Latvia

Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP)

Revised Regional Risk Assessment for Latvia

Version 2.0

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In the case of inconsistency between translations, the official English language version shall always take precedence.

SBP welcomes comments and suggestions for changes, revisions and / or clarifications on all of its Standards documentation. Please contact: **info@sbp-cert.org**

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Annexes

Abbreviations

AS	Akciju Sabiedrība (corporation)
ATM	Automated teller machine
CA	Competent authority
CBD	Convention of Biodiversity
CHP	Combined heat and power
CLRTAP	Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COC	Chain of custody
EC	European Commission
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
EEC	European Economic Community
EIA	Environmental impact assessment
ENGO	Environmental non-governmental organisation
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
EUTR	European Union Timber Regulation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FM	Forest management
FPIC	Free, prior and informed consent
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GDP	Gross domestic product
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GIS	Geographical information system
GM	Genetically modified
GMO	Genetically modified organism
GSI	Global Slavery Index
HCV	High conservation value
IBA	Important bird area
ICP	International Co-operative Programme
ID	Identity
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPM	Integrated pest management
KNAB	Korupcijas Novēršanas un Apkarošanas Biroju (Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau)
KP	Kyoto Protocol
LBAS	Latvijas Brīvo Arodbiedrību Savienība (Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia)
LDDK	Latvijas Darba Devēju Konfederācija (Employers' Confederation of Latvia)
LDF	Latvijas Dabas Fonds (Latvian Fund for Nature)
LEGMC	Latvian Environment, Geology, and Meteorology Centre
LIFE-IP	L'Instrument Financier pour l'Environnement – Integrated Project
LMNA	Latvijas Mežas nozares Arodbiedrība (Latvian Forest Industry Trade Union)
LOB	Latvijas Ornitologijas Biedriba (Latvian Ornithological Society)
LSFRI	Latvian State Forest Research Institute
LSM	Latvijas Sabiedriskie Mediji (Latvian Public Media)
LULST	Latvian University of Life Sciences and Technologies

LULUCF	Land use, land use change and forestry
LVM	Latvijas Valsts Meži (Latvia's State Forests)
MNKC	Meža Nozares Kompetences Centrs (Forest Sector Competence Centre)
N.A.	Not applicable
NDC	Nationally determined contribution
NFI	National forest inventory
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OHS	Occupational health and safety
PAF	Prioritised action framework
PEFC	Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification
RED	Renewable Energy Directive
RRA	Regional risk assessment
RTE	Rare, threatened, and endangered
RVDI	Reģionālā Valsts Darba Inspekcija (Regional State Labour Inspectorate)
SBP	Sustainable Biomass Program
SPA	Specially protected area
SRF	State Register of Forests
SRS	State Revenue Service
SSE	Stockholm School of Economics
SSIA	State Social Insurance Agency
TCSLA	Tripartite Co-operation Sub-Council for Labour Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VAT	Value-added tax
VMD	Valsts Meža Dienests (State Forest Service)
VNR	Voluntary national review
WKH	Woodland key habitat
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Foreword

Regional Risk Assessments (RRAs) are a key part of SBP's focus on identifying and managing risks associated with sustainably sourcing feedstock for biomass production. With an RRA covering an entire geographic region, and determining the risks associated with sourcing feedstock from that region, the need for individual Biomass Producers to conduct risk assessments is avoided, leading to an efficient and consistent risk assessment process. RRAs also ensure active engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders in the region.

SBP-endorsed RRAs remain valid for a period of five (5) years from their publication date. The SBP Regional Risk Assessment Procedure allows for the development of new RRAs, and the review and revision of existing SBP-endorsed RRAs. The need for review and revision may be triggered by new or updated information, changes in legislation, stakeholder feedback, revision of SBP Standards 1 and 2, or expiry of the validity of the SBP-endorsed RRA.

As a result of the Standards Development Process launched in May 2020, both SBP Standards 1 and 2 were revised, thus triggering the review of all existing SBP-endorsed RRAs. A Working Body (WB) was appointed for each of the existing SBP-endorsed RRAs and was responsible for their review and revision. Indufor Oy was appointed by SBP to review and revise the SBP-endorsed RRA for Latvia (v1.0).

A revised RRA is subject to public consultation. The WB is responsible for holding the first public consultation of the revised RRA, following which amendments are made, if necessary, and the revised RRA submitted to SBP. The SBP Technical Committee reviews the revised RRA, which is then subject to a second public consultation held by SBP. Subject to any amendments following the second public consultation SBP, in consultation with its Technical Committee, considers the revised RRA for endorsement.

This SBP-endorsed RRA for Latvia is aligned with the requirements of SBP Standards 1 and 2 (v2.0), and the requirements of the re-cast EU Renewable Energy Directive (REDII) relating to feedstock compliance. Note that to produce REDII-compliant biomass, Biomass Producers must comply with the relevant SBP Standards and Instruction Document REDII: Bridging Requirements for Meeting REDII. Compliance with REDII requirements is mandatory for all Certificate Holders.

1 Introduction

The Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP) has endorsed Regional Risk Assessments (RRAs) for several countries and territories including Latvia.

This report describes the revision of the SBP-endorsed Regional Risk Assessment for Latvia published as version 1.0 (v1.0) in September 2017. The current round of updating was conducted in accordance with the recently updated SBP Regional Risk Assessment Procedure (v1.2) and draws on criteria and indicators set out in Standard 1: Feedstock Compliance (v2.0) and by taking into account Standard 2: Feedstock Verification v2.0 (March 2023).

The revision covers all indicators in the new Standard 1 many of which are new or revised. The data sources for other indicators are also reviewed and revised as necessary.

The revision draws on many sources of information including applicable legislation, reports from state authorities and other stakeholders, various databases as well as statistical data sources.

For each criterion, detailed descriptions and analyses are presented and a risk class is assigned to each indicator as set out in Annex 1. The revised draft of the RRA has been prepared by a Working Body comprising four forestry and certification experts from Indufor with the support of an independent expert on Latvian forestry hired by Indufor.

2 Regional background and statement of scope

2.1 Regional background

The territory of Latvia (Figure 2.1) forms part of the nemoral region in the European biogeographical region classification, being 'halfway between' the temperate and boreal regions. The Nature Conservation Agency is the responsible authority for the implementation of policy deriving from EU Nature Directives, reporting on the status of habitats of EU importance (according to Art. 17 of the EU Habitat Directive) and Natura 2000 reporting as well as the implementation of nature-related policies in Latvia.

According to the fourth cycle of the Latvian National Forest Inventory (NFI) of 2021, conducted by the Latvian State Forest Research Institute (Silava), the area of forest land in the country is 3.3 million ha. About 46% of Latvia's forest area is dominated by coniferous trees and 54% by broadleaved trees. About 31% of forest stands are young, 34% medium-aged, 14% mature and 20% either 'at or above harvesting age'.

Intensively managed forests make up approximately 72% of the forest land and most of the forests with restrictions on management are state-owned (State Forest Service 2022).

Forest ownership is divided into private forests, state-owned forests, local government/ municipality-owned and other forests as follows: state-owned forests (49%), private forests (48%), local government-owned and other forests (3%) of forest area (State Forest Service 2022).

The majority of the state-owned forests are managed by the Joint Stock Company, "Latvia's State Forests" (LVM, Latvijas Valsts Meži). The state-owned forests under the management of LVM in Latvia are FSC- and PEFC-certified. LVM's forest management is divided into eight regions: Rietumvidzeme, Ziemeļkurzeme Vidusdaugava, Zemgale, Dienvidlatgale, Dienvidkurzeme, Ziemeļlatgale and Austrumvidzeme. All forests in these regions are PEFC-certified for forest management. Additionally, LVM's forests in four regions (Dienvidlatgale, Dienvidkurzeme, Ziemeļlatgale and Austrumvidzeme) hold FSC forest management certificates (LVM 2023). The other four regions have FSC-controlled wood certificates.

Some state forests are managed by the State Centre for Defence Military Objects and Procurement (forest areas of the Ministry of Defence) and the Nature Conservation Agency (forest areas of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development).

The Nature Conservation Agency manages 122,723 ha of state-owned land including 60,547 ha of forests and 26,186 ha of bogs and mires (as per consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency). The Agency mainly manages state land in strict nature reserves and partially forest land in national parks.

Large private forest holdings are usually certified., The total area of FSC-certified forests In Latvia was 1,217,943 ha in 2023 (FSC "Facts & Figures") and the total area of PEFC-certified forests was 1,760,055 ha in 2023 (PEFC: "Facts and Figures"). However, according to the stakeholder consultation, there are also many small private forest holdings[2] (1-10 ha) and only a small proportion of these is certified.

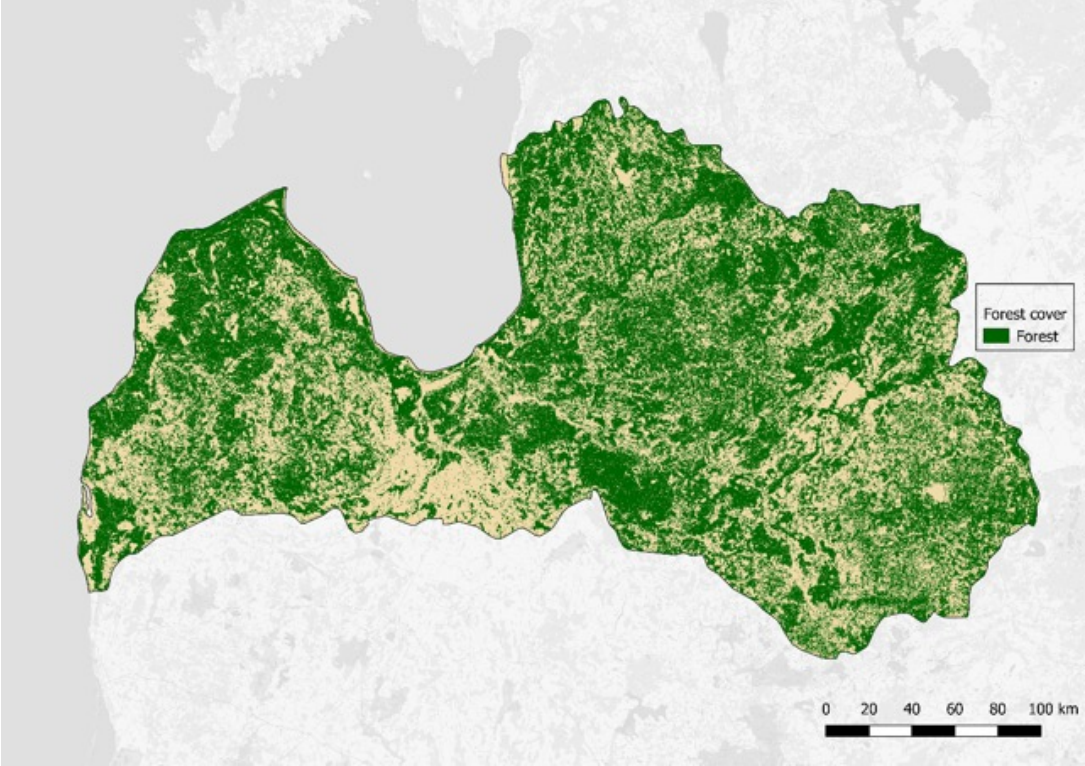
In private and municipal forests, works are carried out by private professional contractors which is also the case in state forests. For logging, an operator shall have a valid forest inventory, along with a felling permit issued by the State Forest Service (VMD, Valsts Meža Dienests). In addition, a forest owner or lawful possessor of forestland is required to develop a forest management plan if the total area of forests under management exceeds 10,000 ha. A forest management plan is also obligatory for forest holdings within national parks; each national park has its own legal framework for conservation and management. According to the Law on Forests, there are exceptions: e.g. a felling permit is not needed if the stump diameter of the trees is less than 12 cm or the operation is thinning in young stands of up to 20 years of age.

Forest inventory data are available on the public forest registry online database (State Forest Service: "The State Forest Registry"). However, the Nature Conservation Agency advises that the available information covers some but not all issued felling permits. (The publicly available information from the online database is available here: (https://data.gov.lv/dati/lv/dataset/meza-valsts-registra-meza-dati).

1 https://www.lvm.lv/kontakti/regioni.

2 There are approximately 135,000 private owners in total in Latvia (Latvian forest sector in facts and figures, 2022)

Figure 2.1 Map of Latvia[3]



3 Forest cover: © ESA WorldCover project [2021] / Contains modified Copernicus Sentinel data ([2021]) processed by ESA WorldCover consortium; Administrative boundaries: made with Natural Earth; Base map: Map tiles by CartoDB, under CC BY 3.0. Data by OpenStreetMap, under ODbL.

The Nature Conservation Agency conducted country-wide mapping of the habitats of the EU importance during 2017-2022. According to the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency, within the project "Preconditions for better biodiversity preservation and ecosystem protection in Latvia"', or simply the "Nature Census" (co-funded by the European Union Cohesion Fund), 854,426 ha of forests in Latvia were surveyed. According to the survey, the area of forest habitats of EU importance is 334,597 ha, and about 37.5% of the habitat areas are located in Natura 2000 territories. A significant majority (80%) of the identified forest habitats of EU importance are located in state-owned forests, while just 1% of these areas are found in municipal properties, and the remaining 19% are in private forests. Forest harvesting is allowed in the forest habitats of EU importance if they are not included in the Natura 2000 territories and regulations on management of those territories does not prohibit certain forest management practices e.g. clearcutting. Data compiled by the Nature Conservation Agency show that approximately 5,000 ha of mapped forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia have been lost due to clearcutting since 2017.

Given the above context, Latvia is considered homogenous regarding SBP risks so the RRA assessment does not require further sub-scoping.

2.2 Statement of scope

The geographical scope of this revision covers the entire territory of the Republic of Latvia. As in the original RRA (2017), this revision covers wood-based primary feedstock[4] from forests including forest residues[5]. Processing residues[6] that have been produced from wood (i.e. raw materials) harvested in Latvia are also covered by this revision. All imported feedstock and processing residues from raw materials that originate outside Latvia are not covered by this RRA.

This revision covers only the land defined as forest by the Law on Forests (2000) of the Republic of Latvia. According to this law, forest land is defined as 'land covered by a forest, land under forest infrastructure objects, as well as overflowing clearings, marshes, and glades that are part of the forest and adjacent marshes'. The law defines the forests as an 'ecosystem in all stages of its development where the major producer of organic mass is trees, the height of which at the particular location may reach at least five metres and the present or potential projection of the crown of which is at least 20% of the area covered by the forest stand'.

Trees outside forests are excluded from the scope of this RRA as per SBP's guidance. Trees outside forests refers to trees on lands not defined as forests under national legislation. According to SBP's Glossary of Terms and Definitions v2.0 (2023), trees outside forests are defined as the 'trees on land not defined as forest under national legislation. This may include agricultural land, including meadows and pasture, built-on land (including settlements and infrastructure), parks and recreational areas and barren land (including sand dunes and rocky outcroppings)'.

2.3 Overview of the local biomass sector

Wood has an important role in energy production in Latvia. Wood-based biomass (firewood, wood residues, woodchips, wood briquettes, wood pellets) makes up 78.6% of the total consumption of renewables and constitutes 33% of the country's total energy consumption (Central Statistical Bureau, 2022).

Overall, the demand for wood-based energy is growing in Latvia especially as gas and other energy sources from Russia are not available and costs for energy supplies are increasing (LSV, 2022). During the past decade, approximately 11 million m^3 of timber were harvested annually from Latvian forests (State Forest Service 2022). In 2022, the harvested volume was 13.2 million m^3. Financial support for renewable energy in the form of subsidies for companies and households is available to support the transition to bioenergy (Ministry of Economics 2023, Cabinet of Ministers 2023 and Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development 2023[7]).

4 The primary feedstock is defined as suggested by SBP Glossary of Terms and Definitions (v2.0, May 2023): 'Feedstock resulted from forestry operations and harvesting of trees from non-forest sourcing areas.'

5 According to SBP Glossary of Terms and Definitions (v2.0, May 2023), 'a forest residue is a feedstock directly generated in the forest for which there is no alternative use. These residues do not include residues from related industries or processing. Examples include feedstock comprising branch wood, diseased wood and storm salvage from natural disturbances, end of life timber plantations, or treetops'.

6 Processing residues are defined – as per the SBP Glossary of Terms and Definitions (v2.0,May 2023)- as the feedstock such as bark, sawdust, slab wood or residues arising from a primary or secondary wood processor; any wood rejected by a sawmill. Sawdust, shavings produced during the processing of wood at the sawmill/wood industry. Chips, offcuts produced during the processing of wood at the sawmill/ wood industry, that may include small offcuts or also bark that has been stripped from the wood.

7 Ministry of Economics 2023. Companies will once again have access to support for improving energy efficiency, using RES (Renewable Energy Source) technologies, and purchasing electric vehicles. Cabinet of Ministers. 2023 Uzņēmumu energoefektivitātei un pārejai uz atjaunojamo energoresursu tehnoloģijām būs pieejami 80,5 milj. eiro no Atveseļošanas fonda. Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. 2023. Atbalsta programma atjaunojamo energoresursu izmantošanai mājsaimniecībās.

The importance of wood as fuel for energy has increased significantly over the last decade in Latvia, especially in combined heat and power (CHP) plants. The growth in demand is mainly due to significant investments made to increase capacity and governmental support. In total, there were 381 heat plants (60% of the total number of heat plants) and 36 CHP plants (30% of the total number of heat plants) running fully or partly on woody biomass in Latvia in 2022 (Central Statistical Bureau: "Heat plants by fuel type", "Combined heat and power plants (chp) by fuel type"). Regardless of fuel type, most heat plants have a small capacity (< 5 MW) with only one having a capacity over 50 MW (Central Statistical Bureau: "Number of heat plants, capacity and produced heat"). CHP plants are larger on average (Central Statistical Bureau: "Number of combined heat and power plants (chp), electrical capacity, produced electricity and heat energy").

3 Methodology

3.1 Data collection

Necessary data for this RRA revision is collected mainly through desktop searches from a range of sources. The sources include applicable Latvian and EU policies, legislation and regulations, reports and articles from relevant Latvian ministries and state authorities, NGO and industry bodies, various databases, as well as technical and scientific reports. Notable Latvian ministries and state authorities from which data is collected include the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Rural Development, the Ministry of Climate and Energy, the Ministry of Welfare, the State Forest Service, the State Environmental Service, the Environment Service Bureau, the Nature Conservation Agency, State Forest Enterprise AS Latvijas Valsts Meži (LVM) and the Labour Inspectorate. Support from the Latvian Forestry and Certification Expert was taken for identifying the data sources and collecting the data.

The data used in this revision were validated by cross-checking them with multiple sources whenever possible. Support from the Latvian forestry and certification expert was also taken for validating the data.

3.2 Selection of indicators to be updated

Updated SBP Standards 1–6 were approved in March 2023 following a comprehensive review process. The updated criteria and indicators in Standard 1: Feedstock Compliance now form version 2.0 (v2.0) and these provide the framework for undertaking a new Supply Base Evaluation (SBE).

Standard 1 (v2.0) includes 10 new indicators and most other indicators from v1.0 have been revised. The availability of new information relevant to nearly all indicators meant that some level of updating of the previous Latvian RRA (2017) was necessary.

The three levels of update are categorised as follows:

- **New additions:** For the new indicators in SBP Standard 1 (v2.0), detailed analysis is conducted, evidence is compiled, and conclusions are made.
- **Major updates:** For the revised indicators in Standard 1 (v2.0) that were partially aligned with the indicators assessed in the original Latvian RRA (2017), a new SBE assessment has been made including an information review, analysis and updated risk classification.
- **Minor updates:** For the revised indicators in Standard 1 (v2.0) that almost fully matched indicators from the original Latvian RRA (2017), the information in the detailed findings of the SBE assessments is updated. Originally assigned risk classes are reviewed and changed when necessary.

The level of update done for each indicator is given in Tables 3.1 to 3.4 on pages 7 to 13.

Table 3.1:

Principle 1 – Feedstock is legally sourced

Criterion 1.1 – Operators and operations are legal

Indicator in SBP Standard 1 (v2.0)	Matching indicator in RRA Latvia (September 2017)	Level of update
1.1.1: Operations related to feedstock sourcing and biomass production shall comply with all applicable and existing laws and regulations.	None.	New addition
1.1.2: Legal ownership of land and resource use rights shall be respected.	1.2.1: Legality of ownership and land use can be demonstrated for the Supply Base.	Major
1.1.3: Feedstock shall be legally harvested, supplied and produced, including in compliance with CITES, EUTR and other applicable legal trade requirements.	1.3.1: Feedstock is legally harvested and supplied and is in compliance with EUTR legality requirements. 1.5.1: Feedstock is supplied in compliance with the requirements of CITES.	Major
1.1.4: Payments for harvest rights and feedstock, including duties, relevant royalties and taxes related to timber harvesting shall be complete and up to date.	1.4.1: Payments for harvest rights and timber, including duties, relevant royalties and taxes related to timber harvesting, are complete and up to date.	Minor
1.1.5: There shall be adequate protection of the supply base from unauthorised and illegal activities, such as illegal logging, mining, and encroachment.	2.4.3: There is adequate protection of the forest from unauthorised activities, such as illegal logging, mining and encroachment.	Minor

Table 3.2:

Principle 2 – Feedstock sourcing does not harm the environment

Criterion 2.1 – Biodiversity is maintained or enhanced

Indicator in SBP Standard 1 (v2.0)	Matching indicator in RRA Latvia (September 2017)	Level of update
2.1.1: Key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation value (HCV) pertaining to biodiversity in the supply base shall be identified.	2.1.1: Forests and other areas with high conservation values in the Supply Base are identified and mapped.	Major
2.1.2: Threats to and impacts on the identified key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation value (HCV) pertaining to biodiversity in the supply base shall be identified and evaluated.	2.1.2: Potential threats to forests and other areas with high conservation values from forest management activities are identified and addressed.	Major
2.1.3: Key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation value (HCV) pertaining to biodiversity in the Supply Base shall be maintained or enhanced.	2.2.4: Biodiversity is protected.	Major

Criterion 2.2 – Ecosystem productivity, functions, and services are maintained or enhanced

Indicator in SBP Standard 1 (v2.0)	Matching indicator in RRA Latvia (September 2017)	Level of update
2.2.1: Feedstock shall not be sourced from land that had one of the following statuses in January 2008 and no longer has that status due to land conversion: a. Forests b. Wetlands c. Peatlands d. Highly biodiverse grasslands.	2.1.3: Feedstock is not sourced from forests converted to production plantation forest or non-forest lands after January 2008.	Major
2.2.2: Ecosystems, their health, vitality, functions and services in the Supply Base shall be maintained or enhanced.	2.2.3: Key ecosystems and habitats are conserved or set aside in their natural state.	Major
2.2.3: Soil quality in the Supply Base shall be maintained or enhanced.	2.2.2: Feedstock is sourced from forests where management maintains or improves soil quality.	Minor
2.2.4: Where the removal of harvest forest residues and / or stumps occurs, this shall not lead to irreversible negative impacts to the ecosystem.	2.2.5: The process of residue removal minimises harm to ecosystems.	Minor
2.2.5: Quality and quantity of ground water, surface water and water downstream shall be maintained or enhanced.	2.2.6: Negative impacts on groundwater, surface water, and water downstream from forest management are minimised.	Minor
2.2.6: Air emissions shall comply with national legislation or in the absence of national legislation with industry best practice.	2.2.7: Air quality is not adversely affected by forest management activities.	Minor

2.2.7: Pesticides shall only be used as part of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan in compliance with national legislation, chemical safety data sheets and industry best practice. Banned pesticides shall not be used.	2.2.8: There is controlled and appropriate use of chemicals, and that integrated pest management (IPM) is implemented wherever possible in forest management activities.	Major
2.2.8: Waste shall be disposed of in an environmentally appropriate manner.	2.2.9: Methods of waste disposal minimise negative impacts on forest ecosystems.	Minor
2.2.9: Harvesting levels shall be justified as to how they can be sustained with reference to inventory and growth data for the Supply Base.	2.3.1: Analysis shows that feedstock harvesting does not exceed the long-term production capacity of the forest, avoids significant negative impacts on forest productivity and ensures long-term economic viability. Harvest levels are justified by inventory and growth data.	Minor
2.2.10: Harvested areas shall be regenerated.	None.	New addition
2.2.11: The impacts of natural processes such as fires, pests and diseases shall be managed.	2.4.2: Natural processes, such as fires, pests and diseases are managed appropriately.	Minor
2.2.12: Genetically modified trees shall not be used.	2.10.1: Genetically modified trees are not used.	Minor

Table 3.3:

Principle 3 – Feedstock is only sourced from supply bases where the forest carbon stock is stable or increasing in the long term

Criterion 3.1 – Feedstock sourcing is consistent with international requirements for land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) emissions

Indicator in SBP Standard 1 (v2.0)	Matching indicator in RRA Latvia (September 2017)	Level of update
3.1.1: LULUCF emissions shall be accounted for through one of the following routes: Route A Feedstock may be sourced from a country of origin which is party to the Paris Agreement, and which has submitted a Nationally Determined Contribution to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) covering carbon emissions and removals from agriculture, forestry and land use which ensure the changes in carbon stock associated with biomass harvest are counted towards the country's commitment to reduce or limit greenhouse gas emissions, or Route B Feedstock may be sourced from a country of origin which is party to the Paris Agreement and has national or sub-national laws in place (developed in accordance with Article 5 of the Paris Agreement and applicable in the area of harvest), to conserve and enhance carbon stocks and sinks, and provided there is evidence that reported LULUCF-sector emissions do not exceed removals, or Route C Feedstock may be sourced from a Supply Base where an assessment demonstrates that both the carbon stock is stable, and the forests' capacity to act as a carbon sink is stable or increasing over the long term.	2.9.2: Analysis demonstrates that feedstock harvesting does not diminish the capability of the forest to act as an effective sink or store of carbon over the long term.	Major

