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Soil quality — Characterization of excavated soil and other soil materials intended for re-use

*Qualité du sol — Caractérisation de la terre excavée et d'autres matériaux
du sol destinés à la réutilisation*



Reference number
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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 3.

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 International Standard may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 15176 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 190, *Soil quality*, Subcommittee SC 7, *Soil and site assessment*.

Annexes A, B, C, D and E of this International Standard are for information only.

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Introduction

This International Standard is one of a series providing guidance on the assessment of soils and soil materials in relation to certain functions and uses. It should be read in conjunction with these other International Standards, some of which give more specific guidance in relation to some of the uses listed in the Scope or particular aspects of assessments. For example, ISO 15800 gives guidance on assessments relating to human exposure to potentially harmful substances and ISO 15175 gives guidance on characterization of soil related to groundwater.

Soils are the dynamic product of chemical, physical and biological processes. They are the result of interactions between the inherent nature of the parent material, the prevailing environmental conditions and human activities. They are a valuable natural resource which should be conserved wherever possible. When construction, mining or other activities require soils to be excavated and moved from their natural situation, they should as far as possible be reused in a manner consistent with their natural properties and the intended use of the receiving location. Soils intended for re-use are usually required to have certain chemical, leaching, geotechnical, physical, biological and radiochemical attributes consistent with this future use. Particular attention must be paid in situations where there is reason to believe that the surplus soil may be contaminated.

Soils that are to be excavated should be investigated to determine how they may be re-used so as to minimize the quantities to be disposed of as waste and to determine environmental impacts that might arise during re-use. Treatment of soils and soil materials to remove or destroy contaminants or to reduce their availability to the environment may alter soil properties. These properties should therefore be determined before re-use. For manufactured soils, the characteristics of both the components and of the manufactured product may need to be determined.

The purpose of characterizing soil (or other media) as suggested in this International Standard is usually to enable judgements to be made about its suitability for a defined use (e.g. arable farming, domestic gardens). These judgements may be made by reference to published international or national guidance that sets out physical, chemical or other generic criteria that must be met, or against criteria set on a site-specific basis. When substances are present that might be harmful to human health or the environment, the judgement may also be made on the basis of a site-specific qualitative, semi-quantitative or fully quantitative risk assessment. In many jurisdictions, formal guidance on such assessments has been published. In some cases this guidance fits within a legislative framework. Guidance has also been provided by professional organizations and some standardization bodies.

When deciding whether to re-use soil material, other possibly competing or overriding objectives such as protection of soil, nature, water and air; physical planning requirements and national legislative requirements may have to be met.

Assessment of soil material for re-use may require the measurement of the chemical, physical, biological, geotechnical and radiochemical characteristics of soil material and of the source and target sites. The assessor should identify those parameters that are appropriate to the task in hand.

This International Standard identifies the functions and properties of soil materials at the source (point of origin) and also the properties of the target (receiving) site which may be relevant to the potential uses listed in the Scope, and indicates for which parameters or procedures there are International Standards available. Radiochemical and geotechnical aspects are not covered. For guidance on the geotechnical aspects of the use of soil materials as construction material, reference should be made to other relevant International Standards (e.g. those produced by ISO/TC 182, *Geotechnics in the field of civil engineering*) or national standards.

The way the soil is handled after excavation may affect soil properties. Some suggestions regarding good practice in soil handling and related practice and monitoring after placement are provided in annex B.