

**Kakovost tal – Navodilo za ekotoksikološko karakterizacijo tal in talnih materialov**

Soil quality - Guidance on the ecotoxicological characterization of soils and soil materials

**iTeh STANDARD PREVIEW**  
**(standards.iteh.ai)**

[SIST ISO 15799:2006](https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/765553dc-e80d-44ad-8964-af4ee5ec2f0a/sist-iso-15799-2006)

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/765553dc-e80d-44ad-8964-af4ee5ec2f0a/sist-iso-15799-2006>



---

---

**Soil quality — Guidance on the  
ecotoxicological characterization of soils  
and soil materials**

*Qualité du sol — Lignes directrices relatives à la caractérisation  
écotoxicologique des sols et des matériaux du sol*

iTeh STANDARD PREVIEW  
(standards.iteh.ai)

SIST ISO 15799:2006

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/765553dc-e80d-44ad-8964-af4ee5ec2f0a/sist-iso-15799-2006>



**PDF disclaimer**

This PDF file may contain embedded typefaces. In accordance with Adobe's licensing policy, this file may be printed or viewed but shall not be edited unless the typefaces which are embedded are licensed to and installed on the computer performing the editing. In downloading this file, parties accept therein the responsibility of not infringing Adobe's licensing policy. The ISO Central Secretariat accepts no liability in this area.

Adobe is a trademark of Adobe Systems Incorporated.

Details of the software products used to create this PDF file can be found in the General Info relative to the file; the PDF-creation parameters were optimized for printing. Every care has been taken to ensure that the file is suitable for use by ISO member bodies. In the unlikely event that a problem relating to it is found, please inform the Central Secretariat at the address given below.

iTeh STANDARD PREVIEW  
(standards.iteh.ai)

SIST ISO 15799:2006

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/765553dc-e80d-44ad-8964-af4ee5ec2f0a/sist-iso-15799-2006>

© ISO 2003

All rights reserved. Unless otherwise specified, no part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and microfilm, without permission in writing from either ISO at the address below or ISO's member body in the country of the requester.

ISO copyright office  
Case postale 56 • CH-1211 Geneva 20  
Tel. + 41 22 749 01 11  
Fax + 41 22 749 09 47  
E-mail [copyright@iso.org](mailto:copyright@iso.org)  
Web [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org)

Published in Switzerland

# Contents

Page

Foreword .....	iv
Introduction .....	v
1 Scope .....	1
2 Terms and definitions .....	1
2.1 Types of soil and other soil materials .....	1
2.2 Terms relating to soil characteristics .....	2
2.3 Land and sites .....	2
3 Field of application .....	3
3.1 Soils and areas of soil use where ecotoxicological tests should be considered: .....	3
3.2 Soils and areas of soil use where ecotoxicological tests are not necessary (provided groundwater contamination can be excluded): .....	3
4 Selection of tests according to use/re-use of soils and soil materials and soil functions .....	3
4.1 Usefulness of ecotoxicity tests .....	3
4.2 General criteria for selection of tests .....	4
4.3 Considerations for the examination of soil functions .....	4
5 Sampling, transport, storage and sample preparation .....	7
6 Limitations of proposed biotests for soils/soil materials .....	7
Annex A (informative) Standardized forms of recommended test systems .....	8
Bibliography .....	31

[SIST ISO 15799:2006](https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/765553dc-e80d-44ad-8964-af4ee5ec2f0a/sist-iso-15799-2006)

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/765553dc-e80d-44ad-8964-af4ee5ec2f0a/sist-iso-15799-2006>

## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 15799 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 190, *Soil quality*, Subcommittee SC 7, *Soil and site assessment*.

iTeh STANDARD PREVIEW  
(standards.iteh.ai)

SIST ISO 15799:2006

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/765553dc-e80d-44ad-8964-af4ee5ec2f0a/sist-iso-15799-2006>

## Introduction

The majority of existing ecotoxicological test methods (biotests) being internationally harmonized were developed to describe the ecotoxic potential of a test substance when added to a soil or soil material. These methods can be used, with some modification, for the ecotoxicological characterization of soils and soil materials with respect to their function and depending on the intended use. However, in such cases, users of the methods need to be aware that the validation of the methods is not complete.