Criterion 3.2 – Carbon stocks in the forest area of the Supply Base are stable or increasing in the long term

Indicator in SBP Standard 1 (v2.0)	Matching indicator in RRA Latvia (September 2017)	Level of update
3.2.1: All feedstock sourcing shall be consistent with either of these two options: Option A. Feedstock may be sourced from Supply Bases where an assessment of the Supply Base shows that the forest carbon stocks are stable or increasing, or Option B. Feedstock may be sourced, if the assessment shows that the forest carbon stocks are declining in the Supply Base, provided that the decline is due to natural processes (fire, pests etc.), and sourcing of feedstock has the aim to recover feedstock that would otherwise be lost or to assist regeneration.	None.	New addition
3.2.2: Primary feedstock shall not be sourced from forest areas where site productivity is low and, according to local definitions or norms, the areas are classified as low-productive or difficult to regenerate.	None.	New addition
3.2.3: Primary feedstock shall not be sourced from forest areas in the Supply Base which, according to local definitions or norms, are classified as having combined attributes of high carbon stocks and high conservation value (HCV).	2.1.1: Forests and other areas with high conservation values in the Supply Base are identified and mapped. 2.9.1: Feedstock is not sourced from areas that had high carbon stocks in January 2008 and no longer have those high carbon stocks.	Major

Criterion 3.3 – Feedstock sourcing shall not compete with wood sourcing for long-lived wood products

Indicator in SBP Standard 1 (v2.0)	Matching indicator in RRA Latvia (September 2017)	Level of update
3.3.1: Feedstock sourcing shall be in compliance with the principles of cascading use, high-quality stem wood shall not be used as feedstock if it is in substantial demand for long-lived products in the Supply Base.	New.	New addition

Table 3.4:

Principle 4 – Feedstock sourcing benefits people and communities

Criterion 4.1 – Decent working conditions are provided, and labour rights are safeguarded

Indicator in SBP Standard 1 (v2.0)	Matching indicator in RRA Latvia (September 2017)	Level of update
4.1.1: Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining shall be respected in the workplace.	2.7.1: Freedom of Association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining are respected.	Major
4.1.2: Forced or compulsory labour shall not be used.	2.7.2: Feedstock is not supplied using any form of compulsory labour.	Major
4.1.3: Child labour shall not be used.	2.7.3: Feedstock is not supplied using child labour.	Major
4.1.4: Workers shall not be discriminated in hiring, remuneration, access to training, promotion, termination or retirement.	2.7.4: Feedstock is not supplied using labour which is discriminated against in respect of employment and occupation.	Major
4.1.5: Wages paid to workers shall meet or exceed the legal minimum wage or where there is no statutory minimum wage industry norms shall be met or exceeded.	2.7.5: Feedstock is supplied using labour where the pay and employment conditions are fair and meet, or exceed, minimum requirements.	Major
4.1.6: Working hours shall comply with legal requirements.	None.	New addition
4.1.7: Workers shall have access to health care provisions, sickness benefits, retirement benefits, invalidity benefits, death benefits, workers' compensation.	None.	New addition
4.1.8: Training shall be provided for all workers to allow them to implement the conditions set out in all elements of the SBP standards relevant to their responsibilities.	2.3.2: Adequate training is provided for all personnel, including employees and contractors.	Minor
4.1.9: Mechanisms shall be in place for resolving grievances and disputes in the workplace.	2.6.1: Appropriate mechanisms are in place for resolving grievances and disputes, including those relating to tenure and use rights, to forest management practices and to work conditions.	Minor
4.1.10: Safeguards shall be put in place to protect the health and safety of workers by developing, communicating and implementing policies and procedures.	2.8.1: Appropriate safeguards are put in place to protect the health and safety of forest workers.	Minor

Criterion 4.2 – Feedstock sourcing benefits communities

Indicator in SBP Standard 1 (v2.0)	Matching indicator in RRA Latvia (September 2017)	Level of update
4.2.1: Negative social and community impacts shall be identified and avoided.	None.	New addition
4.2.2: Feedstock sourcing shall positively contribute to the local economy, including employment.	2.3.3: Analysis shows that feedstock harvesting and biomass production positively contribute to the local economy including employment.	Major
4.2.3: Food, water supply or high conservation values (HCV) that are essential for the fulfilment of basic needs of communities shall be maintained or enhanced.	2.5.2: Production of feedstock does not endanger food, water supply or subsistence means of communities, where the use of this specific feedstock or water is essential for the fulfilment of basic needs.	Minor
4.2.4: Legal, customary, and traditional tenure and use rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities related to the Supply Base shall be identified, documented, and respected.	2.5.1: The legal, customary and traditional tenure and use rights of indigenous peoples and local communities related to the forest, are identified, documented and respected.	Major
4.2.5: Mechanisms shall be in place for resolving grievances and disputes, relating to tenure and use rights of the forest and other land management practices.	2.6.1: Appropriate mechanisms are in place for resolving grievances and disputes, including those relating to tenure and use rights, to forest management practices and to work conditions.	Major
4.2.6: Where Indigenous Peoples' rights are identified in the Supply Base, and FPIC has not been achieved for the proposed and planned activities, a consultation and, if required, accommodation process shall be put in place.	None.	New addition
4.2.7: Designated cultural heritage sites shall be preserved.	None.	New addition

3.3 Risk classification

Based on collected information (evidence), a thorough analysis was undertaken for each indicator and either a low or specified risk class was assigned. The analysis examined (i) the applicable legislative and regulatory framework or industry best practices on the specific issues addressed by the criterion and indicator in question, (ii) mechanisms for implementation or enforcement, (iii) monitoring procedures (presence or absence and frequency or quality), and (iv) current situation on compliance if the information was available. Additionally, a risk conclusion and justification were given for the risk class assigned for each indicator.

For assigning the risk class to an indicator, we followed the guidance given in SBP Standard 2: Feedstock Verification (v2.0) (article 6.3).

– An indicator is assigned with a low-risk class:
  - if legislation that addresses the requirement(s) in SBP Standard 1 exists and is enforced, and legal compliance within the Supply Base can be demonstrated; or
  - in the absence of existing applicable legislation or lack of legal enforcement, by assessing whether the best practice – that demonstrates conformance with the requirements of SBP Standard 1 – is implemented.
– The indicators that cannot be categorised as low risk are considered a specified risk.

For risk classification of indicators, no sub-scoping was used. This is because the risk profile is homogenous in all forests in Latvia (see Section 2.1).

4 Stakeholder consultation

The draft RRA revision was shared with a total of 23 stakeholders in Latvia (see Annex 4) by email on 19 April 2023. The stakeholders were selected in such a way that all the interest groups[8] specified in SBP Regional Risk Assessment Procedure (v1.2) were well represented. The draft was accompanied by a covering letter (see Annex 5). Stakeholders were requested to provide feedback within 30 calendar days which was 19 May 2023. A reminder was sent to stakeholders on 12 May 2023. Both the original request and the reminder were delivered to all stakeholders and no failure messages to the sender's email were received.

Face-to-face consultations were conducted with a number of stakeholders in Latvia on 18 and 19 May 2023

A total of 10 stakeholders out of 23 initially contacted responded to the request to provide feedback. This means the response rate was 43%. The detailed breakdown of stakeholder responses is given in Table 4.1. Nine stakeholders made comment. One stakeholder (Latgran SIA) responded but did not make any comment.

8 The interest groups are economic, social, environmental, certification bodies, national forest agencies, universities and research institutions, and experts.

Table 4.1: Detailed breakdown of stakeholders' responses

Group	Request sent	Responded	Response rate %
	Number of stakeholders		
Industry (economic interest)	10	5	50
Regulator (social and environmental interest)	3	1	33
Civil society (social and environmental interest)	3	2	67
Certification body (social and environmental interest)	3	2	67
Academia and research	4	0	0
Total / overall	**23**	**10**	**43**

The revised draft RRA revision for Latvia was prepared based on stakeholders' feedback (see Annexes 4 and 5). It was then shared with those stakeholders who provided feedback on the draft for follow-up comments. Six stakeholders provided follow-up comments. This final draft is prepared by addressing the follow-up comments given on the revised draft RRA revision.

5 Conclusions

Based on the analysis carried out and the findings related to the indicators (presented in Annex 1), it can be concluded that Latvia is generally a low-risk country in terms of wood-based feedstock sourcing for biomass production.

Out of the total of 42 indicators, 37 are assessed to be in a low-risk class and the remaining five to be in a specified risk class. Table 5.1 lists the risk classifications proposed in this final draft RRA revision report.

In this final draft RRA revision, the risk class of two indicators (3.3.1 and 4.2.5) was changed from specified to low in light of the stakeholder comments received on the earlier draft and the Working Body's gathering of further evidence.

Please see Annex 5 for detailed justifications for the change.

Table 5.1: Assigned risk classes for the indicators.

Indicator	Assigned risk class	
	Low Risk	Specified Risk
1.1.1	✓	
1.1.2	✓	
1.1.3	✓	
1.1.4	✓	

Indicator	Assigned risk class	
	Low Risk	Specified Risk
1.1.5	✓	
2.1.1		✓
2.1.2		✓
2.1.3		✓
2.2.1	✓	
2.2.2	✓	
2.2.3	✓	
2.2.4	✓	
2.2.5	✓	
2.2.6	✓	
2.2.7	✓	
2.2.8	✓	
2.2.9	✓	
2.2.10	✓	
2.2.11	✓	
2.2.12	✓	
3.1.1	✓	
3.2.1	✓	
3.2.2	✓	
3.2.3		✓
3.3.1	✓	
4.1.1	✓	
4.1.2	✓	
4.1.3	✓	
4.1.4	✓	
4.1.5	✓	
4.1.6	✓	
4.1.7	✓	
4.1.8	✓	
4.1.9	✓	
4.1.10	✓	
4.2.1	✓	
4.2.2	✓	
4.2.3	✓	
4.2.4	✓	
4.2.5	✓	
4.2.6	✓	
4.2.7	✓	

Annex 1 Detailed findings for Supply Base Evaluation

Principle 1 – Feedstock is legally sourced

Criterion 1.1 – Operators and operations are legal

Element	Description and analysis
1.1.1	**Operations related to feedstock sourcing and biomass production shall comply with all existing applicable laws and regulations.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The Law on Forests (2000) of Latvia covers all state and privately-owned forests that are 'land covered by a forest, land under forest infrastructure objects, as well as overflowing clearings, marshes, and glades that are part of the forest and adjacent marshes'. The Law defines the forests as an 'ecosystem in all stages of its development where the major producer of organic mass is trees the height of which at the particular location may reach at least five metres and the present or potential projection of the crown of which is at least 20 percent of the area covered by the forest stand'. The assessment covers the legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** *National law and regulations concerning feedstock sourcing and biomass production* The Law on Forests provides the main legislative framework for forestry and forest harvesting in Latvia. Chapter III (Sections 7 -14) of the Law sets provisions for tree felling in the country. Section 9 of the Law specifies the minimum harvesting age for different species of trees in various site classes and Section 12 specifies the minimum diameter for harvesting. The Law neither includes requirements related to forest-based primary feedstock and processing residues sourcing and biomass production, nor restricts the use of wood and forest biomass for bioenergy purposes. However, the decision on the use of wood is made by the forest owners and directed by evident industry cascading in price and quality. For state-owned forests, a maximum limit on tree felling is set by the government every five years. Typically, large forest owners or managers conduct clear-cuts and focus on intensive management practices, including harvesting in accordance with regulations on minimum diameter for final harvest, while smallholders tend to wait until roundwood prices are high. The State Forest Enterprise (LVM, Latvijas valsts meži)[9] – as the consultation with them suggests – conducts clear felling (regeneration felling) mostly in stands that have reached the legally defined harvesting age. Cutting by target diameter represents only a tiny share of LVM's total harvesting. For example, in the period from 2018–2022 only 0.4% of stands were harvested based on diameter. However, it should be noted that the main reason for this approach is the age structure of the managed forest holding. The Law on Forests sets definitive boundaries and requirements for forest management. According to Section 12 of the Law, before tree harvesting commences, forest owners must obtain cutting permits from the State Forest Service. A permit can be used for three years. For harvesting of trees with a stump diameter below 12 cm and for thinning in young stands of up to 20 years of age, no such prior permission from the State Forest Service is required[10].

9 LVM manages the state forests in Latvia. State forests account for about half of all forests in Latvia.

10 It should be noted here that the Government of Latvia has recently approved an amendment in the legislation that lowers the minimum harvesting diameter. This amendment, however, is being contested in court by ENGOs in the country on the grounds that it was approved without proper environmental impact assessment or adequate consultation with stakeholders. The court review is still pending.

1.1.1 continued
Findings continued

There is no evidence that conventional harvesting rules and regulations are violated in Latvia on any notable scale. From the above evidence, it is concluded that the forest-based feedstock used for producing pellets and wood chips in Latvia is sourced in compliance with the Law on Forests.

Implementation of EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED II) in Latvia

The EU RED II imposes several requirements concerning the sustainability of forest biomass to be used for energy generation. The requirements concern:

(i) the legality of harvesting operations

(ii) forest regeneration of harvested areas

(iii) that areas designated by law or by the relevant competent authority for nature protection purposes are protected

(iv) that harvesting is carried out considering the maintenance of soil quality and biodiversity

(v) that harvesting maintains or improves the long-term production capacity of the forest.

The Law on Forests (2000), Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (1993) and their subordinated regulations e.g. Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 935 from 2012 on Harvesting of Trees in Forest, Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 309 from 2012 on Harvest of Trees Outside Forest and the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories fully address the above requirements.

Moreover, the Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 686 on 'Rules on sustainability and greenhouse gas emissions savings criteria, criteria for electricity produced from biomass fuel and procedures for justifying, certifying and monitoring compliance with the mentioned criteria ("Noteikumi par ilgtspējas un siltumnīcefekta gāzu emisiju ietaupījuma kritērijiem, no biomasas kurināmā ražotās elektroenerģijas kritērijiem un kārtību, kādā pamatojama, apliecināma un uzraugāma atbilstība minētajiem kritērijiem") was put in place in November 2022. The Regulations address REDII requirements and suggest a mechanism to fulfill them.

Concerning requirement (i), as concluded in the above section, the forest-based primary feedstock and processing residues used for producing biomass for energy in the country is sourced in compliance with the Law on Forests and the specific regulations set under the Law. This means that harvesting operations in the country comply with the legal and regulatory requirements.

Concerning requirement (ii), according to Section 21 of the Law on Forests, a forest owner or lawful possessor must regenerate a forest stand after felling or damage (e.g. by fire, disease, wind, floods) that cause the basal area of the forest stand to become smaller than the critical basal area set by the Law. Regeneration needs to be completed by artificial or natural means or a combination of both within five years or, in the case of a special site like mesotrophic mire, drained peatland, bog and marsh, within 10 years after harvesting. The State Forest Service enforces the above rule and imposes a fine for non-compliance. There is no evidence or report that the above rule is violated in Latvia.

Regarding requirements (iii) and (iv), the protection of nature, key habitats, biodiversity and ecosystems in Latvia is regulated by the Law on Forests, Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (1993) and General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories as well as the Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (2000) and related regulations. In accordance with the procedure specified in the latter, 658 specifically protected areas (SPAs) are established in Latvia. The SPAs are defined as the geographical areas brought under special state-level protection for safeguarding and maintaining biodiversity, ecosystems, habitats for rare species, landscapes, geological and geomorphological formations and territories important for recreational and educational purposes (Nature Conservation Agency 2023). According to the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories, tree felling is prohibited in specific zones of protected territories (Natura 2000 sites[11]).

11 All Natura 2000 sites in Latvia are designated as National Specially Protected Nature Territories (SPNT). SPNTs of different categories can have zoning with different management/conservation regimes. It has, however, to be noted here that not all SPNTs in Latvia are Natura 2000 sites.

Annex 1 Detailed findings for Supply Base Evaluation continued

1.1.1 continued *Findings continued*	Sections 35–38 of the Law on Forests and related government regulation lays out specific provisions for the protection of nature in the forests. Section nine of the Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes requires landowners and users to promote the preservation of the diversity of species and biotopes, while Sections 11 and 12 prohibit the destruction or deterioration of breeding sites of protected bird species as well as the destruction and deterioration of habitats of other protected species. The above means there are adequate legislative means to fulfil the requirements (iii) and (iv) of EU RED II in Latvia. Regarding requirement (v), the forest harvesting level in Latvia remains far below annual growth and thus the standing stock is increasing. According to the State Forest Service (2022), about 11 million m^3 of timber was harvested on average per year in the past decade in Latvia. The annual harvest level remained below the annual increment on forest land during this period. The latest data from Silava show that the harvesting volume is 76% of the annual increment. Consequently, the growing stock increased from 631 million m3 in 2010 to 682 million m^3 in 2020. This means harvesting maintains or improves the long-term production capacity and carbon stock of the forests. Generally, the use of biomass for energy generation is regulated by the biomass sustainability criteria of the EU RED II (EU 2018/2001) and the National Energy and Climate Plan of Latvia for 2021-2030. The above means requirement (v) is fulfilled in Latvia. In addition to the above, it can be mentioned that the European Union published an assessment of the preparation of guidance for the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in RED II (EU 2021). According to the assessment, the existing applicable Latvian legislation fully addresses the RED II requirements concerning forest biomass. Since there is no report of violation of legislation on any notable scale, it can be concluded that there is no risk of non-compliance concerning feedstock sourcing with the EU RED II requirements. **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests and related regulations while the Nature Conservation Agency enforces the Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories and General Regulations on the Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories as well as the Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes and related regulations. Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the concerned agencies. The EU (2021) report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive as well as stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement of the above legislation in Latvia. This suggests that enforcement is effective. **Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the above analysis it is concluded that the risk class for Indicator 1.1.1 is 'low'.
Means of verification	– Relevant web pages of the State Forest Agency and Nature Conservation Agency – Relevant Latvian national and EU acts, laws and regulations
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet of Ministers. (2020). National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 https://likumi.lv/ta/id/312423-par-latvijas-nacionalo-energetikas-un-klimata-planu-20212030-gadam – Cabinet Regulation No. 264 "General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories" (16.03.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories – EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED) II – DIRECTIVE (EU) 2018/ 2001 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL – of 11 December 2018 – on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (europa.eu)

Annex 1 Detailed findings for Supply Base Evaluation continued

1.1.1 continued *Evidence reviewed*	– Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (02.03.1993). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/59994-on-specially-protected-nature-territories – Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (16.03.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/3941-law-on-the-conservation-of-species-and-biotopes – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – Nature Conservation Agency: Species conservation plan for Hazel Grouse. https://www.daba.gov.lv/lv/media/5918/download?attachment – State Forest Service. (2022). Latvian Forest Sector in Facts and Figures 2022. Riga. – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – Technical Assistance on the preparation of guidance for the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive – https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1fe27161-abbb-11eb-927e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en – Noteikumi par ilgtspējas un siltumnīcefekta gāzu emisiju ietaupījuma kritērijiem, no biomasas kurināmā ražotās elektroenerģijas kritērijiem un kārtību, kādā pamatojama, apliecināma un uzraugāma atbilstība minētajiem kritērijiem (likumi.lv) – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 935 from 2012 on Harvesting of Trees in Forest – Noteikumi par koku ciršanu mežā (likumi.lv) – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 308 from 2012, on Forest Regeneration, Afforestation and Plantation Forests – Meža atjaunošanas, meža ieaudzēšanas un plantāciju meža noteikumi (likumi.lv) – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 936 of 2012) on Requirements for Nature Protection Measures in Forest Management – Dabas aizsardzības noteikumi meža apsaimniekošanā (likumi.lv) – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No 248 from 2013, on Procedure for Evaluation of Sustainability of Forest Management – Meža ilgtspējīgas apsaimniekošanas novērtēšanas kārtība (likumi.lv) – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No 325 From 2013 on the restoration of specially protected species and habitats in a forest – Noteikumi par īpaši aizsargājamo biotopu un īpaši aizsargājamo sugu dzīvotņu atjaunošanu mežā (likumi.lv) – EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium.
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
1.1.2	**Legal ownership of land and resource use rights shall be respected.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all forests in Latvia. **Analysis** In Latvia, the land registration process is regulated by several Laws and Regulations, notably including the State Immovable Property Cadastre Law, Law on Forests and Civil Law.

1.1.2 continued
Findings continued

Tenure rights can only be registered in the State Unified Computerised Land Register if a natural person or a legal entity in any form provides relevant documents confirming the legal rights to the land concerned. This includes identification documents (passport, ID card, company registration documents etc.), sales-purchase agreements, court decisions or other documents proving a legal right to own real property. In situations where customary rights govern use and access, land rights shall be clearly identifiable.

The main primary biomass producers in Latvia providing raw material for biomass production to other companies are the State Forest Enterprise (LVM) and private forest owners. LVM is entrusted to perform forestry activities in most of the state-owned forests[12] (excluding forests reserved for restitution of historical property rights) by the Decision of the Government in which detailed information on state forests with exact boundaries is provided.

The forests under LVM's management are certified according to FSC/PEFC forest management and chain of custody standards in which the indicators concerning tenure, ownership and management rights and responsibilities are evaluated constantly. Some private forests are also certified and thus the above indicators are evaluated constantly for them. No substantial issues concerning the violation of forest ownership and legal land use rights or any disputes over these rights have been identified in the FSC certification process in the state or private forests over the years.

In addition, LVM must perform management rights (sanitation cuttings etc.) in forests reserved for restitution. The land (forest) restitution process is not yet completed. The process of forest restitution and establishment of legal rights, including the provisions for solving disputes, is clearly defined by legislation. Private forest ownership rights shall follow the registration process outlined in legislation and be registered in the State Land Register (Zemesgrāmata). Every private forest owner shall have a forest estate plan and a registration document.

There is no evidence available to indicate that land rights are granted in violation of the national legislation. There is no official information on cases of corruption concerning the process of issuing land tenure and management rights. It can be noted here – as the stakeholder consultation suggests – that all internal evaluations and independent assessments regarding long-term tenure agreements are completed. All independent assessments confirm that the long-term land tenure agreements are in compliance with the applicable laws in Latvia.

Enforcement and monitoring

The State Land Service under the Ministry of Justice and the Land Register Institute enforce laws and regulations related to land registry and the State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests. The State Unified Computerised Land Register under the Land Register Institute is publicly accessible online.

The surveys on corruption perception in Latvia organised by the Corruption Prevention and Combatting Bureau (KNAB) regularly show that the State Land Service and the Land Register Institute are seen by the general public as being amongst the top 10 most trusted state institutions (i.e. regards the institution as "fair" or "rather fair" in terms of corruption). Moreover, Latvia's current standing on the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index is good: it is ranked the 39th least corrupt out of 180 countries with a score of 59 out of 100 in 2022. The above suggests that the land administration enforces and monitors the enforcement of the relevant legislation effectively.

Risk conclusion and justification

The above analysis suggests that legal ownership of land and resource use rights are respected in Latvia and thus the risk for this indicator is considered "low".

12 Some state-owned forests in Latvia are managed by the Nature Conservation Agency (i.e. state-owned forests of National Parks and Strict Nature Reserves) and some are managed by institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Defence.

1.1.2 continued *Means of verification*	– Documents demonstrating that the Biomass Producer is a legally defined entity – Documents showing legal ownership, lease, history of land tenure and the actual legal use: State Land Register (Zemesgrāmata) records; passport, ID card, company registration documents etc., sales-purchase agreements, court decisions or other documents proving a legal right to own real property or business entity – Long-term unchallenged use – State Unified Computerised Land Register – Relevant laws
Evidence reviewed	– Civil Law (28.01.1937). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/225418-civil-law – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Property Guide Latvia: "State Land Service". http://propertyguide.lv/en/agencies/state-land-service/ – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – State Immovable Property Cadastre Law (01.12.2005). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/124247-state-immovable-property-cadastre-law – State Unified Computerized Land Register: https://www.lursoft.lv/en/land-register – Transparency International. (2022). "Corruption Perceptions Index Latvia". https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/latvia
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
1.1.3	**Feedstock shall be legally harvested, supplied and produced, including in compliance with CITES, EUTR and other applicable legal trade requirements.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all forests in Latvia. **Analysis** Woody feedstock harvesting, production and sourcing in Latvia are regulated by both national and EU-level legislation. The EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) is the main applicable cross-border trade framework for assuring the legality of feedstock in the country. As discussed in relation to Indicator 1.1.1 in Annex 1, woody feedstock harvesting, supply and production are fully compliant with the applicable legislation in Latvia. Chapter III (Sections 7–14) of the Law on Forests sets provisions for tree felling, including the minimum harvesting age for different species of trees in various site classes and the minimum diameter for harvesting. Local companies that market timber of local origin in Latvia do not need to go through any additional inspections of the legality of the activity as it is ensured by tree cutting, nature protection, timber circulation and the requirements of the regulatory enactments regulating taxable activities. Nevertheless, the requirements of the Regulation and checking compliance apply equally to timber produced in Latvia.

