



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 9, 2012

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IBI Members Approve First International *Biochar Standards*

The International Biochar Initiative (IBI) today announced final publication of the first international *Biochar Standards* after a two-week open ballot by IBI Membership. The IBI *Biochar Standards* are the result of a multi-year development process that was global, transparent, and inclusive, and that involved the input and participation of hundreds of research scientists, entrepreneurs, farmers and other stakeholders in the drafting, review and approval of the document.

The full document title is: [*Standardized Product Definition and Product Testing Guidelines for Biochar That Is Used in Soil*](#). It is available on the [IBI website](#) and may be freely distributed and used for non-commercial purposes under a Creative Commons copyright license.

IBI began the process of establishing the *Biochar Standards* in May 2009 as a critical first step for the commercialization of sustainable biochar systems. Deployment of sustainable biochar systems at all scales can help solve the global food security crisis and the global climate change crisis by enhancing soil fertility, avoiding greenhouse gas emissions and sequestering stable carbon in soils. For a sustainable biochar industry to succeed, it must provide certainty to consumers and markets about biochar and its safe use as a soil amendment. The *Biochar Standards* provide the tools needed to universally and consistently define what biochar is, and to confirm that a product intended for sale or use as biochar possesses the necessary characteristics for safe use.

The *Biochar Standards* also provide common reporting requirements for biochar that will aid researchers in their ongoing efforts to link specific functions of biochar to its beneficial soil and crop impacts.

The *Biochar Standards* establish the definition of biochar as, "a solid material obtained from thermochemical conversion of biomass in an oxygen-limited environment." Biochar is made from waste biomass, and reduces emissions from biomass that would otherwise naturally degrade to greenhouse gasses. The thermochemical conversion process converts a portion of the biomass into a stable form of carbon that acts as a greenhouse gas sink.

The *Biochar Standards* establish the essential characteristics of biochar as a soil amendment, and designate the tests used to measure these properties. These properties include carbon content, carbon stability, total ash, and pH, for instance, all of which are important to soil health and fertility.

The *Biochar Standards* also grade biochar according to its carbon content: Class 1 biochar contains 60% carbon or more; Class 2 biochar has between 30% and 60% carbon; and Class 3 biochar has between 10% and 30% carbon.

Complete background and development information on the *Biochar Standards* is found on the [IBI website](#), including a set of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs) about the guidelines and all interim drafts and public comments.

IBI's membership approved the final version of the *Biochar Standards* by a 91% majority. Many of the members made comments expressing appreciation for the *Biochar Standards*, recognizing that this is an important first step for the biochar industry:

- *"I have watched the evolution of the guidelines and I appreciate all the work you have done and I know it is very comprehensive, will deter bad products from being purchased as biochar, and I believe your certification will help move the industry on and help the environment. Thank You for the help you've given us."*
- *"I appreciate the work that was done, the transparency with which the process was conducted and the declaration that these 'guidelines' are dynamic and voluntary. Congratulations, well done."*
- *"I am in full support of the effort to establish standards for biochar. The guidelines as they stand today are a good start and I believe it is important to get something into practical application as soon as possible so we can begin to get real-world experience that we can then use to refine the standards."*
- *"I think consistent labeling in particular will be a great asset to the industry."*

IBI is currently developing an IBI Biochar Certification program that will allow producers to officially label their biochar with an IBI logo as having met the requirements of the *Biochar Standards*. IBI believes that a program to certify biochar according to the *Biochar Standards* will further develop the biochar industry.

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