

Changed requirements for importing plants with growing medium

From 1 September 2019, changed requirements apply to the import of plants with attached growing medium, such as soil, peat, coco peat, perlite, etc. This is an amendment to the current Phytosanitary Directive, Annex IV A I, point 34. There will be no transitional period. If you import these type of plants, you may need to take action.

Why additional requirements and for what products?

Growing medium can contain many harmful organisms. The new requirements provide greater certainty that these organisms will not be carried with the attached growing medium. They apply to all plants with attached or associated growing medium, including cuttings. Sterile medium for in-vitro plants is exempted. The requirements apply to imports from all non-EU countries, except Switzerland.

What are the new requirements?

The requirements relate to the growing medium that is present on the plant or in its container at the time of import into the EU. If the plants, including the roots, are completely clean at that moment, the requirement does not apply. The following applies to the growing medium that is present:

Annex IV A I, point 34

a) at the time of putting the plants in the growing medium (that will be present at the moment of import):

- i. The growing medium is free from soil and organic material, and was not previously used for plant cultivation or other agricultural purposes. (Inorganic elements, such as perlite, oasis, etc., are permitted. This also includes paper).
- ii. **OR** the growing medium is composed entirely of peat and/or coconut fibre (for example, coco peat) and was not previously used for plant cultivation or other agricultural purposes. (Other organic elements (such as moss, peat moss, straw, rice straw, or combinations thereof) are not permitted unless treated (see option iii).)
- iii. **OR** the growing medium has undergone an effective treatment to ensure that it is free from harmful organisms; this treatment (the agent or agents used for the treatment and the treatment method) must be stated on the phytosanitary certificate. (NVWA considers RHP horticulture-certified soil an effective treatment). However, the official authority of the exporting country determines which treatments they approve in order to meet this requirement and validates the phytosanitary certificate; therefore contact them in time).

AND

was stored under conditions keeping it free from harmful organisms;

AND

b) since planting in the growing medium (that is present):

i) appropriate measures have been taken to keep the growing medium free from harmful organisms, including at least the following:

- physical isolation of the growing medium from soil and other possible sources of contamination
- hygiene measures
- using water free from harmful organisms

OR

ii. the medium has been completely removed within two weeks prior to export by washing, using water free from harmful organisms. Replanting is permitted in growing medium that meets the requirements under a) and if the requirements under b) i. are subsequently met.

What should be stated on the phytosanitary certificate?

In case growing medium is attached, include an additional declaration regarding Annex IV, A I, point 34 on the certificate. State which option of a) *and* of b) applies. If you write out the text in full, use the official legislative text for this purpose. See [Dutch version 2019/523/EU](#), [English version 2019/523/EU](#), [Spanish version 2019/523/EU](#), [French version 2019/523/EU](#).

Examples of situations, and the options you must use for *importing into the Netherlands* are provided below:

- The plants have been grown throughout their entire life in inorganic growing medium (such as perlite), and this medium has been kept free from harmful organisms during cultivation: use options a) i and b) i.
- The plants have been grown throughout their entire life in coconut fibre and/or peat, and this medium has been kept free from harmful organisms during cultivation: use options a) ii and b) i.
- The plants have been grown throughout their entire life in a mixture of inorganic material (such as perlite) and coconut fibre and/or peat, and this medium has been kept free from harmful organisms during cultivation: use options a) ii and b) i. NVWA allows a combination of a) i and a) ii, provided the additional declaration states a) ii.
- The growing medium is inorganic and/or peat and/or coconut fibre and was previously used for agricultural purposes: it must be treated for (re-)use: option a) iii.
- The plants have been grown in or in contact with (natural) soil and that soil has not or not completely been washed off; the growing medium (e.g. the whole root ball) must have undergone an effective treatment (before or after potting): options a) iii and b) i.
- If RHP horticulture-certified soil has been used and is approved as an effective treatment by the official authorities of the exporting country, this must be stated in the additional declaration as option a) iii. For the agents and method used, state the following: 'Treatment and certification according to RHP protocols' (or a similar text in the language used on the certificate).
- If, in addition to RHP soil, other soil (such as clay) is present in the attached growing medium, this must have been treated, and that treatment (not that of the RHP soil) must be stated in the additional declaration as a) iii.

What is checked at import?

- If growing medium is present, the inspector checks whether the additional declaration for Annex IV, A I, punt 34, parts a and b, is present on the phytosanitary certificate. If it is missing, import of the consignment is not permitted.
- If the additional declaration is present, the inspector assesses whether it corresponds to what he or she observes on the consignment. For example, if the phytosanitary certificate states that the consignment only contains peat and/or coconut fibre and the inspector also sees clay or clay residues, the consignment is not permitted to be imported. If the inspector sees living organisms (such as insects), he or she may take a sample.
- Besides the changed requirements for attached growing medium, all other requirements remain in full force. Note also the requirements applicable to sawdust from certain types of wood in case sawdust is used as packaging material.

What are the main differences with the current requirements?

- Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Malta, Morocco and Tunisia are no longer exempted from the requirement.
- Stating that "the growing medium was free from insects and harmful nematodes and was treated for other harmful organisms" no longer is an option.
- The option 'shake the soil off the roots leaving behind a minimum quantity' has been deleted. Roots must be washed clean instead.
- When using option a) iii (an effective treatment), the agents and the method used must be stated on the phytosanitary certificate.
- The use of water free from harmful organisms is new.

What can I do to ensure that my plants can be imported?

Your supplier and the official authorities of the country of origin determine whether and in what way the requirements can be met. Ask your supplier whether they know these new rules and can comply with them. You should also check whether the authorities will issue a phytosanitary certificate which complies with this changed requirements, in particular regarding any treatments.

Where can I find this information in the legislation?

The official text is published on the websites of both NVWA and the EU (Implementing Directive 2019/523/EU, Annex 4, Part 1, Rubric I, point 34 (page 56 in the Dutch version). You will also find the text in other languages on the EU website. See [Dutch version 2019/523/EU](#), [English version 2019/523/EU](#), [Spanish version 2019/523/EU](#), [French version 2019/523/EU](#).

More information

If you have any questions about the correct way on how to state this additional declaration on the phytosanitary certificate, please contact one of the inspection services. You can also

contact the inspection services for other questions, or visit the websites of [NVWA](#), [Naktuinbouw](#) and [KCB](#).