1.1.3 continued
Findings continued

Legislation regarding penalties and confiscation, covering all timber products as provided for in the EUTR, has been in place since 1 July 2015. Effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties covering domestic production were in place long before the EUTR. Timber resource production in Latvia is carried out in accordance with the procedures stipulated in Law on Forests.

Timber harvesting is based on a felling confirmation system. Felling confirmation specifies the type of harvest and is issued to a forest owner by the State Forest Service. In addition, once a year, the law requires forest owners or legal administrators to provide information to the State Forest Service regarding their commercial operations, including timber production and sales, which is also checked by the State Revenue Service (SRS). Furthermore, there are laws and regulations on the inventory of trees and round timber governing the procedures for record-keeping at all stages of round timber circulation. Accordingly, based on Latvia's national legislation, checks are carried out to verify the origin of timber, along with accounting transactions. In this way, for domestic production, the requirements of EUTR are met.

Noncompliance with forest regulations, including illegal timber harvesting or transactions, can be punished with criminal sanctions laid down in State legislation, including criminal liability, fines and / or a prison sentence for negligence and acting against the law. The penalties and sanctions are considered to be robust.

The Competent Authority (CA) – the State Forest Service – is empowered to act, with a member of staff having been trained and dedicated specifically to EUTR. The CA collaborates with other Member States' Competent Authorities on risk assessment, equal enforcement and other issues. In Latvia, the CA co-operates with the State Revenue Service (Customs and Tax Control Departments), the Nature Conservation Agency which is a CITES supervisory institution, and, when needed, other authorities. Information on all operators placing timber and timber products on the market is available to the CA.

Specific training events on the EUTR for operators have not been carried out by the CA but information has been clarified at meetings of the Latvian Forest Owners' Association and the Latvian Forest Industry Federation. Quality information has been provided and explained at seminars organised by monitoring organisations for individual merchants. The CA has developed guidelines for the operators, and it publishes information in timber industry magazines as well as, in accordance with the EUTR, giving guidance to the operators on an individual basis.

Latvia has signed and ratified the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (The Washington Convention 1973) (CITES). In addition to CITES, trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora is regulated by several EU directives that extend the scope of species within the European Union. None of the local tree and plant species (except wild orchid plant species which are not commercially harvested) are listed in the Annexes of the Washington Convention (1973).

The rules for trade in plants and wild animals regulating the cross-border trade in animals, parts thereof or articles made from them are prepared following the requirements of (i) CITES, (ii) provisions of Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 of 9 December 1996 on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein and (iii) Commission Regulation (EC) No 1808/2001 of 30 August 2001 laying down detailed rules concerning the implementation of the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein. The procedure set by the above mentioned regulations is to be followed and the licences, certificates and other documents as specified in these Regulations are required for bringing in (taking out) animals and plants, parts thereof or articles made from them.

The Nature Conservation Agency and the Customs are institutions responsible for the implementation of CITES requirements. Both institutions check the import and export of endangered species under the CITES including timber products from protected species. A CITES permit is required only when crossing the external borders of the European Union. A special certificate is required when transporting particularly endangered species among the EU countries, in addition to a legal certificate of origin. These certificates, as well as CITES permits, are issued by the Nature Conservation Agency.

1.1.3 continued *Findings continued*	An individual licence issued by the Nature Conservation Agency must be presented for each consignment of animals and plants, parts thereof or articles made from them. For bringing animals and plants, parts thereof and products made from them into/from Latvia to third countries, the completion of customs formalities is allowed only upon presenting the required licences. In recent years, there have been some seizures and confiscations of wood carvings in Latvia but not timber (Traffic 2020). Based on an annual report from the Nature Conservation Agency of the Republic of Latvia in 2012, 10 persons were convicted for illegally importing and selling CITES animals and plants. According to the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency, seized CITES products include live and dead animals, cosmetics and leather products. However, during the last 10 years there have only been a few cases of such seizures. **Enforcement and monitoring** The Nature Conservation Agency is responsible for the implementation of CITES requirements while the State Forest Service is responsible for EUTR and related regulations. These institutions collaborate with the State Revenue Service. Regular monitoring and controls are carried out. As the stakeholder consultation suggests relevant legislation is enforced effectively in Latvia. **Risk conclusions and justifications** Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that feedstock in Latvia is legally harvested, supplied and produced in compliance with CITES, EUTR and other applicable legal trade requirements. Therefore, the risk for this indicator is assessed as low.
Means of verification	– National legislation – Level of enforcement – Supplier contracts with an obligation to fulfil EUTR requirements – Reference to sources of information in guidance notes – Interviews with supplier key staff – List of species purchased – Records of field inspections – Assessment of risk that CITES species may be mixed with non-CITES species in the supply chain – Interviews demonstrate that the CITES requirements are understood – CITES species are known and identified – Where relevant, the permits for harvest and trade in any CITES species – Relevant legislation – Annexes of the Washington Convention (1973) – Webpages of responsible government agencies

1.1.3 continued *Evidence reviewed*	– Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (16.03.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/3941-law-on-the-conservation-of-species-and-biotopes – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – Regulation (EU) No 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market – Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 363/2012 of 23 February 2012 on the procedural rules for the recognition and withdrawal of recognition of monitoring organisations as provided for in Regulation (EU) No 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market – Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 607/2012 of 6 July 2012 on the detailed rules concerning the due diligence system and the frequency and nature of the checks on monitoring organisations as provided for in Regulation (EU) No 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market – Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 927/2012 of 9 October 2012 amending Annex I to Council Regulation (EEC) No 2658/87 on the tariff and statistical nomenclature and the Common Customs Tariff – Law "On 1973 Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora" (17.12.1996). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/41732-on-washington-convention-on-international-trade-in-endangered-species-of-wild-fauna-and-flora-1973 – Cabinet Regulation No. 133 "Procedure for International Trade with Endangered Wild Animal and Plant Species" (06.04.1999). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/23405-kartiba-kada-tiek-nodrosinata-starptautiska-tirdznieciba-ar-apdraudetajiem-savvalas-dzivnieku-un-augu-sugu-ipatniem – Cabinet Regulation No. 1139 "Procedures on Storage, Registration, Keeping in Captivity, Labelling, Trade and Issuing of Certificates for Wild Species Endangered by the International Trade" (06.10.2009). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/198890-procedures-for-keeping-registration-holding-in-captivity-marking-trade-of-specimens-of-species-endangered-by-the-international-trade-and-issuance-of-certificates – Cabinet Regulation No. 1019 "Regulations governing permissions and certificate issuing state fees, fee payment arrangements and incentives for the 1973 Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora" (19.12.2006). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/150402-noteikumi-par-1973-gada-vasingtonas-konvencija-par-starptautisko-tirdzniecibu-ar-apdraudetajam-savvalas-dzivnieku-un-augu-sugam – State Revenue Service: "Home page". https://www.vid.gov.lv/en?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – Traffic. (2020). An overview of seizures of cites-listed wildlife in the European Union. https://www.traffic.org/site/assets/files/17391/2020_eu_seizures_report_final.pdf
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

1.1.4	**Payments for harvest rights and feedstock, including duties, relevant royalties and taxes related to timber harvesting shall, be complete and up to date.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** Corporate Income Tax, Value Added Tax (VAT) and Personal Income Tax are the key applicable taxes to timber and feedstock harvesting in Latvia. **Analysis** There are no specific forest harvesting fees such as royalties, stumpage fees, state fees and other volume-based fees in Latvia. There are also no fees based on quantities, qualities and species. Applicable taxes related to all commercial entities in the forestry sector are Corporate Income Tax, VAT, Personal Income Tax, State Social Security Obligatory Payments, Microenterprise Tax and Capital Increase Tax. The VAT legislation specifies the rights, obligations and liability of tax authorities and taxable persons, as well as setting out the procedures for tax proceedings. VAT must be paid by all persons (both natural and legal) with an annual turnover from their business higher than EUR 50,000 per annum. State Revenue Service is responsible for the collection of VAT which has to be declared every month by the taxpayers. Since 2008, VAT for timber has been paid by the purchaser and not by the seller to avoid VAT laundering. This significant change in VAT law promoted very good preventive measures to stop illegal activities related to VAT payments, contributing to a reduction in VAT laundering. If timber is sold by a natural person to a legal entity, that natural person is liable to pay income tax, which is 15% of the amount received. In this case, income tax on behalf of a seller (physical person) is paid by the company which is purchasing the wood. If wood is sold by an individual entrepreneur doing a timber sales business, income tax is paid by that person once a year through an income declaration process. Income tax declaration is coordinated by the State Revenue Service. Declaration of income and payment of income tax is promoted by the possibility of getting back part of the income tax declared, which gives a financial incentive to do so. Information about the taxpayers is available online in the taxpayer register. In addition, it is possible to check legal entities on the website of the State Revenue Service for tax debts. While the risk of VAT avoidance is considered significantly higher for smaller companies and individual entrepreneurs, small forest owners, there are already mechanisms elaborated and implemented to combat tax evasion in the forestry sector, namely, the reverse payment of VAT, a relatively low threshold of Personal Income Tax, exclusion of Personal Income Tax from timber sales revenues that are invested in forest regeneration. These measures provide a reasonable incentive for forest owners to pay taxes. An additional argument to be considered as a factor for risk minimisation is control over the measurement of roundwood by an industry-acknowledged independent third party institution. The State Revenue Service has come up with several legislative initiatives which have amended existing legislation during the implementation of the so-called shadow economy combatting programme. The most important legislative initiatives have been: – Limiting options for lending money for physical persons, stringent regulations for advance payments; established thresholds for the lending amount to be notified to the State Revenue Service; advanced payments are treated as employment income and taxed if not settled within 90 days after issuance. – There have been new stringent technical requirements established for cash registers and systems. New technical requirements allow the State Revenue Service to detect unauthorised interference in cash or system software.

1.1.4 continued *Findings continued*	– Changes in public procurement legislation. Amendments allow the exclusion of a tenderer from a procurement procedure if the tenderer's average worker monthly income in the first three-quarters of the last four quarters period before the filing date is less than 80% of the average labour income in a given sector. Furthermore, the average income level during the contract effectuation period shall not be lower than the national average income in the recent period. – Amendments to crediting institution legislation oblige crediting institutions to notify the State Revenue Service for all physical person deals exceeding EUR 36,000 in a year or for every deal that exceeds EUR 3,000 in cash. The State Revenue Service shall be notified for all individual transactions exceeding EUR 20,000 or a cumulative sum exceeding EUR 36,000 during the year made using credit accounts registered in low tax or tax-free countries. – Crediting institutions are obliged to provide information to the State Revenue Service on physical person cash deposits to a bank account including those made through an ATM. The credit institution shall notify the State Revenue Service for personal physical deposits made to a bank account more than 8 times per year, for a total amount of at least EUR 6,000. Also, credit and interest payments exceeding the total amount of EUR 3,840 per year shall be notified. – Amendments to the Criminal Code. To increase the efficiency of problem-solving concerning criminal offences connected to "envelope wages", the threshold for damages was reduced from fifty minimum wages to five minimum wages. – Amendments to the Administrative Penalty Code. As of 2014, employees hold the administrative liability for receiving "envelope" salaries i.e. are working without an employment contract and evading Personal Income Tax and Social Security Tax. There is no data available on the scale of the shadow economy in the forestry sector. While the overall scale of the shadow economy and the "envelope wage" issues are highly relevant in Latvia, evidently, it has no strong link with the forestry sector. The forestry sector is not considered among the riskiest sectors in terms of the shadow economy and tax evasion. **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Revenue Service regularly monitors and controls all matters related to taxes and fees. The forest sector is not considered a risky sector in Latvia for shadow economy and tax evasion. This together with stakeholder consultation suggests that monitoring and enforcement of relevant regulations is efficient in the country. **Risk conclusions and justifications** Based on the above analysis, the risk for this indicator is assessed as low.
Means of verification	– Records of payments and correspondence with revenue authorities show payments are correct – Inquiry to State Revenue Service – Online VAT Payers Register http://www6.vid.gov.lv/VID_PDB/PVN – Tax debt online register: The State Revenue Service: http://www6.vid.gov.lv/VID_PDB/NPAR – Lursoft register of commercial entities (http://www.lursoft.lv)

1.1.4 continued *Evidence reviewed*	– Cabinet Regulation No. 103 "Procedure for Transfer of Taxes, Stamp Duties and Other Compulsory Payments to the State Budget" (18.04.1995). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/321021-noteikumi-par-atbalsta-programmu-viena-dzivokla-dzivojamo-maju-atjaunosanai-un-energoefektivitates-paaugstinasanai – Cabinet Regulation No. 109 "Regulation on State Fee for Issuing the Game License, Seasonal Card, Game licence for Foreign Citizens and Permits for Exporting of Game Trophies and the order of Exporting of Game Trophies" (02.03.2004). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/85179-noteikumi-par-valsts-nodevu-par-mednieka-apliecibas-mednieka-sezonas-kartes-un-medibu-atlaujas-izsniegsanu-par-atlaujas-izsnieg – Cabinet Regulation No. 149 "Procedures for Crediting the State Budget Current Payable Taxes and Overdue Tax Payments" (18.04.2000) – Cabinet Regulation No. 17 "Application of Requirements of Law on Value Added Tax and Specific Requirements for Payment and Administering of Value Added Tax" (03.01.2013). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/254172-procedures-for-applying-the-norms-of-the-value-added-tax-and-individual-requirements-for-the-payment-and-administration-of-value-added-tax – Cabinet Regulation No. 178 "Procedures for Application of Tax Relief Determined in International Agreements for Prevention of Double Taxation and Tax Evasion" (30.04.2001). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/14132-procedures-for-application-of-tax-relief-determined-in-international-agreements-for-prevention-of-double-taxation-and-tax-evasion – Cabinet Regulation No. 40 " Regulations Regarding Value Added Tax Returns" (15.01.2013). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/254279-regulations-regarding-value-added-tax-returns – Cabinet Regulation No. 568 "Regulation on Personal Income Tax Declaration and Order of Filling the Declaration" (21.08.2012). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/251000-regulations-regarding-the-declarations-of-personal-income-tax-and-the-procedures-for-the-completion-thereof – Cabinet Regulation No. 573 "Procedure for Transfer of Personal Income Taxes, Overdue Payments and Penalties into the State Budget" (29.06.2004). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/168410-grozijumi-ministru-kabineta-2004gada-29junija-noteikumos-nr573-kartiba-kada-iedzivotaju-ienakuma-nodokli-nodokla-pamatparada-palielinajumu-un-ar-nodokli-saistito-nokavejuma-naudu-un-soda-naudu-ieskaita-budzeta – Cabinet Regulation No. 677 "Regulation on Declaration of Personal Income Tax" (25.08.2008, amendments 06.12.2011). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/180374-noteikumi-par-iedzivotaju-ienakuma-nodokla-pazinojumiem – Cabinet Regulation No. 677 "Regulations Regarding Application of Provisions of the Enterprise Income Tax Law" (14.11.2017). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/295416-regulations-regarding-application-of-provisions-of-the-enterprise-income-tax-law – Cabinet Regulation No. 899 "Application of Norms of Law on Personal Income Tax" (21.09.2010, amendments 30.08.2013). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/218825-likuma-par-iedzivotaju-ienakuma-nodokli-normu-piemerosanas-kartiba – Cabinet Regulation No. 981 "Regulations on Declaration of Taxation Period for Income Tax and Calculation of Advance Payment" (20.12.2011). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/242020-noteikumi-par-uznemumu-ienakuma-nodokla-taksacijas-perioda-deklaraciju-un-avansa-maksajumu-aprekinu – Cabinet Regulation No.237 "On Declaration of Transactions in Cash" (10.04.2007). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/155755-skaidra-nauda-veikto-darijumu-deklaresanas-noteikumi – Law on Corporate Income Tax (09.02.1995). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/34094-on-enterprise-income-tax – Law on Personal Income Tax (11.05.1993). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/56880-on-personal-income-tax – Law on Taxes and Fees (02.02.1995). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/33946-on-taxes-and-fees – Law on Value Added Tax (29.11.2012). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/253451-value-added-tax-law

Annex 1 Detailed findings for Supply Base Evaluation continued

1.1.4 continued *Evidence reviewed continued*	– Lursoft: Register of commercial entities. http://www.lursoft.lv – State Revenue Service: "Home page". https://www.vid.gov.lv/en?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – State Revenue Service: Online VAT Payers Register. http://www6.vid.gov.lv/VID_PDB/PVN – State Revenue Service: Tax Debt Online Register. http://www6.vid.gov.lv/VID_PDB/NPAR
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
1.1.5	**There shall be adequate protection of the Supply Base from unauthorised and illegal activities, such as illegal logging, mining, and encroachment.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all forests in Latvia. **Analysis** Forest harvesting in Latvia is regulated by the Law on Forests. The State Forest Service periodically controls how forest operations in cutting areas are being or have been implemented according to the existing legal acts. The State Forest Service has an annual control plan. Even though legal authorities have increased control of illegal logging in Latvia, some illegal logging still occurs. Before performing logging activities, every forest owner must obtain a harvesting permit. The institution responsible for issuing harvesting permits is the State Forest Service. A harvesting permit is issued by a professional forestry official (a forester) following the requirements of the national forest legislation. A felling permit application is refused in 1% of cases. A harvesting permit is not required for certain types of felling works, that is, pre-commercial thinning, cutting of dead and windfall trees, maintenance of forest clearings etc. There has been a significant effort to implement tighter controls over illegal logging in Latvia. According to the State Forest Service, the share of known illegally logged wood in Latvia is very minor (below 0.2% of the total felled timber volume). The share has been relatively stable and proportionally distributed across private and public forests. Moreover, the forest governance portal of the Chatham House, UK – which monitors illegal logging globally – does not record any illegal logging activities in Latvia (Chatham House 2023). This suggests that the incidence and the risks of illegal logging in Latvia are low. The risk of corruption among forestry officials is substantially minimised through the implementation of controls over the issued harvesting permits and completed forestry works. Over the last three years, there have been no official cases of bribery reported among persons responsible for issuing harvesting licences. Moreover, Latvia's current standing on the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index is good: it is ranked the 39th least corrupt out of 180 countries, with a score of 59 out of 100 in 2022. **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Forest Service enforces the relevant legislation and regularly monitors and controls all matters related to illegality. A very minor share of illegally logged wood in total timber production and no official cases of bribery in issuing harvesting licences suggest that the relevant legislation is implemented and monitored effectively. **Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the above analysis, the risk for this indicator is assessed as low.

1.1.5 continued *Means of verification*	– Overall evaluation of data from overseeing institutions – Assessment of potential impacts at an operational level and of measures to minimise impacts – Regional Best Management Practice manuals – Supply contracts – Monitoring results – Relevant legislation
Evidence reviewed	– State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – Transparency International. (2022). "Corruption Perceptions Index Latvia". https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/latvia
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

Principle 2 – Feedstock sourcing does not harm the environment

Criterion 2.1 – Biodiversity is maintained or enhanced

Element	Description and analysis
2.1.1	**Key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation value (HCV) pertaining to biodiversity in the Supply Base shall be identified.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers key species, habitats, ecosystems and nature conservation areas within legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** In Latvia, – as stated in Section 2.1 – the Nature Conservation Agency conducted country-wide mapping of the habitats of the EU importance during 2017-2022. According to the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency, within the project, "Preconditions for better biodiversity preservation and ecosystem protection in Latvia", or simply the "Nature Census" (co-funded by the European Union Cohesion Fund), 854,426 ha of forests in Latvia were surveyed. The forest habitats of EU importance are found on 334,597 ha and about 37.5% of areas are located in Natura 2000 territories. A significant majority (80%) of the identified forest habitats of EU importance is located in state-owned forests, just 1% are found in municipal properties, and the remaining 19% are in private forests. In Latvia not all Specially Protected Nature Territories (SPNT) are designated as Natura 2000 sites. According to the data provided by the Nature Conservation Agency, 42% of the forest habitats of EU importance are located in the SPNT (including the Northern Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve) and 8% of the forest habitats of EU importance are included in strict nature reserves, strict regime, regulated regime or nature reserve zones of protected areas where regulations prohibit or restrict forest timber harvesting. Additionally, about 5.3% of the forest habitats of EU importance are located in micro-reserves outside Natura 2000 areas.

2.1.1 continued
Findings continued

Therefore, more than half of forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia are without any legal protection status and thus can be harvested for timber production. The above essentially means forest harvesting is allowed in the forest habitats of the EU importance if they are not included within limited management zones of the Specially Protected Nature Territories.

Under the Nature Census, the mapping of the habitats of EU importance in Latvia was undertaken during 2017-2022. However, mapping the protected species was not the task of the Nature Census. Therefore, data on protected species was not collected comprehensively during Nature Census surveys. Consequently, as the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests, the data on protected species is fragmented, and not all locations of the protection of species are mapped and protected. While data on locations of the protected species are updated on a regular basis, operators must establish robust routines to evaluate the location of origin of energy wood to prevent supplies from HCV category 1. According to the Nature Conservation Agency (Prioritised action framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 in Latvia[13]), suitable protection areas could not yet be designated for three species (Unio crassus, Osmoderma eremita, Barbastella barbastellus) and seven habitat types of the EU importance (1 marine, 6 terrestrial).

Moreover, the procedure to make legal protection status is slow and landowners can still carry out cutting in an area while it is being legally established as a protected area. Consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests about 5,000 ha of forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia have been lost due to clearcutting since 2017 (see, Nature Census data: In Latvia, grasslands are the worst at the moment, other habitat groups also need thoughtful long-term management | Nature Conservation Agency (daba.gov.lv)).

The assessment is provided for the categories of HCVs 1-4 that are related to ecosystem and biodiversity.

HCV category 1

HCV category 1 includes major locations of concentrations of species listed in the EU Habitat and EU Birds Directive annexes are mapped on the national level through environmental protection and legislation.

Latvia has 658 specifically protected areas (SPAs) (Nature Conservation Agency 2023) as well as 333 Natura 2000 sites, 98 sites under the Birds Directive and 329 sites of community importance (Habitats Directive). The total area of protected nature territories constitutes 18.2% of the total land area of the country. Overall, 168 species and 62 habitats must be protected under relevant EU regulations (Biodiversity Information System of Europe 2023).

In 2004 when Latvia joined the European Union, a network of protected areas of EU importance Natura 2000 sites was designated in Latvia. As a basis for the Natura 2000 network, the existing national system of specially protected territories was used and amended (5th National Report to the Convention of Biological Diversity of Latvia 2014).

In Natura 2000 sites in Latvia, forests cover the largest proportion of territories and form the largest proportion of the habitat types included in the EU Habitats Directive's Annex I. These include habitats, such as Wooded dunes of the Atlantic, Continental and Boreal region (2180), Western taiga (9010*), Fennoscandian natural old broadleaved forests (9020*), Fennoscandian herb-rich forests with Picea abies (9050), Fennoscandian deciduous swamp forests (9080*), coniferous forests on, or connected to, glaciofluvial eskers (9060), TilioAcerion forests on slopes, screes and ravines (9180*), bog woodlands (91D0*), Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) (91E0*), and Central European lichen Scots pine forests (91T0)[14]. These forest habitats promote the existence of a large variety of biodiversity components including many rare, threatened species.

13 https://latvianature.daba.gov.lv/materiali/prioritised-action-framework-paf-for-natura-2000-in-latvia-2021-2027/

14 With * are marked priority habitats.

2.1.1 continued
Findings continued

Several Natura 2000 sites in Latvia are essential for the conservation of threatened bird species that are almost extinct in many EU countries, with still large though shrinking populations. Thus, Latvian bird populations serve as donor populations for other parts of Europe (5th National Report to the Convention of Biological Diversity of Latvia 2014).

In addition to mentioned protected territories, BirdLife International's important bird areas (IBA) need to be mentioned as known places of concentrations of rare, threatened and endangered species. Most of the inland IBAs in Latvia cover coastal lagoons, lakes, river floodplains, large peatlands and fishpond complexes or relatively plain forested areas. Almost half (44%) of IBAs are located in forest habitats. All IBAs overlap to a large extent with existing nature conservation areas (especially protected nature territories) and Natura 2000 territories. All IBAs overlap with the existing six Ramsar Convention sites in Latvia.

There is no prohibition in national legislation to harvest timber in the forest habitats of EU importance if they are not within limited management zones of the Specially Protected Nature Territories (Natura 2000 sites). The current level of information on biodiversity is sufficient to identify most places where large concentrations of protected species are located but not all. As stated above, while mapping the forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia is done under the Nature Census, mapping the protected species was not the task of the Census. Therefore, data on protected species was not collected comprehensively during Nature Census surveys. Consequently, as the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests, the data on protected species is fragmented, and not all locations of the protection of species are mapped and protected.

According to the Nature Conservation Agency (Prioritised action framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 in Latvia), suitable protection areas could not yet be designated for three species (Unio crassus, Osmoderma eremita, Barbastella barbastellus) and seven habitat types of the EU importance (1 marine, 6 terrestrial). Moreover, according to the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency and Latvian Ornithological Society, there are cases of deliberately destroying bird nests within the forests so that there is no restriction to protect them. The Latvian Ornithological Society estimated – in the Species Conservation Plan for Hazel Grouse – that annually about 51,000 bird nests are destroyed – deliberately and unknowingly – by logging activities in state forests alone in Latvia. Moreover, the Latvian Fund for Nature has collected data on the destruction of nests of the lesser spotted eagle (Clanga pomarine) (https://www.birdlife.org/news/2022/09/05/of-clearcuts-and-birds-part4-latvia/). This data has been used for several court cases (see http://mazaiserglis.lv/en/news/the-latvian-fund-for-nature-wins-in-court-in-the-proceedings-of-the-state-forest-service-regarding-the-abolition-of-micro-reserves-for-the-lesser-spotted-eagle).