For substances with properties resulting in toxic effects, biotests are a complement to conventional chemical analysis. Results from chemical analysis can be used for ecotoxicological assessments based on information on the substances identified, including properties of the chemicals, e.g. their bioaccumulation potential. This information is often scarce (if it exists at all) and does not include possible interactions (synergy/antagonism) between chemicals and the complex soil matrix. Furthermore, an exhaustive identification and quantification of substances is impractical. Therefore, ecotoxicological testing of soils can be used for investigating the potential toxicity of complex chemical mixtures. The extrapolation from laboratory tests to field conditions requires adequate consideration of important environmental factors within the test conditions and the selection of suitable ecotoxicological endpoints.

This International Standard is one of a series providing guidance on soils and soil materials in relation to certain functions and uses, including wildlife conservation, and ought to be read in conjunction with those other standards.

**ITEH STANDARD PREVIEW**  
**(standards.iteh.ai)**

[SIST ISO 15799:2006](https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/765553dc-e80d-44ad-8964-af4ee5ec2f0a/sist-iso-15799-2006)

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/765553dc-e80d-44ad-8964-af4ee5ec2f0a/sist-iso-15799-2006>





# Soil quality — Guidance on the ecotoxicological characterization of soils and soil materials

## 1 Scope

This International Standard provides guidance on the selection of experimental methods for the assessment of the ecotoxic potential of soils and soil materials (e.g. excavated and remediated soils, refills, embankments) with respect to their intended use and possible adverse effects on aquatic and soil-dwelling organisms, and habitat maintenance and the retention function of the soil.

It does not cover tests for bioaccumulation. Genotoxicity tests using eukaryotic organisms in soils are not yet available. It is not applicable to the ecological assessment of uncontaminated soils with a view to natural, agricultural or horticultural use, such soils being of possible interest where they can serve as a reference for the assessment of soils from contaminated sites. Nor is the interpretation of the results gained by application of the proposed methods within its scope.

## 2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

### 2.1 Types of soil and other soil materials

#### 2.1.1 soil

upper layer of the Earth's crust composed of mineral particles, organic matter, water, air and organisms

[ISO 11074-1:1996, definition 5.4]

#### 2.1.2 soil material

excavated soil, dredged materials, manufactured soils, treated soils and fill materials

[ISO 15176:2002, definition 3.1.4]

#### 2.1.3 excavated soil

any natural material excavated from the ground, including top soil, sub soil, altered parent rock and parent rock itself

NOTE Excavated soil typically arises during construction works.

[ISO 15176:2002, definition 3.1.5]

#### 2.1.4 standard soil

field-collected soil whose main properties (e.g. pH, texture, organic matter content) are within a known range

EXAMPLE Eurosoils<sup>[34]</sup>.

## 2.2 Terms relating to soil characteristics

### 2.2.1

#### habitat function

ability of soils/soil materials to serve as a habitat for micro-organisms, plants, soil-living animals and their interactions (biocenoses)

### 2.2.2

#### retention function

ability of soils/soil materials to adsorb pollutants in such that they cannot be mobilized via the water pathway and translocated into the food chain

NOTE The habitat and retention functions include the following soil functions according to ISO 11074-1:

- control of substance and energy cycles as components of ecosystems;
- basis for the life of plants, animals and humans;
- carrier of genetic reservoir;
- basis for the production of agricultural products;
- buffer inhibiting movement of water, contaminants or other agents into the ground water.

### 2.2.3

#### pollutant

substance or agent present in the soil which due to its properties, amount or concentration causes adverse impact on soil functions or soil use

cf. **contaminant** (2.2.4), **potentially harmful substance** (2.2.5)

[ISO 15176:2002, definition 3.2.7]

NOTE See Introduction to ISO 11074-1:1996.

### 2.2.4

#### contaminant

substance or agent present in soil as a result of human activity

cf. **pollutant** (2.2.3), **potentially harmful substance** (2.2.5)

NOTE There is no assumption in this definition that harm results from the presence of the contaminant.

