

Questions & Answers from Oct 2011 IBI Biochar Guidelines Webinars

Note: Most questions were answered during the post webinar Q&A sessions, however, only a few of the answers were recorded. This document captures most of the questions and some of the answers.

Q: Your example farmer joe (I think it was) label gives the biochar and elemental chemical contents only plus an indication of 50% compost in the mix. A very big emerging part of the biochar and compost discussion is the enhancement of microbiological habitats and yet there is no labelling indication of whether the "compost" has any decent biomass amount or species presence. Not all composts are equal when it comes to microbiology. The weakness of your current standardization is that the microbiology of compost is not measured and standardized. Any future work on the microbiological part of all of this

Q: What about regulating inoculation of biochar with agents like acidulants?

Q: In the event of a world wide carbon market, will a biochar producer in (eg Bangladesh) have a 1 page set of instructions to make & deploy biochar?

A: The document will help test & certify quality, but will not provide guidance on how to make or use biochar. There is a possibility that more guidelines etc. will be developed over time. Such as what's been requested/indicated here.

Q: Was there a reason for not prescribing a minimum carbon content?

A: Max ash selected instead. Carbon comes in different forms, including mineral carbonates & the organic C in biochar. Recalcitrant vs labile carbon is still an area being studied.

Q: What about recalcitrant vs labile carbon as a carbon content as measurements?

A: A lot of the analyses aren't well-known within the regulatory world. Want to communicate with larger groups than just biochar producers. Ash is accessible. Recalcitrant/labile is not necessarily understood or recognized outside of biochar. H:Corg is another reliable method, and recognized beyond biochar... hence inclusion.

Q: It seems that biochar will not be able to be used in C sequestration until we have the recalcitrant & labile carbon tests.

A: Yes, but it is coming. The regulatory recognition of the science is minimal/resistant at this time. Wary of using such industry-specific science. Proximate analysis could be used, but it was designed for coal, and not necessarily the most applicable etc... Combustion of test samples can

change/affect the analytical results (particularly where assessing something that is not going to be combusted during use)

Q: Re Test Methodologies. Seeking information about what each method is, or what method has been selected per document.

A: Cited transparency (as goal of process), noted document had all the citations and methods listed within them.

Q: Should there be a physical contaminant threshold for the final biochar product and not the feedstock.

A: Chosen as feedstock b/c contaminants are more likely to be identifiable within the feedstock, than after pyrolysis has occurred.

Q: Do any of the guidelines have leaching tests. If the contaminants are bound to the biochar, they may not be plant-available.

A: No answer at this time.

Q: How are professionals going to be accredited?

A: Not entirely sure, next phase of document development...

Q: The guideline currently has no limit on physical contaminants such as glass in the biochar. Will a limit be forthcoming?

A: Contaminants addressed in more detail. Definition cited. Glass is considered a contaminant and limited in the feedstock.

Q: I am a producer of poultry carbon. My understanding is that IBI is considering excluding poultry carbon as biochar b/c it has a high ash content. Or higher ash content than other biochars.

A: Challenge is to create a blanket statement for all biochars. Some biochars won't fit. There has to be a line drawn somewhere. There is no desire on IBI's part to exclude particular kinds of biochar. Many biochars (manure or otherwise) are within the limits... Will be looking at ash issues more closely in the near future.

Q: ISO is indicated in the slides. Will the IBI be involving ISO in the process?

A: Emulating ISO process. Leading Carbon/Prasino follows principles of ISO 14064 to adhere

Q: What was the rationale for not specifying a minimum carbon percent for biochar?

Q: Radium is a soil element, will the IBI be including guidelines on radium in the future?

A: Maybe in the future? (this could be included in contaminants, thanks to the radioactivity issue – contaminants should include radioactive elements)

Q: Could you increase the carbon content of your biochar by adding chips or something else to the feedstock?

A: Yes. But you need to declare the feedstock. Focusing on the biochar end-product and end-user desires, is a good way to develop the biochar, but everything needs to be declared and identified.