For the above reason, HCV category 1 is considered to a specified risk in Latvia.

HCV category 2

This includes high conservation value large woodland territories: UNESCO world heritage sites, Ramsar sites, forests in strict nature reserves, biosphere reserves, and reserves of national or regional parks. Due to historical land use and forestry practices, the majority of present forests in Latvia are seminatural ecosystems with small insertions of closetonatural forest stands. No landscape-scale seminatural forests with viable populations of mostly naturally occurring species exist in the country. Surveys show that in previous centuries all Latvian forests were under various management activities varying from extensive to very intensive forestry with substantial land use change.

Firstly, forestry practices were suspended in wetland forest stands located around big bogs due to the establishment of strict nature reserves of big wetlands. In the 1970s, forestry practices were suspended in other valuable forests on account of the creation of nature reserves. Six Ramsar Convention sites are designated in Latvia. Other important areas for the biodiversity of large areas include valuable forests in national parks, landscape protection areas and biosphere reserves. All of them are managed under nature management plans that contain provisions related to forest management. A majority of the important landscape-level ecosystems are designated as nature conservation areas at a national level. The risk for this category is considered low due to the strong legal framework and existing network of nature-protected territories.

2.1.1 continued

Findings continued

HCV category 3

This includes Natura 2000 sites, habitats of EU importance and nationally specially protected habitats of Latvia. Natura 2000 sites comprise 11.3% of the total forest area, although only 3.3% of the total forest area is located within zones of SPNT where forest management is prohibited. In total, various types of protected forests take up 0.51 million ha. 1784% of protected species are related to forests in every group of organisms on which information is available. There are 11 types of protected forest habitats in Latvia.

There are no virgin forests in Latvia. The remaining relatively small areas of oldgrowth forests are mostly under protection and some are included in the strict reserves or strict reserve zones of nature protection territories. Representative samples of natural forest habitats and valuable ecosystems have been surveyed in state forests, identified and protected under the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) and designated as Natura 2000 sites.

Natura 2000 sites overlap with national protected areas and are protected on a national as well as an international level. Seminatural forest parcels with high biodiversity within state-owned forest areas are under the forest habitats of EU importance (the most valuable share of those areas used to be classified as woodland key habitats (WKH)). These habitats are designated in protected territories – nature reserves, national parks, landscape protection areas, and biosphere reserves at the national level or as Natura 2000 sites at the EU level. However, there are areas of the habitats of EU importance that are outside protected areas, both in the state- and privately-owned forests. The mapping and identification of habitats of EU importance and specially protected habitats of Latvia within Natura 2000 sites was undertaken during 2017-2022 (project Nature Census). Given the above considerations, the risk level for this subcategory is considered to be low.

HCV category 4

This includes ecosystem protection forests and protection forests i.e. forest areas important for securing basic environmental functions. Latvian national legislation contains provisions for protecting forests that are vital in the protection of water resources e.g. the coastal protection zone along the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Riga, protection belts along rivers and lakes, protection zones around mires, protection belts around urban areas. Special regulations of forest management are applied by limiting felling techniques to provide critical ecosystem services such as soil, air, water and man's living environment protection. The risk for this category is considered low due to the strong legal framework.

Enforcement and monitoring

The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests while the Nature Conservation Agency covers the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories. The National Heritage Board (formerly the State Inspection for Heritage Protection) is responsible for the supervision of compliance with restrictions on cultural areas and objects of the cultural and historical heritage associated with trees and forests.

Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the concerned agencies. The EU (2021) report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive as well as stakeholder consultation does not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement of the above legislation in Latvia. This suggests that enforcement is effective.

Risk conclusion and justification

As the risk class for HCV category 1 is assessed as specified, the risk class for this Indicator is also assessed as specified.

Annex 1 Detailed findings for Supply Base Evaluation continued

2.1.1 continued *Means of verification*	– Natural data management system "Ozols" (Nature Data Management System OZOLS | Dabas aizsardzības pārvalde fe/) – Maps, interviews, regional, publicly available data from credible third parties – Reports and maps of environmental NGOs – Relevant webpages of the State Forest Service, Nature Conservation Agency and EU agencies – Relevant Latvian national and EU acts, laws and regulations
Evidence reviewed	– Biodiversity Information System for Europe: "Latvia". https://biodiversity.europa.eu/countries/latvia – Cabinet of Ministers. (2020). National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/312423-par-latvijas-nacionalo-energetikas-un-klimata-planu-20212030-gadam – Cabinet Order Nr. 583 "On Environmental Policy Strategy 2021-2027" (31.08.2022). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/335137-par-vides-politikas-pamatnostadnem-2021-2027-gadam – Cabinet Regulation No. 264 "General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories" (16.03.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories – European Commission: "The Birds Directive". https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index_en.htm – European Commission: "The Habitats Directive". https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/index_en.htm – Law on Compensation for Restrictions on Economic Activities in Protected Areas (04.04.2013). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/256138-on-compensation-for-restrictions-on-economic-activities-in-protected-territories – Law on Convention for the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, Bern, 1979 (17.12.1996, amendments 03.01.1997). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/41733-par-1979-gada-bernes-konvenciju-par-eiropas-dzivas-dabas-un-dabisko-dzivotnu-aizsardzibu – Law on Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Paris, 1972 (17.02.1997, amendments 26.02.1997). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/42381-par-konvenciju-par-pasaules-kulturas-un-dabas-mantojuma-aizsardzibu – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Law on International Plant Protection Convention (05.06.2003). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/76607-par-starptautisko-augu-aizsardzibas-konvenciju – Law on Rio de Janeiro Convention on Biological Diversity (31.08.1995, amendments 08.09.1995). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/36679-par-1992-gada-5-junija-riodezaneiro-konvenciju-par-biologisko-daudzveidibu – Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (02.03.1993). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/59994-on-specially-protected-nature-territories – Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (16.03.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/3941-law-on-the-conservation-of-species-and-biotopes – Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. (2014). 5th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity Latvia. – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – Nature Conservation Agency: Prioritised action framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 in Latvia pursuant to Article 8 of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive) for the Multiannual Financial Framework period 2021–2027. https://www.daba.gov.lv/lv/media/11340/download

2.1.1 continued *Evidence reviewed*	– Nature Conservation Agency: Species conservation plan for Hazel Grouse. https://www.daba.gov.lv/lv/media/5918/download?attachment – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – https://www.birdlife.org/news/2022/09/05/of-clearcuts-and-birds-part4-latvia/ – http://mazaiserglis.lv/en/news/the-latvian-fund-for-nature-wins-in-court-in-the-proceedings-of-the-state-forest-service-regarding-the-abolition-of-micro-reserves-for-the-lesser-spotted-eagle – EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium.
Risk rating	Low risk **Specified risk**
2.1.2	**Threats to and impacts on the identified key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation value (HCV) pertaining to biodiversity in the supply base shall be identified and evaluated.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers the threats to and impacts on the identified key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high HCV pertaining to biodiversity in legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** There exists a legal and institutional framework aimed at protecting the high nature conservation values in forests. The management of established protected nature areas is regulated by the Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes and the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories. Generally, Latvian legislation on nature conservation corresponds to the requirements of the EU Directives, Convention of Biodiversity (CBD) and other conventions (CBD 2023). The Law on Forests and subordinated normative regulations regulate harvesting depending on the management and protection regime assigned. Special regulations for forest management apply to forests by raising the cutting age and limiting felling techniques to provide critical ecosystem services such as soil, air, water and man's living environment protection. The forestry operations shall be planned and implemented following the requirements of the regulations on tree harvesting in forest land specified in the Law on Forests. There are requirements for the protection of nesting places of rare and endangered bird species as well as detailed requirements to leave trees and dead wood for biodiversity protection in logging sites. As explained in Indicator 2.1.1, in Latvia not all protected areas are Natura 2000 sites. Only about 37.5% of forest habitats of EU importance are located in Natura 2000 territories. A significant majority (80%) of the identified forest habitats of EU importance are located in state-owned forests while just 1% of these areas are found in municipal properties, and the remaining 19% are in private forests. According to the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency, more than half of forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia are without any legal protection status. As also discussed in Indicator 2.1.1, as consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests the location/inclusion of a forest habitat in the Natura 2000 area does not automatically provide the required protection. What is important in terms of protection is the restrictions on economic activity set for the concerned territory. The protection of habitats of EU importance depends on whether the habitats are located in the Natura 2000 territory zones where appropriate restrictions on economic activity are defined.

2.1.2 continued
Findings continued

As explained in Indicator 2.1.1, forest harvesting is allowed in the forest habitats of EU importance if they are not included under strict regimes zones of SPNT/ Natura 2000 sites. Under the Nature Census, the mapping of the habitats of EU importance in Latvia was conducted during 2017-2022. However, mapping the protected species was not the task of the Nature Census. Therefore, data on protected species was not collected comprehensively during the Nature Census surveys. Consequently, as the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests, the data on protected species is fragmented and not all locations for the protection of species are mapped and protected.

According to the Nature Conservation Agency (Prioritised action framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 in Latvia), suitable protection areas could not yet be designated for three species (Unio crassus, Osmoderma eremita, Barbastella barbastellus) and seven habitat types of EU importance (one marine, six terrestrial). Moreover, the procedure to make legal protection status is slow and landowners can still do cutting in an area while it is being legally established as a protected area. Consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests about 5,000 ha of forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia have been lost due to clearcutting since 2017 (see, Nature Census data: in Latvia, grasslands are the worst at the moment, other habitat groups also need thoughtful long-term management. Nature Conservation Agency (daba.gov.lv)).

It is also highlighted that, according to the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency and Latvian Ornithological Society, there are cases of deliberately destroying bird nests within the forests so that there is no restriction to protect it. The Latvian Ornithological Society estimated – in the Species Conservation Plan for Hazel Grouse – that annually about 51,000 bird nests are destroyed by logging activities in state forests alone in Latvia. Furthermore, the Latvian Fund for Nature has collected data on the destruction of nests of a lesser spotted eagle (Clanga pomarine) (https://www.birdlife.org/news/2022/09/05/of-clearcuts-and-birds-part4-latvia/). This data has been used for several court cases (see http://mazaiserglis.lv/en/news/the-latvian-fund-for-nature-wins-in-court-in-the-proceedings-of-the-state-forest-service-regarding-the-abolition-of-micro-reserves-for-the-lesser-spotted-eagle).

Intensive logging is linked to the disturbance and loss of forest habitats of several rare, threatened and endangered bird species particularly in areas important for bird breeding and nesting (Bird International's Important Bird Areas). Most of these areas are overlapping with existing nature protection territories, most of which are territories with less stringent nature protection requirements such as nature parks, protected landscape areas, and National Parks (except strict nature protection zoning), where active forest management, including harvesting in clearcuts, is allowed. Thus, the actual protection regime in these territories in practice does not differ much from commercial forests outside protected nature territories where rare, threatened and endangered species and habitats are protected only through microreserves. The reduction of nature protection and biological diversity needs in favour of commercial interests can be linked to the unfavourable status of protection of several rare, threatened and endangered forest bird species (black stork, lesser spotted eagle, for instance).

The above means there is a risk that the threats to and impacts on some key species and their habitats are not fully identified and evaluated particularly in areas with HCV 1 objects.

Enforcement and monitoring

The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests while the Nature Conservation Agency the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories. The National Heritage Board (formerly the State Inspection for Heritage Protection) is responsible for the supervision of compliance with restrictions on cultural areas and objects of the cultural and historical heritage associated with trees and forests. Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the concerned agencies. The EU (2021) report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive as well as stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement of the above legislation in Latvia. This suggests the enforcement is effective.

Risk conclusion and justification

Based on the above analysis the risk class for this Indicator is assessed as specified.

Annex 1 Detailed findings for Supply Base Evaluation continued

2.1.2 continued *Means of verification*	– Guidance provided by BPs to suppliers/forest operators regarding threats to the identified forests and areas of high conservation values, and verification of conformance through field inspections – Best Management Practice manuals – Standard Operating Procedures – Records of biomass producers' field inspections – Monitoring records – Interviews with staff, stakeholders – Natural data management system "Ozols" (Nature Data Management System OZOLS. Dabas aizsardzības pārvalde fe/) – Maps, interviews, regional, publicly available data from credible third parties – Reports and maps of environmental NGOs – Relevant webpages of the State Forest Service, Nature Conservation Agency and EU agencies – Relevant Latvian national and EU acts, laws and regulations
Evidence reviewed	– Biodiversity Information System for Europe: "Latvia". https://biodiversity.europa.eu/countries/latvia – Cabinet of Ministers. (2020). National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/312423-par-latvijas-nacionalo-energetikas-un-klimata-planu-20212030-gadam – Cabinet Order Nr. 583 "On Environmental Policy Strategy 2021-2027" (31.08.2022). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/335137-par-vides-politikas-pamatnostadnem-2021-2027-gadam – Cabinet Regulation No. 264 "General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories" (16.03.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories – European Commission: "The Birds Directive". https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index_en.htm – European Commission: "The Habitats Directive". https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/index_en.htm – Law on Compensation for Restrictions on Economic Activities in Protected Areas (04.04.2013). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/256138-on-compensation-for-restrictions-on-economic-activities-in-protected-territories – Law on Convention for the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, Bern, 1979 (17.12.1996, amendments 03.01.1997). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/41733-par-1979-gada-bernes-konvenciju-par-eiropas-dzivas-dabas-un-dabisko-dzivotnu-aizsardzibu – Law on Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Paris, 1972 (17.02.1997, amendments 26.02.1997). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/42381-par-konvenciju-par-pasaules-kulturas-un-dabas-mantojuma-aizsardzibu – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (02.03.1993). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/59994-on-specially-protected-nature-territories – Law on International Plant Protection Convention (05.06.2003). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/76607-par-starptautisko-augu-aizsardzibas-konvenciju – Law on Rio de Janeiro Convention on Biological Diversity (31.08.1995, amendments 08.09.1995). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/36679-par-1992-gada-5-junija-riodezaneiro-konvenciju-par-biologisko-daudzveidibu – Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (16.03.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/3941-law-on-the-conservation-of-species-and-biotopes

2.1.2 continued *Evidence reviewed continued*	– Ministry of Culture: "Conservation of historic monuments". https://www.km.gov.lv/en/conservation-historic-monuments – Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. (2014). 5th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity Latvia. – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – Nature Conservation Agency: Species conservation plan for Hazel Grouse. https://www.daba.gov.lv/lv/media/5918/download?attachment – Nature Conservation Agency: Prioritised action framework (paf) for Natura 2000 in Latvia pursuant to Article 8 of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive) for the Multiannual Financial Framework period 2021–2027. https://www.daba.gov.lv/lv/media/11340/download – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium.
Risk rating	Low risk **Specified risk**
2.1.3	**Key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation value (HCV) pertaining to biodiversity in the Supply Base shall be maintained or enhanced.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers the key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation value (HCV) pertaining to biodiversity in legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** According to the Law on Forests, General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories and Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes, the management and protection regime of a particular forest territory determine restrictions for forest use. The management of established protected areas is regulated by the latter two pieces of legislation mentioned above. The management of some protected areas within the forests – according to the Law on Forests – is done based on the forest management plan. The management plan includes provisions for nature protection measures where the protected species, habitats, HCVs and other environmental protection values or objects are listed and marked on the maps with prescribed and detailed protection measures. The statistical information on Latvian protected areas, rare and endangered species found in Latvian forests and other relevant data can be found on the website of the State Forest Service and Nature Conservation Agency. The Regulations on the preparation of forest management schemes and forest management plans state that the forest management plan for state forests shall include sections related to forest protection against fires, sanitary protection, biodiversity protection, and recreational and social functions of forests. The forest operations shall be planned and implemented while following the requirements set up in the regulations on forest felling. There are provisions in the regulations mentioned for seasonal harvesting operations i.e. some final felling and thinning works are not allowed. There are requirements for the protection of nesting places of rare and endangered bird species as well as detailed requirements to leave trees and deadwood for biodiversity protection on logging sites. However, existing Latvian legislation allows forest felling during the bird nesting season (1 April until 1 July) in some forest areas and stands. The maintenance of buffer zones along watercourses or open areas as well as some limitation concerning the protection of soil against erosion is foreseen.

2.1.3 continued *Findings continued*	During the preparation process of a new management plan, all relevant data shall be collected and, together with analyses of the previous management cycle, be incorporated into the new management plan and consequently into operational practice. Nature protection data from state institutions are used in the preparation of forest management plans. In case the forest property is located within a territory with a nature protection status, the forest owner shall consult the managing authority of the nature protection territory. The State Forest Service periodically controls how legal acts targeted at protecting natural values, objects and protected areas are implemented. The maintenance of forest biological diversity is affected by the economic activities in the countryside according to the outcomes of the report (5th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity). The report outlines the fact that the forest often is seen as the only source of income for inhabitants of the countryside and this contributes to the unsustainable use of forests. Other factors that impact forest biodiversity negatively are melioration, construction of forest roads, and lack of natural disturbance in particular forest habitats. The detailed assessment done concerning forests under various HCV Categories under indicators 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 suggests that the risks and threats to certain key species and their habitats (related to HCV category 1 in all forests) are not identified and evaluated. Without such identification and evaluation, there is a risk that those key species and habitats cannot be maintained or enhanced adequately. **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests while the Nature Conservation Agency covers the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories. Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the concerned agencies. The EU (2021) report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive as well as stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement of the above legislation in Latvia. This suggests that enforcement is effective. **Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the above analysis the risk class for this Indicator is assessed specified.
Means of verification	– Guidance provided by BPs to suppliers/forest operators regarding threats to the identified forests and areas of high conservation values, and verification of conformance through field inspections – Best Management Practice manuals – Standard Operating Procedures – Records of biomass producers' field inspections – Monitoring records – Interviews with staff, stakeholders – Natural data management system "Ozols" (Nature Data Management System OZOLS. Dabas aizsardzības pārvalde fe/); – Maps, interviews, regional, publicly available data from credible third parties – Reports and maps of environmental NGOs – Relevant webpages of the State Forest Service, Nature Conservation Agency and EU agencies – Relevant Latvian national and EU acts, laws and regulations

2.1.3 continued *Evidence reviewed*	– Biodiversity Information System for Europe: "Latvia". https://biodiversity.europa.eu/countries/latvia – Cabinet of Ministers. (2020). National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/312423-par-latvijas-nacionalo-energetikas-un-klimata-planu-20212030-gadam – Cabinet Order Nr. 583 "On Environmental Policy Strategy 2021-2027" (31.08.2022). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/335137-par-vides-politikas-pamatnostadnem-2021-2027-gadam – Cabinet Regulation No. 264 "General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories" (16.03.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories – European Commission: "The Birds Directive". https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index_en.htm – European Commission: "The Habitats Directive". https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/index_en.htm – Law on Compensation for Restrictions on Economic Activities in Protected Areas (04.04.2013). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/256138-on-compensation-for-restrictions-on-economic-activities-in-protected-territories – Law on Convention for the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, Bern, 1979 (17.12.1996, amendments 03.01.1997). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/41733-par-1979-gada-bernes-konvenciju-par-eiropas-dzivas-dabas-un-dabisko-dzivotnu-aizsardzibu – Law on Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Paris, 1972 (17.02.1997, amendments 26.02.1997). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/42381-par-konvenciju-par-pasaules-kulturas-un-dabas-mantojuma-aizsardzibu – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Law on International Plant Protection Convention (05.06.2003). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/76607-par-starptautisko-augu-aizsardzibas-konvenciju – Law on Rio de Janeiro Convention on Biological Diversity (31.08.1995, amendments 08.09.1995). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/36679-par-1992-gada-5-junija-riodezaneiro-konvenciju-par-biologisko-daudzveidibu – Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (02.03.1993). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/59994-on-specially-protected-nature-territories – Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (16.03.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/3941-law-on-the-conservation-of-species-and-biotopes – Ministry of Culture: "Conservation of historic monuments". https://www.km.gov.lv/en/conservation-historic-monuments – Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. (2014). 5th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity Latvia. – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium.
Risk rating	Low risk **Specified risk**

Criterion 2.2 – Ecosystem productivity, functions, and services are maintained or enhanced

Element	Description and analysis
2.2.1	**Feedstock shall not be sourced from land that had one of the following statuses in January 2008 and no longer has that status due to land conversion: (a) forests, (b) peatlands, (c) wetlands and (d) highly biodiverse grassland.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers legally defined forest land in Latvia. **Analysis** Conversion is mainly regulated by the Law on Forests. Forest conversion is typically defined as the cutting that is done to enable the use of land for purposes other than silviculture. The Law on Forests defines forests as an 'ecosystem in all stages of its development where the major producer of organic mass is trees the height of which at the particular location may reach at least five metres and the present or potential projection of the crown of which is at least 20 percent of the area covered by the forest stand'. The General Regulations for the Planning, Use and Building of the Territory, General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories and Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes also have provisions regulating forest conversion in Latvia. Converting forest land into other categories is prohibited in protected territories such as forest reserves, forests for protection of ecosystems, protection belt forests (Baltic Sea and Riga Bay), forests of protective zones in state parks and other forests categories mentioned in the Law on Forests. The conversion of forest land into other land use categories is regulated by the existing legal territory planning and forestry framework. As mentioned in Indicator 1.1.1, according to Section 21 of the Law on Forests, a forest owner or lawful possessor must regenerate a forest stand after felling or damage (e.g. by fire, disease, wind, floods) that cause the basal area of the forest stand to become smaller than the critical basal area set by the Law. Regeneration can be done artificially, naturally or as a combination of both within five years and in the case of a special site like the marsh, mesotrophic mire, drained peatland, bog and marsh within 10 years after harvesting. The State Forest Service enforces the above rule and imposes a fine for noncompliance. There is no evidence that the above rule is violated in Latvia on any notable scale. The conversion of forest land into other categories is allowed only in a few exceptional cases when deforestation is necessary for construction, mining, establishing agricultural land, and restoration of specially protected habitat restoration. The conversion may take place if the person initiating conversion has been issued an administrative act which gives the right to undertake those activities and the person pays state compensation for adverse effects associated with deforestation. The owner of the land is obliged to pay state compensation for deforested land if the land use type in the National Cadastre Information System is established as forest. The compensation includes fees: 1) for loss of carbon dioxide sequestration potential, 2) for the loss of biodiversity, and 3) for the degradation of environmental and natural resource protection and sanitary functions. The State Forest Service periodically controls the application of forestry and territorial planning regulations related to deforestation and compiles statistics. Statistical data shows that there are only a few cases of violation of forestry law regarding deforestation. Violation cases are typically of small magnitude ranging from a few cut trees on a construction site to deforestation in small areas and following transformation into a building, ponding, or other land use types (State Forest Service 2022). There is no information on any large-scale illegal transformation of forest land. **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests while the Nature Conservation Agency covers the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories. State Land Service enforces the laws related to land. Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the concerned agencies.

2.2.1 continued *Findings continued*	The EU (2021) report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive as well as stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement of the above legislation in Latvia. This suggests the enforcement is effective. **Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the above analysis, the risk class can be considered to be low for this indicator. However, it has to be noted here that – as the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests – grassland habitats of EU importance are in a very poor state in Latvia. There are reports that since the beginning of the 2000's, some grassland habitats may have been converted through afforestation although there is no precise data available on this matter.
Means of verification	– Historical maps and consultation with stakeholders – Regional, publicly available data from a credible third party – The existence of a strong legal framework in the region – Inquiry to the State Forest Service, municipalities
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet Regulation No. 240 "General Regulations for the Planning, Use and Building of the Territory" (30.04.2013). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/256866-general-regulations-for-the-planning-use-and-building-of-the-territory – Cabinet Regulation No. 264 "General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories" (16.03.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories – Civil Law (28.01.1937). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/225418-civil-law – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (02.03.1993). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/59994-on-specially-protected-nature-territories – Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (16.03.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/3941-law-on-the-conservation-of-species-and-biotopes – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – Property Guide Latvia: "State Land Service". http://propertyguide.lv/en/agencies/state-land-service/ – State Forest Service. (2022). Latvian Forest Sector in Facts and Figures 2022. – State Immovable Property Cadastre Law (01.12.2005). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/124247-state-immovable-property-cadastre-law – State Unified Computerized Land Register: https://www.lursoft.lv/en/land-register – Bankwatch Network (2021). https://bankwatch.org/blog/biodiversity-forgotten-in-the-latvian-recovery-plan – EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium.
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

2.2.2	**Ecosystems, their health, vitality, functions and services in the Supply Base shall be maintained or enhanced.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers ecosystem health, vitality, functions and services in legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** The maintenance and management of ecosystems, their health, vitality, functions and services are mandated by the Law on Forests, General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories and the Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes. The protection of nature, key habitats, biodiversity and ecosystems in Latvia is regulated by the Law on Forests as well as General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories. In accordance with the procedure specified in the latter, 658 specifically protected areas (SPAs) are established in Latvia. The SPAs are defined as the geographical areas brought under special state-level protection for safeguarding and maintaining biodiversity, ecosystems, habitats for rare species, landscapes, geological and geomorphological formations and territories important for recreational and educational purposes (Nature Conservation Agency 2023). According to the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories, tree felling is prohibited in SPAs. Sections 35-38 of the Law on Forests lay out specific provisions for the protection of nature in the forests. There is no evidence of the violation of the above articles in Latvia. The protection, maintenance and management of ecosystems ensure that their health, vitality and functions are maintained or enhanced. Once health, vitality and functions are maintained or enhanced, the supply of ecosystem services (e.g. timber, non-timber forest products, recreation, climate regulations and biodiversity conservation) can be maintained at a sustainable level. In Latvia, the information available on the location and geographical distribution of nature conservation areas, rare, threatened and endangered species, habitats and HCVs can be considered sufficient. There are no major gaps in knowledge on important nature conservation areas. Most important forest areas with a high concentration of nature conservation values have been identified and designated as protected areas at the national and / or EU level (Natura 2000 sites) and protected under the legislation mentioned above. Expert consultation suggests that after completing the state-wide EU habitat inventory (2017-2020) and in line with EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 the process of designation of new protected areas for the conservation of EU habitats is initiated in Latvia. Moreover, as mentioned in Indicator 1.1.1, Section 21 of the Law on Forests dictates that a forest owner or lawful possessor must regenerate a forest stand after felling or damages (e.g. by fire, diseases, wind, floods) that cause the basal area of the forest stand to become smaller than the critical basal area set by the Law. Regeneration could be done artificially, naturally or a combination of both means within five years and in the case of a special site like a marsh, mesotrophic mire, drained peatland, bog and marsh within 10 years after harvesting. The State Forest Service enforces the above rule and imposes a fine for non-compliance. There is no evidence that the above rule is violated in Latvia on any notable scale. The Law on Forests sets definitive boundaries and requirements for forest management. No additional official forest management recommendations exist. For harvesting trees fulfilling the minimum diameter, age and basal area limits set by the Law, no prior permission needs to be taken from the State Forest Service. However, for harvesting trees not fulfilling such limits such as a diameter below 12 cm, prior permission from the State Forest Service has to be taken. There is no evidence that conventional harvesting rules and regulations are violated in Latvia on any notable scale. **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests while the Nature Conservation Agency covers the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories. Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the concerned agencies. The EU (2021) report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive as well as stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement of the above legislation in Latvia. This suggests the enforcement is effective.

