 - iii. Timeline for implementation;
 - iv. Follow-up verification; and
 - d. Maintaining records of all remediation activities.

11.9 Worker-Provided Housing, Potable Water, and Sanitary Facilities

- 11.9.1 The Producer shall ensure any employer-provided housing meets, at a minimum, the following:
 - a. Has safe and operable electricity and plumbing;
 - b. Is structurally sound and in a good state of repair;
 - c. Is clean and litter-free;
 - d. Has potable water;
 - e. Has sanitary facilities;
 - f. Has waste collection;
 - g. Has safe, sanitary sewage disposal;
 - h. Has sufficient fire exits;
 - i. Has a clean, sufficiently equipped area for food preparation;

- j. Has a regularly serviced first aid kit; and
 - k. Has adequate ventilation and climate control, as appropriate.
- 11.9.2 The Producer shall demonstrate that within worker housing units, an adequate amount of floor space and sleeping space is provided to each person, with, at a minimum, access to the following:
- a. Secure space for storing personal items;
 - b. One clean and separate bed, constructed of sturdy and comfortable material with, at a minimum, foam support; and
 - c. Sleeping quarters with the option of separate accommodations to address gender-based or married couple privacy concerns.
- 11.9.3 The Producer shall label potable and non-potable water sources to assure worker protection. If water supply is not maintained by relevant government authorities, then potability shall be documented through regular chemical analysis to WHO potability⁸ or national standards, whichever are higher.

11.10 Workplace Health and Safety

- 11.10.1 The Producer shall enforce proper use of equipment safety guards and personal protective gear.
- 11.10.2 The Producer shall require workers or others who may be exposed to hazardous chemicals, particulate matter, or other physical workplace risks, to wear appropriate clothing and additional protective equipment when operating machinery. Such protective equipment shall be provided at no cost to all applicable workers, and may include respirators, goggles or face shields, head protection, non-permeable overalls or ponchos, aprons, gloves, rubber boots, hearing protection, etc. [Ref. 9].
- 11.10.3 The Producer shall maintain protective equipment in good working order, meeting local occupational health and safety standards. Such equipment shall be replaced by the Producer when deemed necessary, based on corroborated worker reports, internal reports, and/or external audits.
- 11.10.4 The Producer shall maintain the appropriate supplies and equipment to address major medical emergencies associated with occupational health risks, including a first-aid kit, an eye flush, and/or shower facility for accidental exposure to hazardous chemicals and irritants.
- 11.10.5 The Producer shall enforce the workers' rights to remove themselves from situations when they have reasonable justification to believe that there is an imminent and serious risk to their safety or health, consistent with ILO Convention 170 [Ref. 9].

⁸ http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/2011/dwg_guidelines/en/

11.10.6 In the case of pregnancy, the Producer shall reassign a worker to a position that does not involve heavy lifting, protracted bending, or other inappropriate physical activities, and does not involve exposure to chemicals based on SDS recommendation, without any reduction in pay.

11.10.7 The Producer shall make operating instructions for safe use of equipment available to workers and ensure that work equipment that is potentially hazardous to operate meets, at a minimum, the following:

- a. Is maintained in good working condition;
- b. Is stored cleanly and safely; and
- c. Is equipped with safety devices, such as the use of protective guards placed over moving parts and lockout/tagout systems.

11.10.8 The Producer shall prepare a summary report of occupational accidents, injuries, and deaths at least annually, and shall include a description of the nature of the incident, and where and how the event occurred.

11.10.9 When worker transportation is provided, the Producer shall ensure that drivers are licensed, vehicles are inspected, and the number of passengers does not exceed vehicle capacity.

11.11 Health and Safety Committee

11.11.1 Year 1: The Producer shall institute a Health and Safety Committee which is responsible for the following:

- a. Providing an assessment of workplace hazards;
- b. Establishing a hazard risk rating for all jobs;
- c. Developing a written job hazard policy with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs);
- d. Seeking input from workers, worker representatives, and management representatives in developing the written job hazard policy with SOPs; and
- e. Reviewing and analyzing the records of occupational accidents, injuries, and deaths to detect any trends and implement solutions.

11.12 Worker Training

11.12.1 The Producer shall provide training to all workers on employer responsibilities to workers, including non-discrimination, harassment, personal safety and hygiene, and other applicable operational policies.

