

RSPO Organic & Peat Soil Classification

RSPO Peatlands Working Group 2 (PLWG-2) has adopted the common definition of ‘Histosol’ (organic soil) effective November 2018 as follows:

Histosols (organic soils) are soils with cumulative organic layer(s) comprising more than half of the upper 80cm or 100cm of the soil surface containing 35% or more of organic matter (35% or more Loss on Ignition) or 18% or more organic carbon (FAO 1998, 2006/7; USDA 2014; IUSS 1930).

The definition of ‘Histosol’ (FAO 1998, 2006/7; USDA 2014) above will be used for regions without its own specific definition. In other regions, Histosols have been further sub-classified into different sub types. In Malaysia, Histosols are subdivided into muck and peat soil.

In Malaysia, peat soils are defined as:

Soils with an organic layer of more than 50cm in the top 100cm of soil containing more than 65% of organic matter (more than 65% Loss on Ignition) or 35% or more organic carbon (Leamy and Pantan 1966, Paramanathan 2016, drawing on IUSS 1930).

	Muck	Peat*
Organic matter content (Loss on ignition)	> 35% - 65%	> 65%
Depth	> 15cm	> 50cm

* Primarily for bog or dome type peat with limited mineral inputs

In Indonesia peat soils are defined as: *Soils with an organic layer of more than 50cm in the top 100cm of soil containing more than 65% of organic matter.*

This is based on: *Soils with an organic layer of more than 50cm in the top 100cm (Government Regulation, 57/2016); Soils with an organic layer of more than 50cm in the top 100cm with organic matter containing more than 65% (Agriculture Ministry Regulation, 14/Permentan/pl.110/2/2009)*

RSPO recognises the use of the above definitions in Indonesia and Malaysia for the purpose of management of existing plantations.

An alternate nationally accepted definition¹ may be proposed through the National Interpretation (NI) process for the RSPO Principles and Criteria.

¹ As with all RSPO National Interpretations – any modified definition proposed by a national interpretation will need to be approved by RSPO in line with its normal procedures which may involve reference to a relevant RSPO Working Group or to appropriate expert(s)