Annex 1 Detailed findings for Supply Base Evaluation continued

2.2.2 continued *Findings continued*	**Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that ecosystem health, vitality, functions and services in legally defined forests in Latvia are well maintained and enhanced. Thus, this indicator is given a low-risk class.
Means of verification	– Guidance provided to suppliers/forest operators, regarding threats to the identified forests and areas of high conservation value, and verification of conformance through field inspections – Best Management Practice manuals – Standard Operating Procedures – Records of BP's field inspections – Monitoring records – Interviews with staff, stakeholders – Natural data management system "Ozols" (Nature Data Management System OZOLS. Dabas aizsardzības pārvalde fe/); – Maps, interviews, regional, publicly available data from credible third parties – Reports and maps of environmental NGOs – Relevant webpages of the State Forest Service, Nature Conservation Agency and EU agencies – Relevant Latvian national and EU acts, laws and regulations
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet Regulation No. 264 "General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories" (16.03.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories – European Commission: "The Birds Directive". https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index_en.htm – European Commission: "The Habitats Directive". https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/index_en.htm – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (02.03.1993). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/59994-on-specially-protected-nature-territories – Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (16.03.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/3941-law-on-the-conservation-of-species-and-biotopes – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium.
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

2.2.3	**Soil quality in the supply base shall be maintained or enhanced.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The Supply Base covers the legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** The Law on Forests has provisions to maintain and enhance soil quality in forests in Latvia. Section 34 of the Law specifies that forest management must be done in such a way as to preserve the ability of the forest to protect the soil from erosion. Section 6 prohibits damage to soil by any person while staying in the forests. Overall, the special regulations on environmental protection in forest management under the Law on Forests define the principal requirements for the protection of ecosystem services such as soil, air and water. The General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories also have provisions for soil protection. The maintenance of buffer zones along watercourses or open areas as well as some limitation concerning the protection of soil against erosion is foreseen in the Regulations on forest felling. The legislation also contains criteria to assess the soil damage caused by forestry machinery. The maintenance of buffer zones along watercourses or open areas as well as some limitation concerning the protection of soil against erosion is foreseen in the Regulations on forest felling. The legislation also contains criteria to assess the soil damage caused by forestry machinery. No explicit requirements for soil protection (limitations for tree felling on slopes, ravines, etc.) are provided in the national forestry legislation. However, forest managers shall take into consideration the terrain and soil properties in soil preparation for forest regeneration as well as during timber harvesting and forwarding works.. The State Forest Service periodically controls the implementation of legislation targeting the protection of natural values, objects and protected areas. Annual reports show that identified violations of environmental protection regulations in forest management comprise a minor share of total cases. According to the studies on the impact of forestry machinery on forest soils commissioned by the State Forest Enterprise, Latvijas Valsts Meži (AS LVM), the operation of forest forwarding machinery causes the biggest impact on forest soils. Soil compaction and other disturbances caused by forwarding machinery in forwarding tracks in the plot is estimated to be three to four times greater than those from intact plot areas. Soil compaction and other disturbances are more influenced by the harvesting season than the type of forestry machinery. However, no substantial differences in regrowth quality have been observed in technological tracks and intact forest areas. Also, no substantial differences have been observed in tree dimensions and species composition. Some species, however, show better growth conditions in forwarding routes/technological tracks. The density of trees is impacted substantially by soil compaction according to the outcomes of the study. The AS LVM has developed recommendations (best management practice guidelines) for reducing negative effects on soil quality. **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Forest Service and Nature Conservation Agency are the institutions responsible for controlling the fulfilment of the requirements of the relevant laws. The EU (2021) report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive as well as stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement of the above legislation in Latvia. This suggests the enforcement is effective. **Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the above analysis, the extent of systematic and / or largescale non-compliance with legally required environmental protection measures has not been sufficient to threaten the forest resources or other environmental values that have been identified. The impacts of harvesting on soils are considered to be limited. Therefore, this indicator is given a low-risk class.

2.2.3 continued *Means of verification*	– Best Management Practice manuals – Supply contracts – Records of field inspections – Assessment of measures designed to minimise impacts at an operational level – Monitoring records – Interviews with supplier staff, other stakeholders – Publicly available information on the protection of soil – Relevant legislation and their level of enforcement
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet Regulation No. 264 "General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories" (16.03.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (02.03.1993). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/59994-on-specially-protected-nature-territories – Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (16.03.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/3941-law-on-the-conservation-of-species-and-biotopes – Lībiete, Z., Donis, J., Gerra-Inohosa, L., Mūrniece, S., Zālītis, T. (2014). "Review report: Methods and technologies for increasing the capital value of the forest" [Metodes un tehnoloģijas meža kapitālvērtības palielināšanai] – LVM. (2015). Soil treatment for forest restoration [Augsnes apstrāde meža atjaunošanai] – LVM. "Recommendations on reducing the impact of heavy logging equipment on the forest soil" [Ieteikumi, kā samazināt smagās mežizstrādes tehnikas ietekmi uz meža augsni] – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium.
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
2.2.4	**The removal of harvest residues and / or stumps occurs, this shall not lead to irreversible negative impacts to the ecosystem.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers the removal of harvest residues and stumps from legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** All forest operations including harvesting and post-harvesting clean-up should be planned and implemented in accordance with the requirements set up in forest management regulations of the Law on Forests.

2.2.4 continued
Findings continued

The forest operations must be planned and implemented following the requirements and procedures set out in the regulations on forest felling. The regulation contains technological requirements for logging site preparation and logging, but no particular requirements for the removal of harvesting residues are foreseen in the national legislation at the moment. Harvesting works in protected areas must be agreed upon with relevant authorities (state or regional park administrations, protected areas authorities). Before harvesting, a preliminary environmental impact assessment shall be carried out by foresters in state forests and preventive measures selected.

There are no provisions related to the extraction of biomass/feedstock to protect ecosystems, for instance, limitations for the time and the season for extraction according to forest site type, the use of skidding roads, places to store biomass, a ban on burning biomass in forests and extraction from certain forest site types (those growing in poor mineral soils) etc. Similarly, no such provisions are included in the State Forest Enterprise (LVM) procedures and best management practice guides. However, it has to be noted here – as the stakeholder consultation suggests – residue collection is part of logging and is subject to the same regulations that apply to, for example, water and soil protection and seasonal harvesting restrictions. Outside of Latvia, e.g. a Swedish synthesis of research on the environmental effects of forest residue recovery suggests that forest growth can decrease as a consequence of forest residue removal (De Jong et al. 2012). Similarly, a Polish study found that the removal of logging residues negatively affected tree diameter and height but had no significant effect on the basal area of the stand (Węgiel et al. 2023). On the other hand, another Swedish study suggests that an increase in harvesting of logging residues by 2.5 times might be sustainable given some caveats (De Jong et al. 2017). The opinion of forest scientists on the impacts of biomass–logging residue removal from forests in Latvia is outlined in a few reports.

The report (Biomasas izmantošanas ilgtspējības kritēriju pielietošana un pasākumu izstrāde: Meža biomasas resursu izmantošanas analīze, novērtējot dažādu mežistrādes etapu varbūtējo ietekmi uz bioloģiskos daudzveidību, VSIA Vides projekti, 2009) concludes that more research work on the effects of logging residue extraction needs to be done to evaluate the potential impacts of thinning works. Until then it is recommended to extract biomass harvested only in areas with very fertile soils, during the winter period, without strain removal. It is also necessary to continue research work in assessing the ecological role of ecological trees in a forest sustainability context to determine the good practice for the extraction of biomass from forest stands in the Latvian situation. As a part of good practice recommendations, it is suggested that logging residuals are not collected in forest site types with low fertility soils, regardless of the composition of soil and moisture conditions. Economic aspects should favour this due to the relatively small amount of logging residues present in stands growing on poor soils and higher costs for feedstock extraction and transport. The authors conclude that the current legislative provisions as well as certification and best practice recommendations do not jeopardise saprophytic and associated species' living environment upon removal of feedstock from the forests.

Regarding harvesting residues, national legislation requires removing felled green unsound spruce wood (dumped, broken trees and large logging residues (10–50 cm in diameter) from the logging plot to limit the spread of root rot fungus (Heterobasidion annosum).

Forest site types located on poor soils occupy approximately 10% of the total forest area in the country. Half of it (5%) constitutes wet forest site types. In the case of wet forest site types, harvesting residues are used for the stabilisation of technological tracks and there is no threat to the forest ecosystem from harvesting residue removal. In the case of dry forest site types, generally, a low amount of harvesting residues is generated and there is a low motivation for forest owners to collect harvesting residues as a biomass feedstock. Low motivation is a consequence of the high costs of forwarding and operating mobile chipping equipment. In addition, there are provisions in the national legislation to retain deadwood in the plot which has to be followed by the forest owner / logger. Moreover, stump removal is not a common practice in Latvia.

2.2.4 continued *Findings continued*	**Enforcement and monitoring** The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests while the Nature Conservation Agency covers the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories. Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the concerned agencies. The EU (2021) report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive as well as stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement of the Law on Forests in Latvia. This suggests that enforcement is effective. **Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that the removal of harvest residues and stumps does not lead to irreversible negative impacts to the ecosystem in Latvia. Thus, this indicator is given a low-risk class.
Means of verification	– Best Management Practice manuals – Supply contracts – Records of field inspections – Assessment at an operational level of measures designed to minimise impacts on the values identified – Monitoring records – Research studies, reports – Relevant legislation and their level of enforcement
Evidence reviewed	– Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (02.03.1993). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/59994-on-specially-protected-nature-territoriesCabinet Regulation No. 264 "General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories" (16.03.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories – Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (16.03.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/3941-law-on-the-conservation-of-species-and-biotopes – Lazdāns, V., Epalts, E., Kariņš, Z., Kāposts, V., Liepa, J., Blija, T., Āboliņa, A., Laiviņa, S., Lazdiņa, D. (2004). The influence of forest management techniques and technologies on soil properties [Meža apsaimniekošanas tehnikas un tehnoloģiju ietekme uz augsnes īpašībām] – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – Silava & MNKC. (2012). Report on the study 'Methods and technologies for increasing the capital value of the forest' [Atskaite par pētījuma 'Metodes un tehnoloģijas meža kapitālvērtības palielināšanai'] – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – State Regional Development Agency. (2009). Application of biomass use sustainability criteria and development of measures: Analysis of the use of forest biomass resources, assessing the possible impact of different logging stages on biological diversity [Biomasas izmantošanas ilgtspējības kritēriju pielietošana un pasākumu izstrāde: Meža biomasas resursu izmantošanas analīze, novērtējot dažādu mežistrādes etapu varbūtējo ietekmi uz bioloģiskos daudzveidību]. A project. – EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium.

Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
2.2.5	**Quality and quantity of groundwater, surface water and water downstream shall be maintained or enhanced.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers the quality and quantity of groundwater, surface water and water downstream connected to legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** The General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories, the Law on Protection Belts and the Law on Forests contain a requirement for the protection of water resources, including surface watercourses in forests. One of the functions of protective forests is to maintain the water protection functions of the forests. The special management regime is set in management documents for the protected areas where these forests are located to protect water bodies from damage and pollution. The maintenance of buffer zones along watercourses or open areas is foreseen in the regulations on forest felling set by the Law on Forests. Forest felling is to be targeted to maintain biodiversity and to regulate special areas around water courses which are defined in the regulations on forest felling. Regulations on evaluation of compliances of tractors, trailers and other machines in agriculture and forestry set the requirements for forest machinery to prevent possible damage to the environment, including watercourses. In addition, the regulations on forest felling define requirements for preparation for forest felling, use of skidding roads, use of temporary bridges or mats for stream crossings etc. to protect soil and water streams. The common practice for forest managers is to inspect the logging site together with the contractor to evaluate the harvesting conditions in the area and to discuss and agree on the use of forest felling techniques, taking into account the special conditions of felling areas, including the protection of water streams. The State Forest Service periodically checks compliance with legal acts targeted to the protection of natural values, objects and protected areas. In addition, the regional offices of the Nature Conservation Agency periodically control the management and application of legal requirements for nature protection. The information on violations is compiled in an annual report available on the website of the State Forest Service. Reports of the State Forest Service show that there is no substantial, systematic and / or large-scale non compliance with legally required environmental protection measures to an extent that threatens the forest resources or other environmental values. The magnitude of environmental issues in forestry is considered of a limited scale and is not considered a specified risk in Latvia. **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests while the Nature Conservation Agency covers the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories and other nature protection-related regulations. Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the concerned agencies. The EU (2021) report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive as well as stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement of the Law on Forests and the other relevant legislation in Latvia mentioned above. This suggests that enforcement is effective. **Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the above analysis it is evident that the quality and quantity of groundwater, surface water and water downstream are not at risk due to forestry operations in Latvia and thus this indicator is given a low-risk class.

2.2.5 continued *Means of verification*	– Best Management Practice manuals – Supply contracts – Records of field inspections – Assessment of measures designed to minimize impacts at an operational level – Monitoring records – Interviews with staff, stakeholders – Publicly available information on the protection of soil – Relevant legislation and level of enforcement – Inquiries to Nature Conservation Agency
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet Regulation No. 264 "General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories" (16.03.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories – Cabinet Regulation Nr. 935 "Rules for felling trees in a forest" (18.12.2012). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/253760-noteikumi-par-koku-cirsanu-meza – Cabinet Regulation Nr. 936 "Nature Protection Requirements in Forest Management" (18.12.2012). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/253758-dabas-aizsardzibas-noteikumi-meza-apsaimniekosana – Cabinet Regulation Nr. 947 "Regulations on Forest Protection Measures and Declaration of Emergency State" (18.12.2012). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/253786-noteikumi-par-meza-aizsardzibas-pasakumiem-un-arkartejas-situacijas-izsludinasanu-meza – Law on Environmental Protection (02.11.2006). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/147917-vides-aizsardzibas-likums – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Law on Protection Belts (05.02.1997). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/42348-protection-zone-law – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – Water Management Law (12.09.2002). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/66885-water-management-law – EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium.
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

2.2.6	**Air emissions shall comply with national legislation or in the absence of national legislation with industry best practice.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers the air emissions from forestry activities in legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** The Regulations Regarding Ambient Air Quality regulate the protection, management and monitoring of ambient air pollution. There is no indication of any damage to or influence on air quality from forest operations. There is no report on whether forestry activities and operations have a detrimental impact on air quality. The air quality is influenced by biomass and feedstock users burning biomass in power plants, households or other facilities. The monitoring and statistical data on air quality and air quality trends are available on the website of the Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre (LEGMC). The regulations of forest felling under the Law on Forests clearly define a ban on the burning of biomass in the forests and the implementation of the requirement is controlled by the state institutions. The requirements for forestry machinery are defined in the regulations on evaluation of compliance for tractors, trailers and other machines in agriculture and forestry so that they will not cause damage to the environment. **Monitoring and enforcement** The Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre is the institution responsible for ambient air monitoring. The monitoring procedures, functions and observation data and monitoring results are available on the website of LEGMC. The State Forest Service is responsible for enforcing and monitoring the enforcement of the Law on Forests. The EU (2021) report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive as well as stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement of the Law on Forests in Latvia. This suggests the enforcement of this Law is effective. **Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that air emissions from forestry activities in legally defined forests are insignificant in Latvia. Therefore, the level of risk for this indicator is considered low.
Means of verification	– Air quality monitoring data – Best Management Practice manuals – Supply contracts – Records of field inspections – Assessment of measures designed to minimize impacts at an operational level – Monitoring records – Relevant legislation and their level of enforcement – Interviews with staff, stakeholders – Publicly available information on the protection of air – Inquiries to environment enforcement authorities (Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre)

2.2.6 continued *Evidence reviewed*	– Cabinet Regulation Nr. 1290 "Regulations Regarding Ambient Air Quality" (03.11.2009). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/200712-regulations-regarding-ambient-air-quality – ICP Forests: The International Co-operative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests operating under the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP) – Latvian Environment Geology Meteorology Centre: "Air quality". https://www.meteo.lv/lapas/noverojumi/gaisa-kvalitate/gaisa-kvalitate_ievads?id=1273&nid=468 – Latvian Environment Geology Meteorology Centre: "Homepage". https://videscentrs.lvgmc.lv/ – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium.
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
2.2.7	**Pesticides shall only be used as part of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan in compliance with national legislation, chemical safety data sheets and industry best practices. Banned pesticides shall not be used.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers applications of all pesticides in forestry operations connected to feedstock sourcing in Latvia. **Analysis** The Plant Protection Law outlines procedures for plant protection product registration, import, use, storage and protection measures as well as informing the public and controlling the use of pesticides and other chemicals for plant protection purposes. The General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories prohibit using plant protection products (pesticides) in forests in territories with any protection status. All plant protection products shall be registered according to defined procedures. Information about registered plant protection products can be obtained online on the website of the State Plant Protection Service. The list of the plant protection products that are allowed for use in forests is available on the website of the State Forest Service. According to the Regulation Regarding the Special Permits (Licences) for the Distribution of Plant Protection Products, special permits (licences) are needed for the distribution of plant protection products. Stakeholder consultation suggests that only small amounts of herbicides are used to control the spread of invasive plant species – giant hogweed (Heracleum sosnovskyi) – in Latvian forests. In forests managed by LVM, application of herbicides is carried out by certified contractors who are allowed to use and store specific chemicals (pesticides). LVM regularly monitors the work of the contractors. The use of chemicals is very strictly regulated in state forests that are FSC/PEFC-certified and subsequently follow FSC/PEFC pesticide policies. The State Forests Enterprise (AS LVM) defines the permissible amount of chemicals to be used in state forests. This amount is calculated based on necessary conditions for forest protection against diseases and other natural calamities and is targeted to reduce the permissible amount. The use of chemicals in private forests is not very common but the general legislation related to plant protection products is followed.

2.2.7 continued *Evidence reviewed*	The LVM has responsible personnel who are involved in the use and storage of chemicals and have the necessary qualification for training in the handling of chemicals. The LVM annually prepares reports on the use and storage of chemicals. No violations of plant protection product-related legislation have been registered by the State Plant Protection Service. **Monitoring and enforcement** The State Forest Service periodically controls how forest operations in cutting areas are being or have been implemented according to existing legal acts. The Plant Protection Service under the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for the registration, control and legislative enforcement of plant protection products. The Nature Conservation Agency enforces General Regulations on the Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories. The registration of no violations of plant protection product-related legislation by the State Plant Protection Service suggests that the relevant legislation is effectively enforced. **Risk conclusion and justification** Latvia has a strong legislative and regulatory framework for the control of the use of pesticides and the use of pesticides is limited in Latvian forests. Therefore, this indicator is assessed as a low-risk class.
Means of verification	– Best Management Practice manuals – Supply contracts – Records of BP's field inspections – Assessment of measures designed to minimise impacts at an operational level – Monitoring records – Interviews with institutions responsible for overseeing the use of chemicals (State Forest Service, State Environment Inspection, State Plant Protection Service and others) – Relevant legislation and their level of enforcement
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet Regulation No. 264 "General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories" (16.03.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories – Cabinet Regulation Nr. 682 "Regulation Regarding the Special Permits (Licences) for the Distribution of Plant Protection Products" (27.07.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/214202-regulation-regarding-the-special-permits-licences-for-the-distribution-of-plant-protection-products – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – Plant Protection Law (17.12.1998). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/51662-plant-protection-law – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – State Plant Protection Service: Online database of registered plant protection products. http://registri.vaad.gov.lv/
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

2.2.8	**Waste shall be disposed of in an environmentally appropriate manner.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers the management of all wastes generated by forestry operations connected to feedstock sourcing from all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** The Waste Management Law defines waste as "various substances and articles belonging to the category of waste, according to the classifier of waste set forth Section 8 of the Law, which are disposed of by the holder of waste, which one wishes to dispose of or must dispose of". The Law provides waste definitions, classification and functions of responsible institutions involved in waste management, monitoring, storage and other waste management procedures. The National Waste Management Plan of Latvia (2021–2028) sets the goals, measures and monitoring procedures for waste reduction and prevention based on the performed analyses. The Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 485 "On Management of Specific Types of Hazardous Waste" and Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 302, "Waste Classification Regulations and Hazardous Waste Properties" define hazardous wastes and set out procedures and requirements for hazardous waste handling, collection and disposal. Oil products according to the regulations are classified as hazardous waste and need to be collected and forwarded to special companies that have the necessary licence to dispose of the waste in an environmentally sound manner. Section 6 of the Law on Forests sets out a requirement to prohibit the disposal of waste in the forest. The Nature Management Plan, the planning documents of an individual protected area, and the individual regulation of protected objects or selective areas define the requirements and procedures to prevent waste disposal in the forest. The waste issue is relevant in the forests near cities and recreational objects. It is common practice for forest management companies to have signed agreements with waste management companies for waste collection and transportation from forests and recreational sites. Regional offices of the State Environmental Inspection control waste disposal in the forests and take appropriate measures in case of a legal violation. Much of the waste in the forest is left by the general public during the summer season, resulting from the occupation of summer cottages and summer housing whose owners have not entered into contracts for the collection of household waste. According to the Waste Management Law, every household waste producer must have a contract with the waste collection company covering all costs of waste collection and disposal. Waste collection contracts shall be concluded not only by owners of private houses and apartment tenants but also cottage, summer home and other temporary accommodation owners or users. This is determined by the Waste Management Law Article 16. According to the information from the State Environmental Inspection, on average 20 complaints about littering in forest areas are received annually by the institution, however, recent years show a reducing trend. There is no information on waste disposed of in private forests. According to the information from the State Forest Enterprise AS LVM, about 2 000 cubic meters of household waste is collected from state forests annually. The statistics of AS LVM show that despite public awareness campaigns and actions, the amount of discarded waste in forests remains high. Since 2005, AS LVM has been implementing a public awareness campaign: "Do not litter the forest!". The purpose of the campaign is to increase the level of public awareness and contribute to cleaner forests in general. During the campaign, 200 public forest clean-up actions took place all over the country.