[ISO 15176:2002, definition 3.2.6]

### 2.2.5

#### potentially harmful substance

substance which, when present in sufficient concentration or amount, may be harmful to humans or the environment

NOTE It may be present as a result of human activity [**contaminant** (2.2.4)] or naturally.

[ISO 15176:2002, definition 3.2.8]

## 2.3 Land and sites

### 2.3.1

#### re-use

useful and harmless utilization of soil materials

NOTE In the context of this International Standard the re-use means the transfer of soil materials to another location for use in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, gardens, recreational areas and construction sites.

[ISO 15176:2002, term 3.4.1]

### 3 Field of application

#### 3.1 Soils and areas of soil use where ecotoxicological tests should be considered:

- assessment of the ability of a soil to sustain a natural biocenosis or agriculture;
- assessment of the combined ecotoxicity of all bioavailable contaminants present in soils or soil materials;
- assessment of the ecotoxicity of potentially harmful substances in cases where the soil or soil material can affect the ground and surface water;
- identification of soils or soil materials (refills, embankments) having a low degree of contamination — usually within a depth of 1 m — and which can remain at the site without further treatment;
- detection of potential ecotoxicity which could not be traced by chemical analysis;
- monitoring and control of the success of soil treatment (off-site, on-site, *in situ*);
- monitoring and control of soils/soil materials that have been decontaminated and are to be applied at the surface.

#### 3.2 Soils and areas of soil use where ecotoxicological tests are not necessary (provided groundwater contamination can be excluded):

- contaminated soils classified as hazardous waste or which can be characterized clearly by chemical/analytical parameters, in which cases ecotoxicological testing could be useful for a final investigation after remediation and for process control during biological remediation;
- commercially/industrially used areas with no prospect of horticultural/agricultural use;
- soil materials or backfilled materials in an area to be effectively sealed by covering with buildings or other forms of low permeability cover such as concrete or tarmacadam or asphalt.

### 4 Selection of tests according to use/re-use of soils and soil materials and soil functions

#### 4.1 Use of ecotoxicity tests

Toxicants can affect different species (and in some cases genotypes) present within ecosystems at different concentrations. The ideal approach for the precise ecotoxicological characterization of the soil toxicity is to use a battery of tests with several species belonging to different taxonomic and trophic groups, in order to avoid false negative results owing to an adaptation of a test system (genotypic shift) to a specific contaminant as compared to uncontaminated soils. Studies using field or semi-field investigations are rarely carried out and can be very expensive.

The ideal scheme can be rendered more practicable by the adoption of simpler testing strategies and the application of safety factors to the results obtained. If, however, testing is performed on one species or function only, the high diversity in the sensitivity of species to toxicants will result in a high level of uncertainty. It is therefore recommended to test at least a microbial process, a species from the plant kingdom, and one from the animal kingdom, usually a saprophagous/detritivorous species; if more than one animal species is tested, a predatory species should be included in the test battery. The minimum number of species to be tested depends on the regulations to which the test strategy must comply. This International Standard only gives the basic principles for their use. Further considerations to the selection of tests using soil organisms are given in 4.3.

**4.2 General criteria for selection of tests**

Criteria for the selection of ecotoxicity tests have been established in the context of hazard assessment and classification of chemicals. These criteria should also apply for the ecotoxicological characterization of contaminated soils. Criteria reviewed were: scientific validity, ecological significance, practicability and acceptability. See [30] and [31].

The basic requirements that test protocols must meet in order to be established in international standards include reproducibility, statistical validity, general acceptance and performance.

The importance of a criterion is relative to the specific situation. Decisions have to be made as to which criteria are the most important or which tests may have to be modified, and choices made between these and more practical considerations — for example, easy culturing of test organisms in the laboratory or the availability of life stages required for a test throughout the year.