11.12.2 The Producer shall provide training to workers who are involved in the operation of equipment and machinery, or who are asked to perform inherently dangerous tasks, in the use of protective equipment and proper operational procedures.

- 11.12.3 The Producer shall include in its worker training program a discussion of emergency procedures, contingency plans, and procedures that have been developed to address potential emergencies, consistent with ILO Convention 155 [Ref. 9], such as fire, flood, workplace accidents, and other disasters.
- 11.12.4 The Producer shall maintain a written record documenting instructors, materials, and attendance for all worker training.
- 11.12.5 Training shall be provided free of charge, during regular working hours, and in a language and terms easily understood by workers.

11.13 Risk Mitigation and Emergency Preparedness

- 11.13.1 The Producer shall design work areas in a manner intended to promote worker safety and risk mitigation, including:
- a. Unobstructed access for workers and work vehicles;
 - b. Adequate ventilation and lighting;
 - c. Readily cleanable walls, floors, and surfaces;
 - d. Clearly marked emergency exits and pathways free from obstructions;
 - e. Proper warning signage; and
 - f. Access to emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers.
- 11.13.2 The Producer shall take mitigation steps to limit worker exposure to excessively high noise levels, temperatures, dehydration risk, dust, and other contaminants.
- 11.13.3 The Producer shall establish written safety procedures to be followed in the event of accidents or exposure to hazardous materials.
- 11.13.4 The Producer shall have transportation and care procedures in place in case of medical emergency.
- 11.13.5 The Producer shall develop contingency plans, in cooperation with worker representatives (if applicable), based upon a risk assessment of potential emergency situations that could arise, including but not limited to personal medical emergencies, fire, workplace accidents, chemical exposure, and natural disasters, consistent with ILO Convention 155 [Ref. 9].

11.14 Human Resource Management

- 11.14.1 The Producer shall provide all workers with access to all relevant employment policies, including but not limited to hiring, termination, conditions of employment, workplace conditions, working hours, benefits, pay schedule, holidays, sick leave, non-discrimination, sexual harassment, and other unacceptable behavior.
- 11.14.2 The Producer shall implement a policy to address worker grievances, including but not limited

to issues related to compensation and receipt of benefits, sexual harassment, and other gender-related grievances. The policy shall describe the means by which workers can communicate grievances to designated management representatives, guarantee no reprisals, and describe disciplinary actions and the right to appeal.

11.14.3 The Producer shall communicate and provide written grievance policies and disciplinary procedures, with the right to appeal, to all workers.

11.14.4 The Producer shall ensure that worker complaints are fully investigated, and that proper disciplinary action is taken where warranted.

11.15 Benefits and Access to Services for Workers and their Families

11.15.1 The Producer shall allow workers unpaid time off for illnesses or other health issues that require medical, dental, or other professional attention during normal working hours.

11.15.2 The Producer shall ensure that workers and their immediate families have access to health care.

11.15.3 The Producer shall provide full-time workers paid sick leave and a workers compensation program that meets or exceeds the local or nationally mandated minimum.

11.15.4 The Producer shall include in its worker training program an orientation to relevant company policies and health services available to employees.

11.15.5 The Producer shall provide full-time workers with a vacation plan that meets or exceeds national or local law, including national holidays, under which paid vacation days are accrued.

11.15.6 Once a worker has completed a minimum probationary period established by the Producer of no more than six months, the Producer shall provide parental leave with compensation in accordance with applicable local or national standards, with a guarantee of return to the same or equivalent position at the same or higher wage at the end of the parental leave.

11.15.7 The Producer shall ensure that workers' children have access to education. In remote locations with no access to schools, the Producer shall provide school-aged children of workers housed on-site with access to formal education consistent with minimum national requirements.

12. Community Benefits

12.1 Local and Regional Community Impact

12.1.1 The Producer shall recognize Indigenous and other customary rights (e.g., related to fishing, hunting, collection, cultural sites) and work to ensure that the operation does not negatively

affect cultural community resources.

- 12.1.2 The Producer shall work to ensure that the operation does not negatively affect the community's natural resources (e.g., surface and groundwater quantity and quality, soil quality degradation, air quality) or contribute to significant issues of community concern (e.g., noise, transportation impacts).
- 12.1.3 The Producer shall implement policies regarding preferences for local hiring, procurement from regional sources, and contribution to community infrastructure maintenance.