2.2.8 continued *Findings continued*	The Forest owner, irrespective of ownership of municipal, hazardous or industrial waste disposed of by a third party, is obliged to clean up a littered forest area. This is subject to the Waste Management Law. The waste shall be collected and transferred to a waste collection company, an operator, which has received a licence for waste management. The cost of waste collection shall be covered by the forest owner or manager. However, the forest owner or manager is entitled to claim damages from the waste producer – the guilty party. The impact on the environment at the operational level related to waste in the forest is quite low. Both in the state forest enterprise and for private forest owners the prevailing practice is to check the felling area and other areas where the forest activities are foreseen before and after work by responsible persons and to ensure that no waste is deposited and that all legal requirements and good practices are followed. **Monitoring and enforcement** The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests and periodically controls how forest operations in felling areas are being or have been implemented according to the existing legal acts, including waste regulations. The State Environmental Inspection enforces the Waste Management Law and other related legislation and controls the fulfilment of the related requirements. **Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the above analysis, the risk can be considered low for this indicator.
Means of verification	– Best Management Practice manuals – Supply contracts – Records of BP's field inspections – Assessment of measures designed to minimise impacts at an operational level – Monitoring records – Interviews with staff, stakeholders – Inquiries to environment authorities (State Environment Inspection, Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre, other subordinated institutions of the Ministry of Environment)
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet Regulation No. 264 "General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories" (16.03.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories – Cabinet Regulation No. 302, "Waste Classification Regulations and Hazardous Waste Properties" (19.04.2011). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/229148-regulations-regarding-waste-classification-and-properties-rendering-waste-hazardous – Cabinet Regulation Nr. 485 "On Management of Specific Types of Hazardous Waste" (21.06.2011). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/288583-grozijumi-ministru-kabineta-2011-gada-21-junija-noteikumos-nr-485-atsevisku-veidu-bistamo-atkritumu-apsaimniekosanas-kartiba – Cabinet Regulation Nr. 935 "Rules for felling trees in a forest" (18.12.2012). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/253760-noteikumi-par-koku-cirsanu-meza – Cabinet Regulation Nr. 936 "Nature Protection Requirements in Forest Management" (18.12.2012). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/253758-dabas-aizsardzibas-noteikumi-meza-apsaimniekosana

2.2.8 continued *Evidence reviewed continued*	– Cabinet Regulation Nr. 947 "Regulations on Forest Protection Measures and Declaration of Emergency State" (18.12.2012). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/253786-noteikumi-par-meza-aizsardzibas-pasakumiem-un-arkartejas-situacijas-izsludinasanu-meza – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forestshttps://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825 – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – Waste Management Law (28.10.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/221378-waste-management-law
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
2.2.9	**Harvesting levels shall be justified as to how they can be sustained with reference to inventory and growth data for the Supply Base.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers forest harvesting in legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** According to the Law on Forests and subsequent Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation No. 238 "On National Forest Monitoring", the Latvian State Forest Research Institute "Silava" is assigned as the executing agency for forest resources monitoring at the national level. Forest resources are monitored for a five-year period, using statistical methods. The first monitoring cycle was implemented from 2004 to 2008. In total, monitoring is carried out on about 10,000 sampling plots distributed evenly all over the country. Each monitoring/sampling plot represents 666 ha of forest. During the five-year period, all sampling plots are visited, and monitoring parameters are surveyed. The annual harvesting rate in state forests is approved by the Government. On an operational level, there is strict control that the allowed felling volume and area set in the cutting technological card shall be followed. Responsible persons from the State Forest Service periodically check the felling area before, during and after activities to be sure that the allowed cutting rate is followed. During 2010–2020, the forest area in Latvia increased from 3.226 million ha to 3.296 million ha. This amounts to 1% growth in the forest area. During the same period, the country's timber harvesting level ranged between 10.56 million m^3 and 11.24 million m^3 per year (State Forest Service 2022). The harvesting level remained below the mean annual increment of the growing stock which is estimated to be above 27 m^3 per year. Indeed, the latest data from Silava show that the harvesting volume is 76% of the annual increment. As a result, the total growing stock has been increasing in Latvian forests. According to the State Forest Service (2022), the growing stock in legally defined forests in the country increased by 9% to 582 million m^3 in 2020 from 531 million m^3 in 2010. In Latvia, the harvesting rate does not exceed the annual increment and provides the potential to meet long-term economic, social and environmental needs. The statistical data on forest use and forest increment is calculated using forest inventory and monitoring data. The statistical information (including growth/drain, inventory, mortality, and age class distribution according to ownership type, administrative boundaries and other criteria) is available online on the website of the State Forest Service, which is the responsible institution for the compilation of statistical information on forest resource use, regeneration and vitality.

Annex 1 Detailed findings for Supply Base Evaluation continued

2.2.9 continued *Findings continued*	**Monitoring and enforcement** The State Forest Service periodically controls how forest operations in harvesting areas are being or have been implemented according to existing legislation. The EU (2021) report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive as well as stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement of the Law on Forests in Latvia. This suggests that enforcement of this Law is effective. **Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the above analysis it can be concluded the forest harvesting level in Latvia is well below the sustainable forest management threshold and thus the risk can be considered low for this indicator.
Means of verification	– Harvesting records, inventory and growth data and yield calculations – Operational Practices indicate that biomass feedstock harvesting rates avoid significant negative impacts on forest productivity and long term economic viability – Relevant legislation and their level of enforcement
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet Regulation Nr. 51 "National forest monitoring rules" (18.01.2022). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/329305-nacionala-meza-monitoringa-noteikumi – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – State Forest Service. (2022). Latvian Forest Sector in Facts and Figures 2022. – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium.
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
2.2.10	**Harvested areas shall be regenerated.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers the regeneration of all harvested areas in legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** Concerning requirement (ii), according to Section 21 of the Law on Forests, a forest owner or lawful possessor must regenerate a forest stand after felling or damage (e.g. by fire, diseases, wind, floods) that cause the basal area of the forest stand to become smaller than the critical basal area set by the Law. Regeneration could be done artificially, naturally or a combination of both means within five years or in the case of a special site like a marsh, mesotrophic mire, drained peatland, bog and marsh within 10 years after harvesting. The State Forest Service enforces the above rule and imposes a fine for non-compliance. There is no evidence that the above rule is violated in Latvia.

2.2.10 continued *Findings continued*	**Enforcement and monitoring** The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests. Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the concerned agencies. The EU (2021) report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive as well as stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement of the Law on Forests in Latvia. This suggests that enforcement of this Law is effective. **Risk conclusion and justification** There is appropriate legislation in place in Latvia to ensure the regeneration of areas harvested for sourcing feedstock for biomass production as the above analysis suggests. Regular monitoring of such legislation is conducted and reported by designated authorities. Therefore, it is concluded that the risk rating for this indicator is low risk.
Means of verification	– Relevant web pages of the State Forest Service and Nature Conservation Agency – Relevant Latvian national and EU acts, laws and regulations
Evidence reviewed	– Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium.
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
2.2.11	**The impacts of natural processes such as fires, pests and diseases shall be managed.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers the impacts of natural processes in all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** Chapter VII of the Law on Forests (Forest Protection) specifies regulations for protection against fire, pests and diseases and Chapter XV specifies penalties for the violation of such regulations. The regulations on forest protection against fires define the general requirements for establishing antifire measures, for instance, mineralised lines in forests, as well as setting the procedures for the organisation of a fire extinguishing system in state and private forests. The state programme on forest fire protection establishes and ensures the protection of all forests (state and private) against forest fires. Latvian forests according to the burning class are divided into three categories (low, medium and high), criteria foreseen by Cabinet Regulation Nr. 238 "Fire Safety Regulations". In Latvia, the fire prevention and monitoring system covers all forests in the country. The watchtower network covers the territory of Latvia involving watchmen who detect and identify forest fires in the fire season and warn the responsible institutions. In addition, the State Forest Enterprise, AS LVM, has an onground monitoring system and responsible persons for monitoring and reporting on forest fires. The integrated warning system allows for reporting forest fires using an integrated phone number.

2.2.11 continued *Findings continued*	The statistical information about forest fires is available on the website of the State Forest Service. State Forest Service personnel monitor forests daily, especially during the fire season, and visit the operational sites to ensure that natural processes, fires, pests and diseases are managed appropriately. Forestry workers and personnel are instructed on fire prevention and protection measures and get the appropriate training. In addition, the State Forest Service periodically controls forest operations in forest felling areas for compliance with existing legal acts related to fire safety. According to information from the State Forest Service, almost all forest fires are discovered within half an hour from the breakout, and a fire station car with a forest fire brigade is sent to the location of the forest fire. Up to 80% of all forest fires are discovered and extinguished so that the area damaged by fire does not exceed 0.5 ha. In extensive forest fire fighting, special heavy machinery bulldozers, excavators – are used for fire suppression and elimination. To ensure the involvement of machinery in a coordinated emergency procedure in such situations, cooperation agreements are being concluded with various organisations and fire emergency plans have been drawn up to specify obligations of the involved parties and participation procedures for fires. The regulations on tree felling in forests define the procedures, responsible institutions and measures for forest protection against pests, diseases and other natural calamities. Monitoring data on forest sanitation conditions and damage is available from the State Forest Service. Statistical data about forest sanitation conditions, measures for forest sanitation protection, a list of related legal acts, diseases and pests as well as various scientific reports are available on the website of the State Forest Service. **Monitoring and enforcement** The State Forest Service is the responsible authority for forest health condition monitoring in all forests in Latvia. It surveys forest health and issues an opinion on forest health conditions. The State Forest Service carries out forest health condition monitoring in all Latvian forests to ensure forest management is undertaken in a way that does not cause a deterioration of forest health and provides timely detection of pest proliferation and outbreaks. **Risk conclusion and justification** Considering the above analysis, a low-risk class is assigned for this indicator.
Means of verification	– Overall evaluation of potential impacts of operations on forest ecosystem health and vitality based on data from overseeing institutions – Assessment of potential impacts at an operational level and of measures to minimise impacts – Regional Best Management Practice manuals – Supply contracts – Monitoring results – Relevant legislation and their level of enforcement
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet Regulation Nr. 238 “Fire Safety Regulations” (19.04.2016.) – Forest Statistical Data (State Forest Service) – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – State Forest Service: “About us”. https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

2.2.12	**Genetically modified trees shall not be used.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers the use of genetically modified (GM) trees for feedstock. **Analysis** There is no commercial use of GM trees in Latvia. The National Programme on Biological Diversity outlines principal aims and objectives related to the use of genetically modified organisms in forestry. In particular, the programme calls for "Promoting conservation of Latvian forest genetic resources (13.8.3)" and "Avoiding the use of genetically modified trees" (13.8.4). The main legal acts related to the use of GM trees in Latvia are as follows: The Law on Environment Protection, The Law on the Circulation of GMOs, and the Regulation on Forest Reproductive Material. The Law on Circulation of GMOs establishes the principal areas of activities involving genetically modified organisms and products, state management and regulation. The Law outlines the rights, duties and responsibilities of genetically modified organisms and product users. The Law applies to all natural and legal persons who are importing, placing on the market, using, or deliberately releasing GMOs into the environment as well as those involved in testing, researching and other activities involving genetically modified organisms and products. The use of genetically modified reproductive material for commercial use is not banned according to Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 159 "On Forest Reproductive Material". There is no evidence or facts provided by the responsible institutions about the known or suspected use of GM trees in the country. According to the latest available FAO study ("Preliminary review of biotechnology in forestry, including genetic modification", 2004 (available at http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/ae574e/ae574e00.htm), commercial use of GM trees is not practiced in the country. **Enforcement and monitoring** The state authorities responsible for controlling the use of GMOs do not possess any information or evidence of unauthorised or commercial use of GM trees in Latvia. The State Plant Protection Agency is responsible for the management of registering seeds/reproductive material and every registered seed shall be provided with information. There are no genetically modified seeds included in this register. Likewise, there are no natural or legal persons cultivating genetically modified organisms in Latvia according to the register data. **Risk classification and justification** The risk for this indicator can be considered as low according to the above analysis.
Means of verification	– Reference sources, interviews and records – Public reports – EU and National Legislation – EU register of authorised GMO

Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet Regulation Nr. 159 "On Forest Reproductive Material" (26.03.2013). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/256258-noteikumi-par-meza-reproduktivo-materialu – Latvian National Biosafety Clearing House: "Homepage". http://lv.biosafetyclearinghouse.net – Law on Circulation of Genetically Modified Organisms (15.11.2007). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/167400-law-on-the-circulation-of-genetically-modified-organisms – Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development: National Programme on Biological Diversity – State Plant Protection Service: "Homepage". https://www.vaad.gov.lv/en – State Plant Protection Service: The register of genetically modified crop growers. https://www.vaad.gov.lv/lv/genetiski-modificeto-kulturaugu-audzetaju-registrs
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

Principle 3 – Feedstock is only sourced from Supply Bases where the forest carbon stock is stable or increasing in the long term

Criterion 3.1 – Feedstock sourcing is consistent with international requirements for land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) emissions

Element	Description and analysis
3.1.1	**Key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation value (HCV) pertaining to biodiversity in the Supply Base shall be identified.** LULUCF emissions shall be accounted for through one of the following routes: **Route A** Feedstock may be sourced from a country of origin which is a party to the Paris Agreement, and which has submitted a Nationally Determined Contribution to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) covering carbon emissions and removals from agriculture, forestry and land use which ensure the changes in carbon stock associated with biomass harvest are counted towards the country's commitment to reduce or limit greenhouse gas emissions, or **Route B** Feedstock may be sourced from a country of origin which is a party to the Paris Agreement and has national or sub-national laws in place, in accordance with Article 5 of the Paris Agreement, applicable in the area of harvest, to conserve and enhance carbon stocks and sinks, and providing evidence that reported LULUCF-sector emissions do not exceed removals, or **Route C** Feedstock may be sourced from a Supply Base where an assessment demonstrates that both the carbon stock is stable and the forests' capacity to act as a carbon sink is stable or increasing over the long term.

3.1.1 continued *Findings*	**Scale of assessment** The assessment covers Latvia's participation in the Paris Agreement. **Analysis** Latvia ratified the Paris Climate Agreement in 2017 (UNFCCC: "Latvia") and has submitted a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) as an EU member state to the UNFCCC covering carbon emissions and removals from land use, land use change, and forestry (LULUCF), ensuring that the changes in carbon stock associated with biomass harvest are counted towards the country's commitment to reduce or limit greenhouse gas emissions (European Commission, 2020). Latvia submitted its eighth national communication and fifth biennial report under the UNFCCC in 2022 (Lupkina et al. 2022). For the base year 1990, the historical emissions/removals for the LULUCF sector were -12.3 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalents (Lupkina et al. 2022). Latvia's climate policy is based on the EU, the UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement requirements. Common policies of the EU play a major role in the implementation of international agreements (Lupkina et al., 2022). The national emission reduction targets are presented in the Environmental Policy Strategy 2021-2027 and the National Energy and Climate Plan 2030 (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, 2021, Cabinet of Ministers, 2020). For the whole LULUCF sector, Latvia's target for GHG emission reduction is 3.1 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent (tCO_2eq), and the forestry sector is expected to be at least climate-neutral (Cabinet of Ministers, 2020). **Enforcement and monitoring** Latvia has thus far done all the required reporting and review related to the Paris Agreement. The reporting is subject to multilateral assessment. **Risk classification and justification** Based on the evidence provided above, the risk for non-conformance with this indicator is classified as 'low'.
Means of verification	– UNFCCC website and NDC registry – UNFCCC national communications and biennial reports
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet of Ministers. (2020). National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/312423-par-latvijas-nacionalo-energetikas-un-klimata-planu-20212030-gadam – European Commission. (2020). Update of the NDC of the European Union and its Member States. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/EU_NDC_Submission_December%202020_0.pdf – Lupkina, L., Štelce, V., Treija, S., Lazdāne-Mihalko, J., Cakars, I., Siņics, L, Indriksone, I., Maļinovskis, E., Zandersons, V., Klāvs, G., Reķis, J., Kudreņickis, I., Bērziņa, L., Lazdiņš, A., Bārdule, A., Butlers, A., Gancone, A., Pommere-Bramane, I., Zommere-Rotčenkova, K., Dansone, B., Dimbiere, A., Poutanene, M. (2022). Latvia's eighth national communication and fifth biennial report under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Prepared by the Latvian Environment Agency and Ministry of the Environmental Protection and Regional Development. – Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. (2021). Environmental Policy Strategy 2021-2027 (Vides politikas pamatnostādnes 2021.- 2027. gadam). – UNFCCC: "Latvia". https://unfccc.int/node/61097
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

Criterion 3.2 – Carbon stocks in the forest area of the Supply Base are stable or increasing in the long term.

Element	Description and analysis
3.2.1	All feedstock sourcing shall be consistent with either of these two options: **Option A** Feedstock may be sourced from Supply Bases where an assessment of the Supply Base shows that the forest carbon stocks are stable or increasing, or **Option B** Feedstock may be sourced if the assessment shows that the forest carbon stocks are declining in the supply base, provided that the decline is due to natural processes (fire, pests etc.) and sourcing of feedstock has the aim to recover feedstock otherwise lost or to assist regeneration.
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The Latvian National Forest Inventory (NFI) hosted by LSFRI Silava includes the assessment of forest carbon stocks and sinks. The Latvian national GHG emissions reporting made under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol includes the reporting of current and projected GHG removals and emissions. Option A is applied. **Analysis** Latvian forest area has been constantly increasing over the past 20 years, continuing the trend of the 20th century (Lupkina et al. 2022). The forest growing stock has also steadily increased: in 2022, the total forest growing stock in Latvia was 681 million m^3 although the growth rate is slowing down (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2022). Most of the Latvian forests are available for commercial exploitation (Lupkina et al. 2022). During the past decade, on average 11 million m^3 of timber has been harvested annually (State Forest Service, 2022). Total forest carbon stocks have slightly increased in the 2000s – the growth in live biomass has stabilised (State Forest Service, 2022). According to the procedures approved by the Ministry of Environment Protection and Regional Development on a national system of accounting of emission units of greenhouse gases (GHG) related to land use, land use change and the forestry (LULUCF) sector, the Ministry of Agriculture, LSFRI Silava, and the University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LULST) are responsible for carrying out the accounting of GHG emissions and CO_2 removals in the LULUCF sector, including reporting of forest management, afforestation and deforestation activities according to Articles 3.3 and 3.4 of the Kyoto Protocol. The State Environment Agency prepares the annual report on GHG emissions and removals making use of the guidelines approved by the IPCC (IPCC, 2006). The results of the inventory indicate that the LULUCF sector has been a net CO_2 sink over the last three decades. However, the sector's sink has been decreasing and in 2020, the sector became a net emission source (Lupkina et al. 2022). The change is mostly due to the increase in harvest rates, natural mortality and the reduction of increment in the ageing forests reducing the net removals of CO_2 in forest land. However, harvesting also most likely affects the situation: harvesting volumes have fluctuated significantly in the 2000s but throughout the whole period there has been a slight upward trend and the removals exceeded 13 million m^3 in 2019 and 2020 (State Forest Service, 2022). Currently, the annual increment is higher than the total removals but in future the total removals might, at times, exceed the annual increment even if the felling volumes are considerably reduced (Lupkina et al. 2022). Conversion of forest land to settlements and conversion of abandoned, naturally afforested farmland to cropland and grassland also play a considerable role along with GHG emissions from drained organic soils (Lupkina et al. 2022).

3.2.1 continued *Findings continued*	Lupkina et al. (2022) analysed two scenarios (WEM, business-as-usual and WAM, intensified forest management) related to forest management in Latvia's eighth national communication and fifth biennial report to the UNFCCC. They found that in both scenarios the total forest growing stock would remain relatively stable until 2050. If the harvest rate does not exceed the annual increment in the long run and forests are regenerated, the forest growing stock remains stable or increases thus allowing the forest carbon stock to also remain stable or to increase. However, if the harvest rate increases and LULUCF sector emissions remain the same as before or increase, the gap between LULUCF sinks and emissions will become smaller or the emissions may exceed the sinks. Latvian forestry is generally relatively sustainable and controlled by legislation. The Law on Forests provides the main legislative framework for forestry in the country (Law on Forests, 2000; Information on the forest management activities as well as the stand-wise inventory data are stored in the forest register maintained by the State Forest Service (State Forest Service: "Meža valsts reģistrs")). **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Forest Service periodically controls how forest operations in harvesting areas are being or have been implemented according to existing legislation. The forests are monitored regularly in the NFI. GHG monitoring and future projections are presented in the reporting related to the Paris Agreement. **Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the evidence provided above and the consultation with a local expert, there are indications that growing harvest pressures may lead to temporarily exceeding the annual increment of Latvian forests. However, if the harvest rate does not exceed the annual increment in the long term and forests are regenerated, the forest growing stock will remain stable thus allowing the forest carbon stock to also remain stable in the long term. For now, the risk of non-conformance with this indicator is classified as 'low'. However, as the growth of forest carbon stock in living biomass has stabilised and a slight decrease has been identified and harvesting pressures are increasingly heavy, the situation must be closely monitored. This indicator should be given special consideration at the next RRA revision. Especially, if the current felling levels are maintained or increased in the future, the risk for this indicator must be reassessed accordingly.
Means of verification	– Applicable legislation – National forest inventory data – Statistical reports – Public reports and plans – Expert consultation
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet Regulation Nr. 51 "National forest monitoring rules" (18.01.2022). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/329305-nacionala-meza-monitoringa-noteikumi – Cabinet Regulation Nr. 67 "On forest management plan" (04.02.2014). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/264224-noteikumi-par-meza-apsaimniekosanas-planu – Cabinet Regulation Nr. 935 "Rules for felling trees in a forest" (18.12.2012). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/253760-noteikumi-par-koku-cirsanu-meza – Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. (2022). The environment of Latvia in figures: climate change, natural resources and environmental quality 2021. Riga 2022 – IPCC. (2006). 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. https://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/2006gl/ – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests

3.2.1 continued *Evidence reviewed continued*	– Lupkina, L., Štelce, V., Treija, S., Lazdāne-Mihalko, J., Cakars, I., Siņics, L, Indriksone, I., Maļinovskis, E., Zandersons, V., Klāvs, G., Reķis, J., Kudreņickis, I., Bērziņa, L., Lazdiņš, A., Bārdule, A., Butlers, A., Gancone, A., Pommere-Bramane, I., Zommere-Rotčenkova, K., Dansone, B., Dimbiere, A., Poutanene, M. (2022). Latvia's eighth national communication and fifth biennial report under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Prepared by the Latvian Environment Agency and Ministry of the Environmental Protection and Regional Development. – State Forest Service. (2022). Latvian Forest Sector in Facts and Figures 2022. – State Forest Service: "The State Forest Registry". https://gis.vmd.gov.lv/
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
3.2.2	**Primary feedstock shall not be sourced from forest areas where site productivity is low and, according to local definitions or norms, the areas are classified as low-productive or difficult to regenerate.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** In Latvia, there are several distinguishable forest types categorised based on e.g. species composition and site productivity. The assessment will focus on analysing whether there are low-productivity types and if those exist whether they are addressed in Latvian legislation and regulations. **Analysis** The first Latvian forest typology was developed in the early 1900s and has been revised several times since; the currently approved version was developed in the 1970s and recognises 23 forest site types. Latvian forest types are defined by the growing conditions and their characteristic species composition (Liepa et al. 2014). Overall, most of the Latvian forests consist of relatively productive forest site types, with only about 10% of the total forest area located on nutrient-poor soils (Ikauniece, 2017). Site indices (SI) are often used to describe a species-specific measure of forest productivity based on the height of a stand at a particular age; they were first developed as early as the 1800s (Kędziora et al. 2020). When using the site index, productivity is usually classified from I-V with best-productivity sites in class I and lowest-productivity sites in class V (or lower). Forest productivity can be defined in other ways too: a common benchmark for low production in the boreal region is <1 m^3 per ha per year (e.g. Hämäläinen et al. 2018, Hämäläinen et al. 2019). The definition is widely used in the region, e.g. in Finnish forestry to categorise land under forest management as productive forest land ('metsämaa': forest growth >1 m^3/ha/year), low-productive land ('kitumaa': forest growth 0.1–1 m^3/ha/year), and non-productive land ('joutomaa': forest growth <0.1 m^3/ha/year). However, a similar local definition for 'low-productivity forest' per se could not be found. In the past, a 'stand composition assessment scale' which was based on the assessment of stands according to types of forest growth conditions was used in Latvia to select the tree species for the regeneration. At least officially, such a division is no longer used (Liepa et al. 2014). Apart from in important or otherwise protected forest habitats, Latvian legislation or regulation does not set any specific requirements for the management of low-productivity forests or areas that are difficult to regenerate. Based on discussion with a local expert and the review of forest typology in Latvia, areas defined as 'forests' do not generally include low-productivity sites. The low-productivity sites generally fall under other categories: if there are conditions preventing trees from reaching five metres in height, the sites are not classified as forest.

Annex 1 Detailed findings for Supply Base Evaluation continued

3.2.2 continued *Findings continued*	**Enforcement and monitoring** The State Forest Service periodically controls how forest operations in harvesting areas are being or have been implemented according to existing legislation. **Risk classification and justification** Based on the evidence presented above, the risk for non-compliance with this indicator is concluded as 'low'.
Means of verification	– Consultation of a local expert – Literature on Latvian forest typology – Scientific literature – Applicable legislation
Evidence reviewed	– Hämäläinen, A, Strengbom, J, Ranius, T. (2019). Low-productivity boreal forests have high conservation value for lichens. J Appl Ecol. 2020; 57: 43– 54. https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.13509 – Hämäläinen, A., Strengbom, J., Ranius, T. (2018). Conservation value of low-productivity forests measured as the amount and diversity of dead wood and saproxylic beetles. Ecol Appl, 28: 1011-1019. https://doi.org/10.1002/eap.1705 – Ikauniece, S. (ed.) (2017). Protected Habitat Management Guidelines for Latvia: Volume 6 Forests. Nature Conservation Agency, Sigulda. – Kędziora, W., Tomusiak, R., Bore, T. (2020). Site index research: a literature review. Forest Research Papers 81: 91-98. DOI: 10.2478/frp-2020-0010 – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Liepa, I., Miezīte, O., Luguza, S., Šulcs, V., Straupe, I., Indriksons, A., Dreimanis, A., Saveļjevs, A., Drēska, A., Sarmulis, Z., Dubrovskis, D. (2014). Latvijas meža tipoloģija (Latvian forest typology). Latvijas Lauksaimniecības Universitāte, Meža Fakultāte.
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
3.2.3	**Primary feedstock shall not be sourced from forest areas in the Supply Base which, according to local definitions or norms, are classified as having combined attributes of high carbon stocks and high conservation value (HCV).**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The Latvian National Forest Inventory (NFI) hosted by LSFRI Silava includes the assessment of forest carbon stocks and also incorporates biodiversity monitoring from 2019 onwards. All legally defined forests and key species, habitats, ecosystems and nature conservation areas within them are generally well surveyed. Environmental policy guidelines set the objectives of the environmental policy which are subject to the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 and the Latvian National Development Plan 2021-2027.

