



Project group at Inagro, Belgium.



Project group meeting at WUR in The Netherlands.

How much of a reality is a 100% replacement for peat?

“During the trials and research our aim was 50% replacement of peat with alternative materials. That was our benchmark. I do think that 100% replacement of peat will be a possibility in the future. But our target was 50% with as little deviation as possible from standard casing soil. In that respect, the project has certainly succeeded.”

Can the results be seen in practice at commercial growers?

“The practical trials at the growers involved in the project in Poland and Serbia are now being wound up. The results can also be seen at Eurochamp in Spain. Whether the formulations we developed during the project will be used further is now up to the casing soil suppliers.”

What alternative materials were used?

“I’m afraid I can’t make a full statement as the project has not yet been completed. We used seven different materials at the beginning of the project, and two of them were promising enough to be included in the rest of the four-year period. These materials are grass and moss fibres.”

What has the project taught you?

“The project ran for four years and we are currently in the concluding phase. What we have particularly noticed is that laboratory results do not always translate into success in practice. And we are also very pleased with the cooperation from so many partners in the project. This approach led to various ideas being developed.”

How much do the alternatives cost and will casing remain affordable?

“The price of grass, including processed grass, is not expected to be high. The production process will be different, but it will not lead to a sharp price rise. And there is widespread,

long-term availability of grass, so that’s an aspect we don’t have to worry about.”

Peat is not susceptible to pathogens due to its low pH. But what about the alternatives? Have any abnormalities or diseases been found?

“We will announce all the details of the process we have been working on when we officially conclude Bioschamp on 5 September. But for now, I can say that we occasionally found small ink cap fungi on the beds. However, they did not affect the quality and yield of the mushrooms.”

What about the water retention capacity of the material used?

“Moss has a greater water retention capacity than grass. But on the other hand, grass is easier to process. Both materials have their advantages and disadvantages.”

Will growers need to adapt the way they grow if they use the 50% blend?

“Some growers say they obtain the same results with the Bioschamp casing and standard casing without making any changes. Others have said they had to adapt their watering strategy. So this seems to depend on the specific mushroom farm or grower.”

Do the alternative materials used contain enough bacteria, *pseudomonas putida* especially, to stimulate pinning?

“We didn’t investigate that particular aspect. We worked with our alternative materials plus 50% peat in the casing. And as there are enough bacteria in peat to guarantee pinhead formation, we don’t know for sure.”

The detailed results of the Bioschamp project will be presented in Madrid on 5 September. For more information, see www.bioschamp.eu

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