12.2 Community Engagement

- 12.2.1 Year 1: The Producer shall conduct at least one meeting with local community representatives every three years, or when significant changes to the operation would impact the community, whichever is more frequent, to discuss the Producer's work plan, fire and emergency preparedness, and any public concerns related to current and planned operational activities.
- 12.2.2 Year 1: The Producer shall make a demonstrated effort to include sufficient stakeholder representation in community meetings, including local community members, local/regional authorities, and environmental experts from both government and non-government organizations, as applicable.
- 12.2.3 Year 1: The Producer shall maintain auditable records of community engagement meetings, including an attendance list and topics covered.
- 12.2.4 Year 1: The Producer shall demonstrate a process for addressing any feedback received during community engagement.

13. Product Quality

13.1 Product Integrity

- 13.1.1 The Producer shall develop product specifications and document that its products meet these specifications, including:
 - a. Auditable records of the ingredients used in mixes; and
 - b. Methods to ensure that the quality of the mixes for professional growers meets client expectations.

13.2 Packaging, Labeling, and Shipping

- 13.2.1 The Producer shall maintain minimum specifications for packaging and labeling of its peat moss product(s) in accordance with relevant standards and regulations, and including the

following:⁹

- a. Product contents are accurately represented and labeled;
- b. The product is packed, wrapped, and presented in such a manner as to protect it from mechanical damage;
- c. Instructions, recommendations, and warnings (as applicable) are provided along with the product for use in retail sales, in accordance with current provincial and federal regulations; and
- d. The product weight and measurement are included and are in compliance with applicable regulations.

13.2.2 The Producer shall ensure that the product conforms to international shipment requirements, as applicable.

13.3 Contamination

13.3.1 The Producer shall demonstrate effective measures to prevent contamination by hazardous materials of peat moss product(s) throughout harvest and processing.

13.3.2 The Producer shall separate and discard all contaminated material.

13.3.3 If sales or customer records indicate product contamination has occurred at any of the Producer's sites, then the Producer shall identify all sources of contamination and maintain a corrective action log for three years.

13.4 Customer Service

13.4.1 The Producer shall maintain customer service tracking reports, including records of customer complaints, returns, credits, and corrective and preventative actions.

13.5 Storage and Transportation

13.5.1 The Producer shall develop and implement written policies and procedures to manage temperature during the stockpiling of peat in the fields, including the following:

- a. Systematic monitoring of the temperature;
- b. Procedures to avoid deterioration due to overheating; and
- c. Procedures to handle peat that has overheated.

13.5.2 The Producer shall develop specifications for transportation of its bulk or packaged products(s), including:

- a. Requirements to avoid contamination during bulk transportation; and

⁹ Specifications must be determined by using the recognized testing methods according to current standards, regulations and/or laws. Products sold in bulk are not bound by this requirement.

- b. Requirements for the safe transportation and storage of its packaged peat products.

14. Claims

14.1 General Conformance Requirements

- 14.1.1 All claims language and/or label (i.e., logo) usage in relation to this Standard, including private labels, shall:
 - a. Be reviewed and approved by the certification body prior to use;
 - b. Conform to the certification body's labeling and language requirements, including guidelines for ingredient and component claims;
 - c. Comply with US Federal Trade Commission guidelines or other national guidelines if outside the US; and
 - d. Accurately reflect the content of certified peat in the certified product.
- 14.1.2 Any claims made by the Producer in connection with this Standard shall only be in reference to its own certification or that of certified suppliers.

Note: Examples of allowable claims that a certified Producer may make include the following:

- A certified Producer can make a claim relating to the certification of their own operation, for example, “[Company name] peatlands are certified Veriflora® Responsibly Managed.”
- An organization selling peat as a component or ingredient of a final product can make an on-product/point of sale claim that specifies peat as an ingredient and includes the percentage of certified peat used in the product (by dry weight of the total amount of peat or by dry weight of the total product, which shall be specified in the claim), “Made with 90% peat from Veriflora® Responsibly Managed Peatlands.”
- In cases where peat is consumed in the production process but is not physically present in the final product, the Producer can claim “The processing of this product uses peat from certified Veriflora® Responsibly Managed Peatlands” and cannot imply presence of certified peat in the final product.

Annex 1: References

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 - ILO Convention 155 — Occupational Safety and Health Convention (1981)

- ILO Convention 170 — Chemicals Convention (1990)
10. International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Standards:
 - ISO 9001:2000, “Quality Management Systems — Requirements”
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