3.2.3 continued
Findings continued

Analysis

The EU (e.g. RED II) considers high carbon stocks to be in wetlands, peatlands and forests (EU RED II, EU Glossary Item: "Land with high carbon stock"). In the context of forest ecosystems, mature and old-growth forests have the highest carbon stocks, and old-growth forests are also important for biodiversity (e.g. Molina-Valero et al. 2021, Ķēniņa et al. 2019, Nord-Larsen et al. 2019, Seedre et al. 2015, Luyssaert et al. 2008). The European Green Deal (European Commission, 2019) and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (European Commission, 2020) emphasise the need to protect the remaining primary and old-growth forests that store large carbon amounts.

Additionally, they address the need to increase the quantity, quality, and resilience of European forests overall. Wetlands and natural peatland ecosystems classified as non-forest mires are outside the scope of this indicator but mature (including secondary forests) and old-growth forests and wetland forests will be assessed.

Forest protection started in Latvia in the early 1900s and the protected area network grew throughout the century and in the early 2000s. The latest significant review took place before Latvia joined the EU in 2004. At that time, new and significant areas for forest habitat conservation were established to provide conservation of characteristic and significant habitats within the entire boreal biogeographical region to ensure the long-term existence of populations of typical and threatened species (Ikauniece, 2017).

Efforts to map the habitats of EU importance have been made since the beginning of the 21st century and in 2022 Latvia completed its mapping of these habitats which began in 2017 (Kurlavicius et al. 2004; VNR, 2022; Krūmiņa et al. 2019).

The data collected in the 'Nature Census' (Nature Conservation Agency: "Nature Census", Krūmiņa et al. 2019) is available in the nature data system 'Ozols' (Natural data management system "Ozols") and integrated with other government information systems e.g. State united geospatial information portal (Latvian Geospatial Information Portal). Since 2019, some data acquisition related to forest biodiversity has also been a part of the national forest inventory programme (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation Nr. 51). The Nature Conservation Agency is responsible for carrying out the EU habitat monitoring and other related projects (e.g. LIFE-IP LatViaNature) are being planned and implemented with a goal to enhance the state of the data and data management systems (Nature Conservation Agency: "Projects").

Biologically valuable forests in Latvia belong to eleven protected habitat types defined by the EU: 9010* Western Taiga, 9020* Fennoscandian hemiboreal natural old broad-leaved deciduous forests (Quercus, Tilia, Acer, Fraxinus or Ulmus) rich in epiphytes, 9050 Fennoscandian herb-rich forests with Picea abies, 9060 Coniferous forests on, or connected to, glaciofluvial eskers, 9080* Fennoscandian deciduous swamp woods, 9160 Sub-Atlantic and medio-European oak or oak-hornbeam forests of Carpinion betuli, 9180* Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines, 91D0 Bog woodland, 91E0* Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae), 91F0 Riparian mixed forests of Quercus robur, Ulmus laevis and Ulmus minor, Fraxinus excelsior or Fraxinus angustifolia, along the great rivers (Ulmenion minoris), and 91T0 Central European lichen Scots pine forests (Ikauniece, 2017).

There are virtually no intact forests in Latvia, meaning that all forests have been influenced by human action at some point in time (Ikauniece, 2017). The area of mature forest stands that are older than 100 years represents only 8% of all forests (NFI Cycle IV). The remaining relatively small areas of oldgrowth forests are usually under strict protection and included in the strict reserves or strict reserve zones of nature protection territories.

Wetland forests represent 20% of the Latvian forest area, of which 9% have a thin peat layer (<30 cm) and 11% have a thick peat layer (>30 cm) (NFI Cycle IV). Two EU-protected wetland forest types are found in Latvia: Fennoscandian deciduous swamp woods and bog woodlands. Bog woodlands are relatively common and swamp woods are also found throughout Latvia although rarely in large continuous areas (Ikauniece, 2017).

3.2.3 continued

Findings continued

However, there is a risk that some old-growth forests and wetland forest priority habitats remain without protection; when assessing indicator 2.1.1, specified risk for HCV category 1 was identified in relation to the state of identification of all key species, habitats, ecosystems, and HCVs pertaining to biodiversity under the HCV category 1 (see indicator 2.1.1 for in-depth analysis).

It should be noted – as the stakeholder consultation suggests – that forest harvesting in excessively moist areas in Latvia is limited by economic factors as the cost of harvesting is high and mostly just low-quality wood is produced. However, it must be acknowledged that during periods of high demand and prices for energy wood, logging is also carried out in such areas.

Representative samples of natural forest habitats and valuable ecosystems have been surveyed in those state forests which are identified and protected under the Habitats Directive and designated as Natura 2000 sites. The Nature Census completed in 2020 will significantly improve the degree of mapped nature values. Natura 2000 sites overlap with national protected areas and are protected on a national as well as an international level. Seminatural forest parcels with high biodiversity are identified as habitats of EU importance. Aggregations of Habitats of EU Importance are designated in protected territories – nature reserves, national parks, landscape protection areas, and biosphere reserves at the national level or as Natura 2000 sites at the EU level.

However, there are HCV areas and habitats of EU importance and EU-protected habitats that are outside protected areas particularly in privately owned forests. It should be noted that in Latvia, the conservation status of most habitats and species is not favourable and continues to decline and biodiversity considerations are not sufficiently integrated into sectoral policies (OECD, 2019). This does not necessarily concern the specific habitat types discussed in this indicator but it should be taken into account. Insufficient management plans in protected areas, as well as limited options to conserve biodiversity outside protected areas and promote mainstreaming into other sectors, are among the reasons why the status and trends of ecosystems and species are not improving. In 2021, environmental policy guidelines for 2021-2027 were published (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, 2021).

Moreover, harvesting is allowed in protected areas or zones which do not have a strict management restriction regime. Important habitats falling outside of strict protection may be used to source feedstock. In addition, not all bird nesting areas are identified.

Enforcement and monitoring

The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests while the Nature Conservation Agency enforces the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories and the Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes.

Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the concerned agencies.

Risk classification and justification

There is a risk that insufficiently mapped HCV areas remain and there are significant gaps in the information. The possibility that these areas overlap with areas with high carbon stocks such as mature secondary forests, cannot be ruled out. Moreover, harvesting can occur in important habitats and harvesting may pose a risk to threatened bird species through the destruction of nests as not all nesting areas are identified.

Thus there is a risk of a non-conformity with this requirement which is given the risk classification of specified. See also indicators 2.1.1-2.1.3 for more details.

Means of verification

- Applicable legislation
- Public reports and plans
- Public databases
- Websites of government agencies and ministries

3.2.3 continued
Evidence reviewed

- Cabinet Regulation No. 264 "General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories" (16.03.2010). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories
- Cabinet Regulation Nr. 51 "National forest monitoring rules" (18.01.2022). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/329305-nacionala-meza-monitoringa-noteikumi
- EU Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive)
- EU Glossary Item: "Land with high carbon stock". https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/glossary-item/land-high-carbon-stock_en
- EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED) II – DIRECTIVE (EU) 2018/ 2001 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL – of 11 December 2018 – on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (europa.eu)
- European Commission. (2019). The European Green Deal. Brussels, 11.12.2019.
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- Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. (2021). Vides politikas pamatnostādnes 2021-2027. Gadam (Environmental Policy Strategy 2021-2027).
- Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development: "Protection of Species and Habitats". https://www.varam.gov.lv/en/protection-species-and-habitats
- Molina-Valero, J. A., Camarero, J. J., Álvarez-González, J. G., Cerioni, M., Hevia, A., Sánchez-Salguero, R., Martin-Benito, D., Pérez-Cruzado, C. (2021). Mature forests hold maximum live biomass stocks. Forest Ecology and Management. 480. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2020.118635
- Natural data management system "Ozols" (http://ozols.daba.gov.lv/pub/Life/)
- Nature Conservation Agency: "Nature Census". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/projects/nature-census
- Nature Conservation Agency: "Projects". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/projects

3.2.3 continued *Evidence reviewed continued*	– Nord-Larsen, T., Vesterdal, L., Bentsen, N. S., Larsen, J. B. (2019). Ecosystem carbon stocks and their temporal resilience in a semi-natural beech-dominated forest. Forest Ecology and Management. 447: 67-76. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2019.05.038 – OECD. (2019). OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Latvia 2019. OECD Environmental Performance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/2cb03cdd-en – Seedre, M., Kopáček, J., Janda, P., Bače, R., Svoboda, M. (2015). Carbon pools in a montane old-growth Norway spruce ecosystem in the Bohemian Forest: Effects of stand age and elevation. Forest Ecology and Management. 346:106-113. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2015.02.034 – VNR (Voluntary National Review). (2022). Latvia's report to the United Nations on the implementation of sustainable development goals.
Risk rating	Low risk **Specified risk**
3.3.1	**Feedstock sourcing shall be in compliance with the principles of cascading use, high-quality stem wood shall not be used as feedstock if it is in substantial demand for long-lived products in the Supply Base.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The Latvian Law on Forests regulates the directing of forest management. The main Latvian law concerning energy is the Energy Law. **Analysis** The Latvian Law on Forests provides the main legislative framework for forestry in the country. The Law neither has any provision directly related to forest-based feedstock sourcing and biomass production nor does it restrict the use of wood and forest biomass for bioenergy purposes. Based on expert consultation, Latvian legislation does not restrict the use of wood for energy purposes in any way. In practice, mostly low-quality wood is used, but nothing prohibits the use of higher-quality wood. No detailed data about the quality of wood used for chipping was found. In the expert consultation, cases concerning the use of pulpwood for biomass in situations where the biomass price was better were brought up; wood particleboard production also utilises low-quality timber. Overall, the demand for energy wood is growing especially as gas and other energy sources from Russia are not available and costs for energy supplies are increasing (LSV, 2022). This has led to the reduction of the legal cutting diameter (defined in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation Nr. 935) which, according to our expert consultation, has been taken to court by environmental NGOs. The cutting diameters have changed for pine (Pinus sylvestris), spruce (Picea abies), and birch (Betula sp.): previously they depended on the productivity of the site but in the new legislation they are the same for both low- and high-productive sites. For example, the old cutting diameter for pine ranged from 27 to 39 cm, now it is 30 cm. However, it was pointed out to the stakeholder that only a very small proportion of harvesting is carried out based on the target diameter: for example, in the state forests, 0.4% of stands were harvested based on diameter in 2018-2022. Wood-based biomass (firewood, wood residues, woodchips, wood briquettes, wood pellets) makes up a significant proportion of the fuel used in energy production: 78.6% of the total consumption of renewables and accounting for 33% of the total energy source consumption (Central Statistical Bureau, 2022). Latvia's National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 (Cabinet of Ministers, 2020) 'is governed by' the EU Renewable Energy Directive. In relation to agriculture, land use and forestry, one element of the plan's target status quo in 2030 is the following: 'Agriculture and forestry contribute significantly to bioenergy without endangering food security and the CO2 removals and in compliance with the cascade principle'.

3.3.1 continued *Findings continued*	The stakeholder consultation suggests that the prices of timber and pulpwood have consistently been higher than the prices of biomass apart from a short period after Russia invaded Ukraine (wood prices are available for registered users at Latvian Wood portal (Latvian Wood: "Koksnes cenu datu bāze (Wood price database)")). Thus it can be argued that the markets encourage the use of wood according to the cascading principle. There is no evidence of large-scale utilisation of high-quality wood for biomass. **Enforcement and monitoring** The Cabinet of Ministers prepares the National Energy and Climate Plan. The Ministry of Economics governs the energy sector. **Risk classification and justification** Latvian legislation does not place any requirements directly related to forest-based feedstock sourcing and biomass production nor does it restrict the use of wood and forest biomass for bioenergy purposes apart from the concept of cascading use being recognised in the latest National Energy and Climate Plan. There are examples of producing biomass from wood that could be used for other purposes – however, such cases only happen on a small scale. Based on the evidence presented above, the risk of non-compliance with this requirement is classified to be low. Nevertheless, the developments both in biomass demand and price must be considered when reassessing this indicator in the future. In particular, the prices of pulp wood and wood chips have to be closely monitored. The market alone might not be enough to ensure the cascading use of wood in the coming years if market disturbances and societal disturbances similar to recent ones continue.
Means of verification	– Applicable legislation – Public reports and plans – Official statistics – News sources
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet of Ministers. (2020). National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/312423-par-latvijas-nacionalo-energetikas-un-klimata-planu-20212030-gadam – Cabinet Regulation Nr. 935 "Rules for felling trees in a forest" (18.12.2012). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/253760-noteikumi-par-koku-cirsanu-meza – Central Statistical Bureau: "In 2021 consumption of renewables 3 % higher than a year ago". https://stat.gov.lv/en/statistics-themes/business-sectors/energy/press-releases/8732-consumption-renewable-energy – Central Statistical Bureau. (2022). Latvijas Energobilance 2021. Gadā (Latvian energy balance 2021). – Energy Law (03.09.1998). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/49833 – Latvian Wood: "Koksnes cenu datu bāze (Wood price database)". https://latvianwood.lv/lv/cenu-datubaze/ – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – LSV. (2022). "Wood: a resource to replace gas?". https://eng.lsm.lv/article/economy/economy/wood-a-resource-to-replace-gas.a474103/
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

Principle 4 – Feedstock sourcing benefits people and communities

Criterion 4.1 – Decent working conditions are provided, and labour rights are safeguarded

Element	Description and analysis
4.1.1	**Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining shall be respected in the workplace.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining is a fundamental right in Latvia in all sectors of the economy. The risk assessment focuses on national legislation protecting rights in line with international laws. The Latvian Constitution, Article 107 stipulates the freedom of trade unions and the rights to collective labour agreements and striking. Latvia has signed and ratified the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work including Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise and Convention 98 Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining. National legislation addresses the objectives and requirements of the signed Conventions. The rules of ratified international law shall be applied if it conflicts with the national Labour Law (Section 12). Labour Law, Section 8 protects the right to unite in organisations for employees and employers. Affiliation to the organisation shall not lead to discrimination and it must not serve as the basis for not contracting or for dismissal of an employee. Employees have the right to be nominated trade union-linked authorised representatives to negotiate on social, economic and occupational rights and the interests of employees in the workplace (Section 10). The representative has the mandate to take part in the determination and improvement of remuneration provisions, the working environment, working conditions, and organisation of working time, as well as in protecting the safety and health of employees (Section 11). Labour Law stipulates collective agreements between an employer and an employee, trade union or authorised representatives of employees if the employees have not formed a trade union (Sections 17–27). Trade Union Law (2014) states that everyone has the right to establish a trade union to join or not to join a trade union (Section 4). Trade unions shall be independent of the state, local government and employer organisations (Section 6). The largest confederation of trade unions is the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS) which unites 18 different branch trade unions including the Forest and Wood Workers Trade Union of Latvia (Latvijas Mežas Arodbiedrība, LMNA). LMNA represents workers in forestry, harvesting, wood processing, and the pulp and paper industry. Especially among the major companies in wood processing, the share of employees being part of trade unions is high. Depending on the general or company-level collective agreements, employees may receive additional benefits from trade unions and have better means to agree on work-related arrangements with their employer. LMNA has signed a collective agreement with the State Forest Service in 2020. Evidence on other collective agreements was not available. Confederations of trade unions, government and the Latvian Employers' Confederation participate in the National Tripartite Co-operation Council. **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Labour Inspectorate is the institution overseeing various aspects of employment, discrimination in work dismissals, details of employment contracts, safe environments at work etc.

Annex 1 Detailed findings for Supply Base Evaluation continued

4.1.1 continued *Findings continued*	**Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the evidence reviewed, the risk for non-compliance with this indicator is concluded to be low.
Means of verification	– Existing legislation – Level of enforcement – Public information
Evidence reviewed	– Forest and Wood Workers Trade Union (LMNA): "Latvijas Meža nozares arodbiedrība noslēdz ģenerālvienošanos ar Valsts meža dienestu". https://lmna.lv/?p=1513 – Forest and Wood Workers Trade Union of Latvia: "Homepage". www.lmna.lv – Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS): "Homepage". https://arodbiedribas.lv/en – Human Rights Guide: "State Labour Inspectorate". https://www.cilvektiesibugids.lv/en/themes/organisations/state-institutions/state-labour-inspectorat – ILO: "NORMLEX Information System – Ratifications for Latvia". https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11200:0::NO:11200:P11200_COUNTRY_ID:102738 – Labour Law (20.06.2001). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/26019-labour-law – Law on Trade Unions (06.03.2014). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/265207-law-on-trade-unions – LBAS: "Par koplīgumiem meža nozarē – kā darba un privātās dzīves līdzsvara instrumentiem". https://arodbiedribas.lv/news/par-kopligumiem-meza-nozare-ka-darba-un-privatas-dzives-lidzsvara-instrumentiem/ – The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (15.02.1922). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57980-the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-latvia
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
4.1.2	**Forced or compulsory labour shall not be used.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** According to the Latvian Constitution (Article 106), forced labour is prohibited and Article 107 stipulates the right to remuneration at the level of the minimum wage along with paid leave. In 2006, Latvia ratified the ILO Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour C29 and in 1992 the Convention on Abolition of Forced Labour (C105). Latvia has also ratified the ILO 2014, P029 – Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention that specifies government responsibilities to build policies, resources and information to combat all forms of forced labour. It also addresses the measures to identify and protect the victims of forced labour.

4.1.2 continued *Findings continued*	Labour Law Section 14 on foreign workers in Latvia stipulates that regardless of the employment contract, the posted employee has to be provided with working conditions and employment provisions as laid down in the Latvian legislation, as well as in the collective agreements that are generally binding and that regulate e.g. work time, remuneration, leave, safety and health, equal treatment etc. Section 6 states that provisions of any contract which are contrary to collective agreements or erode the legal status of an employee shall not be valid. The Criminal Law (1999) Sections 146 on Violation of Labour Protection Provisions, 152 on Illegal deprivation of Liberty and 154.1 on Human Trafficking are applicable in the prevention of forced labour. According to the Global Slavery Index (GSI), Latvia ranked 24 out of the 50 European and Central Asian Countries with the risk for forced labour (least is worst) in 2018. According to the report, the legislative and administrative measures to prevent forced labour have improved since the earlier assessment in 2014. The risk of unpaid and forced work exists for workers working abroad without appropriate contracts. Companies operating in Latvia and employing personnel must register all employees with the State Revenue Service (SRS) even before starting the employment relationship. The SRS shall have the information on all payments made (including salaries). Forestry work is carried out mostly by local entrepreneurs with local workers or large national/international companies with Latvian workers. The additional workforce from Ukraine may be available in all sectors. **Enforcement and monitoring** The Ministry of Welfare is responsible for implementing conventions and taking measures to avoid forced or compulsory labour in the country. The Work Inspectorate is the agency enforcing the legislation. The cases of forced labour are rare and they have not been encountered in the forestry sector. Employers shall register all workers to State Revenue Service before the work begins, which makes employees and employers accountable for taxes and allows employees access to health insurance and services. Despite the obligation for registration, unregistered payments of wages occur contrary to regulations. Implementation of measures to decrease unregistered work has been a priority of the State Labour Inspectorate. It has increased information to local and foreign workers and also intensified co-operation related to monitoring the issue. In 2021, 877 unregistered employed persons were found. Of these, 480 persons were without an employment contract concluded in writing and without declaration to the SRS, 288 persons were with a written agreement employment contract but without declaration to SRS, and 109 persons were without a written employment contract but declared to the SRS. There is no sector-specific information available. Violations of work contracts and registration obligations were encountered in 47% of the companies inspected. **Risk conclusion and justification** The risk for forced labour in the forestry sector is low although there is some risk for unregistered work.
Means of verification	– Existing legislation – Level of enforcement – Public information – Local expertise

4.1.2 continued *Evidence reviewed*	– Antislavery in Domestic Legislation: Latvia". https://antislaverylaw.ac.uk/country/latvia/ – ILO: "NORMLEX Information System – Ratifications for Latvia". https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11200:0::NO:11200:P11200_COUNTRY_ID:102738 – Labour Law (20.06.2001). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/26019-labour-law – Ministry of Welfare: "Information on working conditions and terms of employment". https://www.lm.gov.lv/en/information-working-conditions-and-terms-employment?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F – State Employment Agency: "Employment of foreigners". https://www.nva.gov.lv/en/employment-foreigners?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F – State Employment Agency: "Homepage". https://www.nva.gov.lv/en – State Labour Inspectorate. (2021). Activity report 2020. https://www.vdi.gov.lv/lv/media/1970/download?attachment – State Labour Inspectorate. (2021). Annual report 2021. https://www.vdi.gov.lv/lv/media/2193/download?attachment – State Labour Inspectorate: "Homepage". https://www.vdi.gov.lv/lv – The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (15.02.1922). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57980-the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-latvia – Walk Free: "Global Slavery Index". https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/2018/data/maps/#prevalence
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
4.1.3	**Child labour shall not be used.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** The Labour Law contains specific requirements that the employer must comply with if employing persons under 18. In general, the Labour Law prohibits permanently employing children under 15 years of age. In exceptional cases, children from 13 years of age may work with their guardian's consent on selected jobs. Adolescents between the ages of 15 to 18 may work following the restrictions stipulated in the Labour Law and respecting the Cabinet Ministers' list of prohibited works that increase the risk to the safety, health or development of a child. Employees under 18 years of age shall undergo annual medical examinations. Labour Law Section 132 specifies that the allowed working time for persons under 18 years of age is 7 hours a day and 35 hours a week. Work may not interfere with the education of the child. For forestry work, an employee shall have a licence (Nodarbinātā apliecība) issued by a contractor to persons working in the forest (this document must be present at the site) and worker qualification documents for the use of different machinery; this also decreases the risk of child labour.

Annex 1 Detailed findings for Supply Base Evaluation continued

4.1.3 continued *Findings continued*	**Enforcement and monitoring** The Labour Inspection Board and five regional Labour Inspectorates (RVDI) are responsible for the enforcement of the national and related international legislation on child labour. RVDIs conduct checks on workplaces and address complaints or appeals received. The Ministry of Welfare is responsible for implementing this convention and taking all measures to protect the rights of children. Child labour is not typically used in forestry and the annual reports of the State Labour Inspection do not report on the issue. **Risk conclusion and justification** The risk of using child labour in forestry work is low.
Means of verification	– Existing legislation – Level of enforcement – Public information – Monitoring records
Evidence reviewed	– ILO: "NORMLEX Information System – Ratifications for Latvia". https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11200:0::NO:11200:P11200_COUNTRY_ID:102738 – Labour Law (20.06.2001). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/26019-labour-law – Ministry of Welfare: "Information on working conditions and terms of employment". https://www.lm.gov.lv/en/information-working-conditions-and-terms-employment?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F – The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (15.02.1922). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57980-the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-latvia – UN Human Rights Council: "OHCHR Dashboard". https://indicators.ohchr.org/
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
4.1.4	**Workers shall not be discriminated in hiring, remuneration, access to training, promotion, termination or retirement.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** In Latvia, the prohibition of discrimination is governed by various legislative acts: the Constitution, Labour Law, Criminal Law, Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination of Natural Persons-Economic Operators, and Law on Social Security all refer to non-discrimination under their discipline. Of International laws, Latvia has ratified in 1992 the ILO Convention 111 on Discrimination and Convention 100 on Equal Remuneration and it is a signatory to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950).

4.1.4 continued
Findings continued

According to the European Commission Country report on non-discrimination (EU Directives 2000/43 and 2000/78), the Latvian Constitution provides the principles of legal equality and non-discrimination but it does not specify the grounds on which discrimination is prohibited. Due to the supremacy of the Constitution, discrimination is outlawed in the public sector but in the private sector its enforcement is complicated if there are no specific implementing laws. The same applies to international treaties which only bind public bodies in Latvia.

The EU Country Report (2021) on non-discrimination in Latvia provides a comprehensive analysis of the state of the legal framework relevant to counteracting discrimination. Latvia has ratified most of the relevant international conventions against discrimination promulgated by the EU, UN or ILO and it is a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights. The Constitution (Article 91) provides for the principles of legal equality and non-discrimination but does not expressly state the grounds on which discrimination is prohibited. In general, the anti-discrimination legislation is fragmented. Different laws address different grounds for discrimination (e.g. gender, ethnicity, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, political opinion, and education). The constitution binds the public sector but due to the absence of specific tools implementing law enforcement the prohibition is complicated in the private sector.

However, the Labour Law, with its amendments of 2006, sets the most comprehensive prohibition for discrimination for both public and private sectors. The Labour Law provides protection against all forms of discrimination (direct and indirect, harassment, instructions to discriminate and victimisation). Access to vocational guidance and training, as well as issues of education in both the public and private sectors, are also covered by the Labour Law. Section 12 of the Labour Law states that provisions of an international agreement ratified by the country shall be applied if they differ from those contained in the Labour Law. However, the interpretation of non-discrimination in Latvian legislation is not necessarily fully in compliance with those applied in the international Directives.

The Office of the Ombudsperson is an independent state institution appointed by and accountable to the Parliament. The Ombudsman investigates individual complaints on the grounds of gender, age, racial or ethnic origin, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, language, and social status and submits recommendations and proposals to the Parliament and governmental institutions on the priorities of gender equality policy which include recommendations on amendments to relevant legislation. Latvian legislation covers all aspects of equal opportunities.