The test methods recommended here were originally designed for hazard assessment of chemicals and were in most cases internationally harmonized (e.g. by OECD, EU or ISO). In most of the methods, provisions have been made to adapt the test design to come within the scope of this International Standard. Nevertheless, in many cases experience still has to be gained using the test methods for characterizing soil quality. In addition, the selection of ecotoxicological test methods for the assessment of soils or soil materials depends on their intended use or re-use and on the soil functions to be protected, in particular the retention and habitat functions.

Table 1 gives an example of a decision scheme based on the relevant function.

**Table 1 — Relevance for ecotoxicological testing to the intended re-use of the soil**

Re-use of soils	Soil function		
	Retention function	Habitat function	
	Aquatic organisms	Plant growth	Soil biocenoses
	<b>Detection of biological effects</b>		
Below sealed areas	low <sup>a</sup>	low	low
Commercially and industrially used unsealed areas	high	low	low
Landfill covering	high	high	low
Green areas, parks and recreation areas	high	high	high
Areas used in horticulture or agriculture	high	high	high

<sup>a</sup> Applies only to the unsaturated soil zone.

**4.3 Considerations for the examination of soil functions**

**4.3.1 Retention function**

Transport via water of soluble, colloidal or particle fractions plays a dominant role in the risk assessment of contaminated soils. This is true not only because water may mobilize contaminants, but also because contaminants and metabolites in the water phase potentially have a severe effect on micro-organisms, plants and soil fauna.

Aqueous eluates are useful for testing ecotoxic effects on organisms exposed via the water-mediated transport. It should be taken into account that substances mobilized via water could be subjected to different types of changes, (e.g. metabolism or hydrolization) when transported into the groundwater and from there into surface waters, and that their concentrations are reduced by dilution. Moreover, substances may be mobilized over time due to environmental changes (e.g. pH, chemical and biological transformation). Eluates

may serve as early indicators for the contamination of pore and ground water prior to the exposure of surface and drinking water.

With these aspects, the investigation of groundwater and eluates is of the utmost importance — regardless of the proposed soil use.

#### 4.3.2 Habitat function

##### 4.3.2.1 Representativeness of organisms and processes

The suitability of the soil for living organisms can best be examined by means of test methods selected to include organisms and processes representative of different taxonomic groups.

##### 4.3.2.2 Soil material used as control for bioassays on solid matrices

As a general principle in ecotoxicological testing, any end points measured in a treatment are compared with those measured in the control or controls.

When evaluating the suitability of the soil for soil-dwelling organisms, it is a prerequisite to compare the contaminated soil or soil material with a control material, which may also be used for preparing dilution series with the contaminated sample.

Several types of control material can be used:

- an uncontaminated soil with comparable pedological properties to the sample being tested;
- an inert material (e.g. quartz sand);
- a certified natural soil (e.g. standard soil);
- a standardized artificial soil (see ISO 11267, ISO 11268-1 and ISO 11268-2).

The choice between these control materials should be made depending entirely on the aims of the ecotoxicological assessment, the type of biological test being carried out and the requirements of the test organism. This recommendation cannot be generalized for all biological tests. Adding sand to a soil or a soil material can create a compact mixture incompatible with the growth and development of many organisms (e.g. plant growth tests). It is preferable to use a more complex control material (such as artificial soil) for dilution where this would have the advantage of reproducing more closely the natural environment of the organisms and even if it may interact with pollutants. Placing an organism in a medium that does not match the most important characteristics of its natural habitat may cause stress.

- If a dose-response curve is needed, one of the control materials mentioned above may be used to dilute the contaminated substrate.
- If the aim is to classify each sample of soil or soil materials in terms of ecotoxicity hazard, it is preferable to use an inert material (e.g. quartz sand), which will not interact with the pollutants present in the sample and whose composition and granulometry can be rigorously standardized.

The requirements of the control material must take into account the different soil uses and the type and origin of the soil (e.g. undisturbed soil, refilling material, excavated soil, remediated soil). Nutrient deficiency, as well as physical conditions, can cause differences in plant growth and animal behaviour that need not necessarily be caused by the pollutant situation and the hazard potential.

- If the aim is to evaluate the ecotoxicity of a soil or soil material sample from a contaminated site, the preferred method would be to use an uncontaminated control material similar to the sample being tested.