

Social Assessment: for a changing world

CANADIAN SPHAGNUM PEAT MOSS ON GLOBAL MARKETS

With buyers all over the world, peat moss producers are required to answer precisely and rigorously to questions regarding their sustainability performance. In 2009 the *Association des producteurs de tourbe horticole du Québec* (APTHQ) carried out an environmental life-cycle assessment. In 2012, the APTHQ saw the necessity to complete the portrait with the social impact of its activities. Groupe AGÉCO guided the association through the process and produced a socioeconomic assessment of Canadian peat moss bogs.

“HOW IS OUR ASSOCIATION DOING? ARE WE DOING WELL?”

APTHQ represents the actors in an industry that generates 500 million dollars in revenue every year with peat moss operations. The product is mainly used for gardening compost. Canadian peat moss is exported to the United States, Asia and North Africa. International market development is a priority for the sector. The major clients are American and they require more and more information on the environmental and social performance of their suppliers.



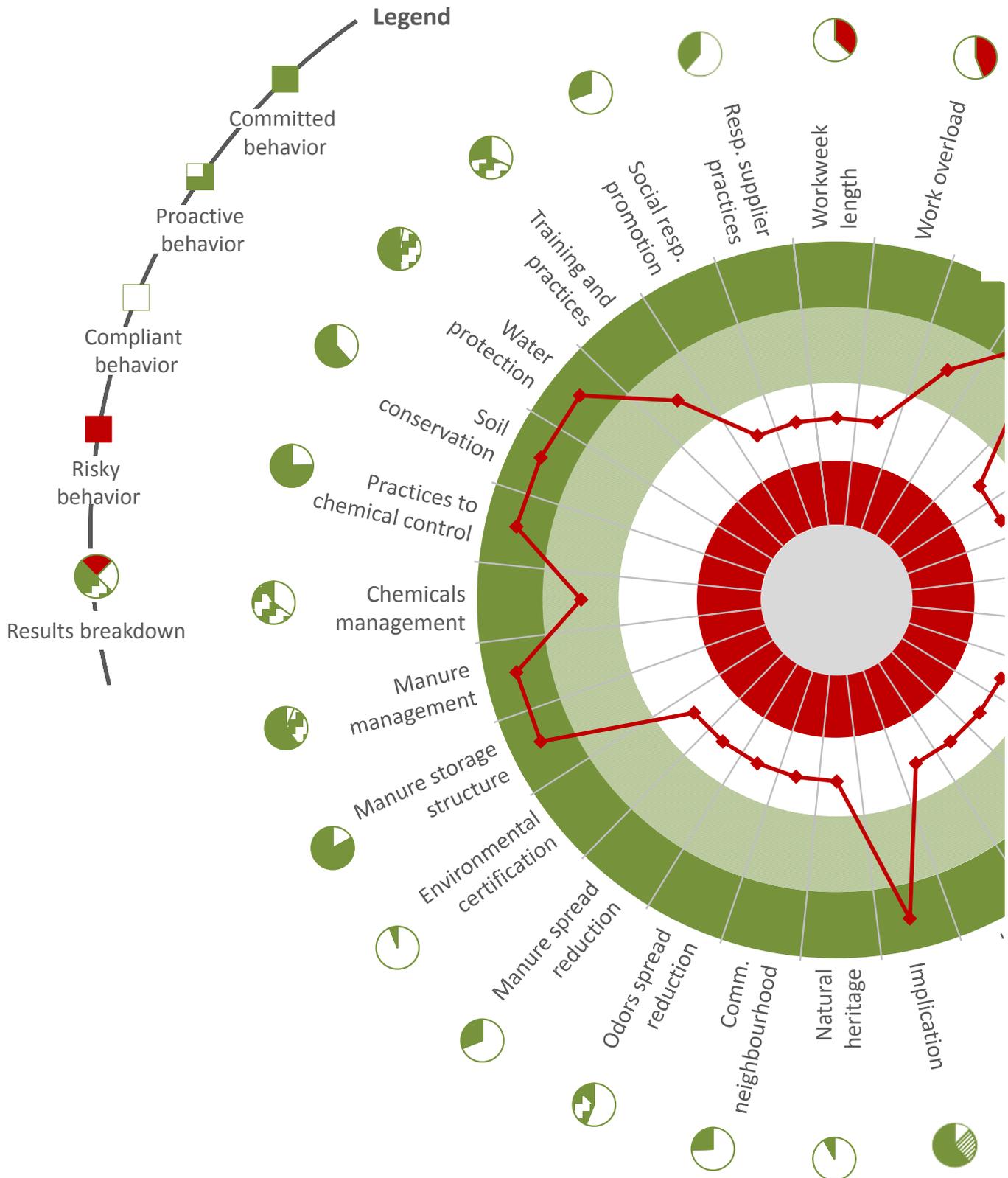
How can one define what a good supplier is? What “doing well” means. The *Association des producteurs de tourbe du Québec* are solicited with questions such as : *Do you know all the actors in your supply chain? Are you certain they are socially compliant? Do you have a positive impact in your community?* APTHQ was not equipped to answer all these requests and to offer a clear picture of their social performance.

APTHQ was also preoccupied with the presence of coconut fiber from Mexico and Asia that is mixed with the peat moss for gardening purposes. This ingredient brought up questions because of its origin and the potential risk regarding labor conditions in those parts of the world.

To “do well”, one needs to know what the situation is, where the corporate behavior is top of the line and where improvements are to be considered in collaboration with partners.

A CLEAR PICTURE OF THE SITUATION

Groupe AGÉCO evaluated the social performance of peat moss production in Canada based on 15 indicators that measured the impacts in the 5 stakeholder categories that are defined in the guidelines of the social life-cycle assessment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2009). The analysis highlighted the behavior of the sector in regards to workers, community, clients, suppliers and partners as well as society.



KNOW WHERE YOU STAND IN ORDER TO IMPROVE

With the social life-cycle assessment of the sector, APTHQ now has a detailed picture of its strengths and the areas where there are potential risks. They are now able to answer the various questions of local and international buyers and to show credible data to prove their saying.

APTHQ now communicates its social assessment to members and to peat moss buyers in order to stimulate dialogue and action towards even better practices. These are core elements of an exemplary corporate social behavior.

“Continuous improvement remains the best road towards excellence. An innovative behavior today could become the norm in the future” believes Geneviève Potvin, director *Créneau de valorisation de la tourbe et des technologies agro-environnementales*.

Peat moss is an organic substance that comes from the partial decomposition of plants that takes hundreds of years. Sphagnum peat moss is used in many applications, often for gardening purposes. In North America, gardening is the main use of the product. Peat moss is part of growing substrates and soil compost. Canadian sphagnum peat moss is harvested, transformed and packaged in Canada to be marketed, shipped and utilized worldwide.

For nearly 15 years, Groupe AGÉCO is active in the agriculture and agri-food sectors, sustainable development and social responsibility. The recommendations of the consulting firm facilitate the implementation of concrete improvements in your organization.

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