Enforcement and monitoring

There are several legal avenues for addressing cases of discrimination in Latvia:

- Courts of general jurisdiction
- The Constitutional Court – legislation that is allegedly discriminatory on the grounds of age has twice been challenged in it
- Submitting a complaint to the same public institution that has treated the person differently or to a higher institution
- The State Labour Inspectorate if discrimination has occurred within the framework of a labour relationship – the inspectorate can impose a fine on the grounds of gender, age or ethnicity
- The Ombudsman's Office, which is empowered to pursue amicable settlements can file a complaint in an administrative court if it is in the public interest or it can bring a case to the civil court if the issue concerns a violation of equal treatment.

The normal avenue for redress would be a court of general jurisdiction. The case should be filed to the court within a three-month time limit in employment cases which may be a barrier for victims of discrimination.

Risk conclusion and justification

Based on the above analysis, the risk class is assessed to be low for this indicator.

4.1.4 continued *Means of verification*	– Existing legislation – Level of enforcement – Public information – EU report
Evidence reviewed	– Council of Europe. (1950). European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf – European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). (2018). ECRI – Country monitoring in Latvia. https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/latvia – European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, Kamenska, A. (2019). Country report: non-discrimination: Latvia 2019. Publications Office 2019. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/790673 – ILO: "NORMLEX Information System – Ratifications for Latvia". https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11200:0::NO:11200:P11200_COUNTRY_ID:102738 – Labour Law (20.06.2001). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/26019-labour-law – Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination of Natural Persons-Economic Operators (29.11.2012). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/253547-law-on-the-prohibition-of-discrimination-of-natural-persons--participants-to-a-legal-transaction – The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (15.02.1922). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57980-the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-latvia – UN General Assembly. (1965). International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Treaty Series, vol. 660. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial – UN General Assembly. (1966). International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Treaty Series, vol. 999. https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-human-rights-work/monitoring-and-promoting-un-treaties/international-covenant-civil-and – UN General Assembly. (1966). International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Treaty Series, vol. 993. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

4.1.5	**Wages paid to workers shall meet or exceed the legal minimum wage or where there is no statutory minimum wage, industry norms shall be met or exceeded.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** Latvia has set the minimum wage that is for normal working hours as EUR 620 per month (from 1 January 2023). The minimum wage is binding for all employers. The Cabinet of Ministers sets further regulations on the implementation of the rules on minimum wage e.g. on an hourly basis. Labour Law Section 61 provides that remuneration may not be less than the minimum wage determined by the State. Remuneration agreed on in collective agreements must be at the level of or above the level of minimum wage. All employees must have a written and signed work contract that defines the terms for remuneration. Contracts that have terms that erode the workers' rights under the level of provisions of Labour Law and other relevant laws and regulations are invalid. A signed employment contract is also the basis for obligatory social security payments. Employers must register all employees with the State Revenue Service (SRS) which entitles them to the payment of statutory social fees and taxes. In addition to signed contracts, employees working in the forestry sector companies are obliged to have an Employee Licence / Card (Nodarbinātā apliecība) issued by the contractor. The Employee license / card must be present at a site/plot in the forest. However, unregistered employment is common in Latvia. The State Labour Inspectorate reported in 2021 that in the spot checks carried out in 2020, 47% showed gaps in labour contracting procedures: persons with whom written employment contracts were not concluded and/or whose employer had not declared them to the State Revenue Service (SRS) as employees were found. The overall level has remained the same in the past years. Official statistics from the State Labour Inspectorate do not provide information on cases of illegal employment in the forestry sector. The statistics are provided for the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors combined. In those sectors combined the rate of unregistered or not formally contracted employees was 1.54 per 1,000 workers in 2020. It is estimated that their share is higher in fisheries and lower in forestry. There is no available information on cases where non-EU foreign workers are working in the forest or wood processing sector without a residence permit and subsequently without a contract and social security insurance. The shadow economy continues to be a problem in Latvia. According to the Shadow Economy Index of the Stockholm School of Economics, the shadow economy in Latvia grew by 1.1%, reaching 26.6% of the national gross domestic product in 2021. The most important component of the shadow economy in 2021 was envelope wages. In Latvia, the incomes hidden from the state increased slightly up to 23.8% of the total average wages. The practice of the shadow economy is most common in the construction sector. There is no report of such practices in the forestry sector. The median wages in Latvia have increased between 2017 to 2021 from EUR 516 to EUR 740 per month. The minimum wage set by the state has increased at the same time from EUR 380 to EUR 620. In the forestry sector, wages are well above the minimum level. The average salary for a chain saw operator is about EUR 800–1,500 per month. For skilled workers operating forwarders, the monthly wage is about EUR 2,000–3,500 and EUR 2,800–4,000 for harvesting machine operators. The monthly payments for unregistered workers may be half of the level described above.

4.1.5 continued *Findings continued*	Labour Law provisions for paying wages at or above the minimum level are explicit and binding on all employers. Labour Law Chapter 5-7 outlines the scope aspects agreed upon in collective agreements if the employer and employees are parties directly (or through their associations) to the agreement. **Enforcement and monitoring** The Labour Inspectorate has, among others, the task of controlling how employers and employees mutually fulfil the obligations specified in employment contracts and collective labour agreements. It carries out checks at workplaces and follows up on corrective actions. It is evident that regular inspections improve the situation and employees and employers pay more attention to work contracts and registration. The State Labour Inspectorate reports that the priorities in 2020 were, among others, the implementation of the policy of reducing unregistered employment by conducting surveys in companies whose economic activity has increased the risk of unregistered employment. Workers may file an appeal to the Labour Inspectorate if the issue cannot be solved directly with the employer with or without the support of the trade union. **Risk conclusion and justification** Information on the minimum wage is available for employees and employers and there are adequate procedures (contracts and enforcement) to foresee that remuneration is at least at the minimum level. Based on the above analysis, the risk class for this indicator is assessed as low.
Means of verification	– Existing legislation – Level of enforcement – Public information
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet Regulation No. 563 "Procedures for the Determination and Review of the Minimum Monthly Salary" (18.08.2016). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/284262 – Cabinet Regulation No. 656 "Regulations Regarding Amount of the Minimum Monthly Wage within the Framework of Normal Working Time and Calculation of the Minimum Hourly Wage Rate" (24.11.2015). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/278067-noteikumi-par-minimalas-menesa-darba-algas-apmeru-normala-darba-laika-ietvaros-un-minimalas-stundas-tarifa-likmes-aprekinasanu – Cabinet Regulation No. 665 "Minimum Monthly Salary and the Minimum Hourly Wage Rate" (27.08.2013). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/259405-noteikumi-par-minimalo-menesa-darba-algu-un-minimalo-stundas-tarifa-likmi – Central Statistical Bureau: "Statistics Portal". https://stat.gov.lv/en – Labour Law (20.06.2001). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/26019-labour-law – Ministry of Welfare: "Minimum monthly wage". https://www.lm.gov.lv/en/minimum-monthly-wage – State Labour Inspectorate. (2021). Annual report 2021. https://www.vdi.gov.lv/lv/media/2193/download?attachment – Stockholm School of Economics, SSE Riga: "Shadow Economy Index for the Baltic Countries". https://www.sseriga.edu/shadow-economy-index-baltic-countries
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

4.1.6	**Working hours shall comply with legal requirements.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** Labour Law Sections 130–137 define regular working time, its recording and the restrictions on working hours for children. Sections 141–144 stipulate rest times. The Labour Law provides that regular working time is eight hours a day and 40 hours a week. The daily working time may be extended by one hour if work time on other weekdays is shorter. The work week is five days but with a local agreement, it can be extended to six days if the nature of the work requires it. Daily rest time is 12 consecutive hours and weekly rest is 42 consecutive hours. An agreement on aggregated working time is possible with a maximum of 56 hours a week. In such a case, the average working hours in the accounting period may not exceed the regular working time. Daily rest time shall be 12 hours a day on average and 35 hours a week on average. Overtime work shall be agreed on in writing by the employer and employee. If overtime work continues for more than six consecutive days, the employer needs a permit from the State Labour Inspectorate for further overtime work. Overtime work may not exceed eight hours on average within seven days. Persons under 18 years of age may not work overtime. The employer must keep accurate accounts for each employee of total hours worked and separately for overtime hours, night work, weekly rest time, public holidays and furlough time. Employees have the right to verify the accounts of working time. Employees performing overtime work are entitled to supplementary payments agreed on in the Collective Agreements of paid time off. The amount of the supplement specified in Paragraph one of this Section shall be determined by a collective agreement or an employment contract. Labour Law Section 145 stipulates breaks during the working day and Section 149 on annual paid leave. **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Labour Inspectorate enforces the Labour Law. Employers are obliged to follow the working hours of each employee. **Risk conclusion and justification** The legislation sets comprehensive requirements for working time and its monitoring. Employers must record working and rest times and the records are available for employees on request. Enforcement is in place through the regional offices of the Labour Inspectorate. Based on the available information there is a low risk of illegal working times in forestry work.
Means of verification	– Legislation – Enforcement – Public information
Evidence reviewed	– Labour Law (20.06.2001). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/26019-labour-law – State Labour Inspectorate Law (19.06.2008). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/177910-state-labour-inspectorate-law
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

4.1.7	**Workers shall have access to health care provisions, sickness benefits, retirement benefits, invalidity benefits, death benefits, and workers' compensation.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** The State Social Insurance Law prescribes the general principles of social insurance as well as governing its financial and organisational structure. The Law covers, among others, the following insurances: unemployment insurance, occupational accident insurance (also covers occupational diseases) and health insurance. The Law determines the groups of persons who must make social insurance contributions (compulsory for employees and self-employed persons) and persons who can join the social insurance scheme voluntarily. Among others, all employees who have attained 15 years of age and are employed by an employer shall have mandatory social insurance covering all types of social insurance. Each type of insurance has its budget financed by statutory fees and state budget and/or other sources. Private companies also provide health insurance and several employers purchase them for their employees. Employers and employees shall be registered with the State Revenue Service which is a precondition for the benefits of employment-related insurance. In the case of invalidity benefits or other injury-related compensation, the State Social Insurance Agency (SSIA) registers the accidents and pays possible compensations. It can also finance measures to prevent occupational threats to health and safety. Every person residing legally in Latvia has the right to medical care paid from the State budget. Sickness benefits are paid to a worker unable to report to work for recognised reasons e.g. sickness or injury, medical or preventive care or care for sick children under 14 years. Longer sick leave for incapacity for work can be paid first up to 26 weeks and it is extendable to 52 weeks on the recommendation of the State Medical Commission for Assessment of Health Condition and Working Ability. The employer pays the first 10 days of sick leave and the State Social Insurance Agency pays the subsequent days. Employers pay 75–80% of the average salary. **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Labour Inspectorate enforces the statutory requirements. Health services are provided by the public health care supported by the Social Insurance Agency. **Risk conclusion and justification** The legislation ensures statutory health services and sickness benefits. The risk of failing with these provisions in forestry work is low.
Means of verification	– Legislation – Public information – Analytical report

4.1.7 continued *Evidence reviewed*	– European Agency for Safety and Health at Work: "Latvia". https://osha.europa.eu/en/about-eu-osha/national-focal-points/latvia – European Commission: "Latvia – Compensation in case of accidents at work or occupational diseases". https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1117&langId=en&intPageId=4637 – Iftikhar A., Mir, A. (2021). Decent Work Check 2021 – Latvia. WageIndicator.org https://wageindicator.org/documents/decentworkcheck/europe/latvia-english.pdf – Law on Social Services and Social Assistance (31.10.2002). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/68488-law-on-social-services-and-social-assistance – Law on State Social Insurance (01.10.1997). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/45466-on-state-social-insurance – Ministry of Welfare: "Description of the situation". https://www.lm.gov.lv/en/description-situation-1 – State Revenue Service: "Mandatory State Social Insurance Contributions". https://www.vid.gov.lv/en/mandatory-state-social-insurance-contributions
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
4.1.8	**Training shall be provided for all workers to allow them to implement the conditions set out in all elements of the SBP Standards relevant to their responsibilities.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** The Labour Law requires that employers provide training to workers in safe and healthy working practices. The educational system in Latvia provides a broad range of degreelevel education, training and scientific knowledge for the forestry sector. State forest enterprises annually analyse the training and qualification demand and prepare an annual training plan for its specialists and workers. The plan shall consider the employees' needs and necessary qualification requirements related to their duties and responsibilities. In addition, according to the health and safety legislation, every new employee shall be acquainted with the safety instructions and updated annually in skills on safety and health requirements through attending special courses or instructions. This must be proved by corresponding documents and training records. Many forest cuttings and other forest activities in the state and private forests are performed by contractors who must hold the necessary qualifications and corresponding documents. When state forest enterprises organise a tender they ask contractors for the documents which prove their qualifications and other skills needed for the job. The order on forest work safety requires that every forest worker must have the necessary qualifications and corresponding documents. The state forest enterprises and contractors are periodically controlled by the State Labour Inspection, State Forest Service, authorities of fire protection and other controlling institutions to check that all workers have the necessary qualifications skills, corresponding documents, and other necessary skills. It is the prevailing practice to include in the agreement with contractors the requirements to have the necessary qualification. Workers shall carry a licence (Nodarbinātā apliecība) issued by a contractor and relevant worker qualification documents e.g. for the use of a trimmer, chainsaw, tractor and self-propelled forest machinery driving licence.

4.1.8 continued *Findings continued*	There are 13 vocational schools in Latvia providing education in forestry and forest management. Technical school Ogres Tehnikums runs a four-year curriculum for forestry technicians and shorter programmes for chainsaw operators and other professionals in forestry. Mechanised forest work requires trained workers to operate the machinery and to consider environmental aspects in forestry work. The availability of trained workers with vocational degrees in forest management and university graduates specialising in forest management and environmental protection is satisfactory. **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Labour Inspectorate monitors with spot checks the capacity-building and training in work health and safety-related aspects. The State Forest Service spot checks forestry operations also in the private sector. Voluntary certification (FSC or PEFC) would require training on all relevant aspects of forest management standard requirements. **Risk conclusion and justification** The Latvian legislation requires up-to-date training on health and safety and the assigned working tasks. The availability of competent employees in forestry is satisfactory. For this reason, the risk is classified as low.
Means of verification	– Existing legislation – Level of enforcement – Public information
Evidence reviewed	– Labour Law (20.06.2001). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/26019-labour-law – Latvijas Lauku Konsultaciju Un Izglitibas Centrs: "Apmācības". http://new.llkc.lv/lv/nozares/mezsaimnieciba-apmacibas/apmacibas – PEFC: "PEFC Latvia". https://pefc.org/discover-pefc/our-pefc-members/national-members/pefc-latvia – Preferred by Nature: "NEPCon interim standard for Latvia". https://preferredbynature.org/library/standard/nepcon-interim-standard-latvia – State Forest Service. (2022). Latvian Forest Sector in Facts and Figures 2022. – State Labour Inspectorate Law (19.06.2008). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/177910-state-labour-inspectorate-law – Technical school Ogres Tehnikums: "Maksas izglītība". https://ovt.lv/maksas-izglitiba/ – Technical school Ogres Tehnikums: "Mežsaimniecības tehniķis". https://ovt.lv/program/mezsaimniecibas-tehnikis/
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

4.1.9	**Mechanisms shall be in place for resolving grievances and disputes in the workplace.**
Findings	**Scale of Assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** Labour rights-related conflicts are defined as work-related disputes that involve an employer and one employee or groups of employees. Grievances and disputes, including those relating to tenure and use rights, forest management practices and work conditions are regulated by e.g. the Constitution of Latvia (Satversme) and Labour Law. Land restitution after the regaining of independence in Latvia is still ongoing. The property areas are recorded in land Cadastre. Any conflict in tenure rights can be brought to the State Land Service for clarification or to the court. In work-related disputes, it is the prevailing practice to include additional clarification statements in the working contract concerning dispute resolutions. Labour Law Sections 25–27 stipulate the procedures to resolve disputes related to the implementation of the collective agreement at a workplace. A conciliation commission represented by the parties of a collective agreement shall settle that type of dispute. In grievances related to discrimination, the employer must prove that differential treatment of an employee is based on objective circumstances and not on any characteristics that may be a ground for illegal discrimination (Labour Law Section 29). Labour Law Section 32 outlines that individual disputes regarding rights between employees and employers should first be settled within a mutual undertaking. The trusted employee representative at the workplace also represents the trade union and can be involved in finding a solution to a dispute with the support of the trade union. If an agreement is not reached, either party can take the case to court. Employee and employer organisations in Latvia are well organised and there are established procedures to implement labour agreements in the employer organisations that are part of the agreements. Through trade union representatives at the workplace, employees have access to support in grievance situations. In the forestry sector, the main trade union is the Forest Sphere Trade Union of Latvia (LMNA) trade union which is a member of the umbrella organisation of the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS). **Enforcement and monitoring** The rights of employees and employers are provided in Labour Law and in case of discrimination in other horizontal laws as well. Disputes where there is a doubt of breaching a law can be reported to the State Labour Inspectorate. Trade union representatives support employees in grievance processes and if a case remains unsolved it can be brought to court. There are established operational procedures to address disputes and grievances. **Risk conclusion and justification** The risk of failing to conform to this indicator in forestry work is low.
Means of verification	– Existing legislation – Level of enforcement – Best Management Practices

4.1.9 continued *Evidence reviewed*	– Labour Law (20.06.2001). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/26019-labour-law – Law on Land Ownership Right of the State and Local Governments and Corroboration Thereof in the Land Register (29.03.1995). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/34595-on-land-ownership-rights-of-the-state-and-local-governments-and-corroboration-thereof-in-the-land-registers – Law on Trade Unions (06.03.2014). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/265207-law-on-trade-unions – State Audit Office report: Is the implementation of the land reform expected to be completed shortly; https://www.lrvk.gov.lv/en/getrevisionfile/29541-ZgXyGu-VeTwREhtCB9igx1sg8hGQ9cMV.pdf – State Immovable Property Cadastre Law (01.12.2005). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/124247-state-immovable-property-cadastre-law – The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (15.02.1922). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57980-the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-latvia
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
4.1.10	**Safeguards shall be put in place to protect the health and safety of workers by developing, communicating and implementing policies and procedures.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** Latvia has ratified the ILO Conventions on Occupational Health (C155) and Labour Inspection (C081). However, it has not ratified Conventions C102 on Social Security, C121 on Employment Injury Benefits and C130 on Medical Care and Sickness Benefits. The Ministry of Welfare (Labour Department) and the State Labour Inspectorate are the main agencies in enhancing, supervising and controlling occupational health and safety (OHS) in Latvia. Close cooperation with the employer and employee organisations is essential for feasible and efficient improvements in the sector. The Tripartite Co-operation Sub-Council for Labour Affairs (TCSLA) discusses the issues of both labour legal relations and labour protection. The Sub-Council comprises representatives of the Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Justice, State Labour Inspectorate, Latvian Free Trade Union Confederation (LFTUC) and Latvian Employers' Confederation (LEC). The legal framework of the occupational safety and health protection system is set up by the Labour Protection Law (2001). The Labour Protection Law transposes the requirements and principles of the EU Framework Directive on safety and health at work. The Labour Protection Law provides the legal framework for the occupational health and safety system (OHS) in Latvia. This includes the rights and obligations of an employer and employee in creating and ensuring a safe working environment. The Law also establishes principles of an occupational health and safety system in organisations, sets the procedure to challenge proceedings, and the liability for violation of the occupational health and safety requirements. Implementation of Occupational Health and safety legislation is monitored and controlled by the State Labour Inspectorate. The State Labour Inspectorate collects data on work-related accidents and regularly monitors and reports occupational health and safety compliance statistics for companies in different sectors of the economy.

4.1.10 continued
Findings continued

The challenge is to ensure the effective operation of the OHS system both at the national and especially enterprise level. In state forestry, the State Forest Enterprise LVM applies strict safety measures. The employer is the chief subject responsible for meeting the labour protection requirements in the enterprise. Employers shall perform a risk assessment of the work environment, plan mitigation measures, and carry out internal monitoring, establish the organisational structure of labour protection and consult with employees to engage them in the improvement of labour protection. Additional responsibilities include, among others, provision of first aid, secured investigation of accidents at work and their registration as appropriate.

Employers shall also provide instructions and training on labour protection and ensure compulsory health control of employees. The employer organises the work of an OHS specialist or the internal OHS structural unit. Employees shall select a trusted representative in labour protection issues who will co-operate with the enterprise OHS specialist to improve OHS. Trusted representatives have access to OHS-related information and are entitled to express a grounded opinion of employees freely and to inform the State Labour Inspectorate on OHS-related issues.

Employees shall obey safety rules and recommendations and wear proper protective equipment. The employer shall provide collective measures for a safe work environment and personal protective equipment. They shall also inform the employer and other relevant parties of all accidents or risks of accidents. Employees must also attend compulsory health checks.

According to the State Labour Inspectorate data, the wood processing industry ranks among the top industries with accidents at the workplace. The highest accident rate was in the transport and construction businesses. The accident rate in forestry and wood procurement is significantly lower. The State Labour Inspectorate reported in 2021 three cases of injury related to forestry operations and six to seven cases of injury related to timber transportation and processing. One lethal accident occurred related to either professional logging or tree felling in a household. Forest Sector Planning Document (2015–2020) reported that about 54,000 workers are employed directly in the forest/forestry sector. Workers are increasingly well informed by employers and aware of occupational health and safety issues.

The Stakeholder consultations carried out during the previous SBP assessment of the regional risks in Latvia in 2016 discussed widely the work safety issues. Due to the increase in the accident rate in the past ten years, stakeholders brought up the following arguments to support the low-risk estimate for this SBP indicator:

- Increasing mechanisation of harvesting works i.e. the majority (up to 80%) of harvesting works are carried out using forestry machinery.
- There is a regulatory framework in place and strong enforcing mechanisms established with regular inspection and controls at the workplace.
- Information on a variety of labour protection issues in the forestry sector has improved. Progress in raising awareness of occupational health and safety issues.
- Rapidly developing trade and professional education.

The same arguments apply today.

Enforcement and monitoring

The State Labour Inspectorate enforces the Labour Protection Law. Typical failures to comply with labour protection rules in the industry were failures to carry out a risk assessment, failure to train employees on work safety and failures in compulsory health checks. In addition, in forestry, employers need to document regular equipment maintenance.

4.1.10 continued *Findings continued*	Several agencies may carry out inspections of workplaces e.g. the State Sanitary Inspectorate and State Revenue Service (SRS) do joint spot-checks for combating illegal employment and exchange of information. Commercial entities operating in the forestry sector, working in PEFC/FSC FM/COC certified forest operations as subcontractors, are monitored both by the forest managers and accredited FSC certification bodies. **Risk conclusion and justification** The legislation sets undisputable provisions for employers to address work-related health and safety risks and to protect employees from any occupational injuries or diseases. Inspection measures and reporting obligations on accidents are in place. In voluntary certification, the annual audits also monitor the issue in detail. Although forestry is a high-risk sector for work-related accidents and injuries, it has adopted satisfactory procedures to mitigate them. Mechanisation also increases work safety if safety instructions are followed. The risk for unsafe working methods may be higher with self-employed chain-saw operators due to a lack of supervision. The share of fibre procured from such operations remains low. The risk of failing to supply fibre from forestry operations where safety measures are not taken properly into account is low.
Means of verification	– Existing legislation – Level of enforcement – Monitoring records – Policy documents
Evidence reviewed	– Cabinet Regulation No. 372 "Occupational Safety & Health Requirements for the Use of Personal Protective Equipment" (20.08.2002). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/65619-labour-protection-requirements-when-using-personal-protective-equipment – Cabinet Regulation No. 950 "Regarding the Use of Plant Protection Products" (13.12.2011). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/241853-regulations-regarding-the-use-of-plant-protection-products – European Agency for Safety and Health at Work: "Latvia". https://osha.europa.eu/en/about-eu-osha/national-focal-points/latvia – Eurostat: Fatal Accidents at work by NACE Rev. 2 activity – Forestry and Logging (EUROSTAT, HSW_N2_02, 10/03/2023): https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hsw_n2_02/default/line?lang=en – Eurostat: Non-fatal Accidents at work by NACE Rev. 2 activity – Forestry and Logging (EUROSTAT, HSW_N2_01, 01/03/2023): https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hsw_n2_01/default/table?lang=en – Iftikhar A., Mir, A. (2021). Decent Work Check 2021 – Latvia. WageIndicator.org https://wageindicator.org/documents/decentworkcheck/europe/latvia-english.pdf – ILO C081: Labour Inspection Convention. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/ – ILO C102: Social Security, Minimum Standards Convention. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/ – ILO C121: Employment Injury Benefits Convention. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/

4.1.10 continued *Evidence reviewed continued*	– ILO C130: Medical Care and Sickness Benefits Convention. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/ – ILO C155: Occupational Safety and Health Convention. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/ – Labour Law (20.06.2001). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/26019-labour-law – Labour Protection Law (20.06.2001). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/26020-labour-protection-law – State Labour Inspectorate. (2021). Annual report 2021. https://www.vdi.gov.lv/lv/media/2193/download?attachment – State Labour Inspectorate: "Accident map". https://www.vdi.gov.lv/lv/nelaimes-gadijumu-karte#nelaimes-gadijumu-piemeri-mezizstrade – The State Labour Inspectorate: "Accidents at work in 2021" (operational data until 31.12.2021). https://www.vdi.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/nelaimes-gadijumi-darba-2021-gada-operativie-dati-lidz-31122021 – Vanadzins, I., Martinsone, Z., Lakisa, S., Reste, J., Gravele, M., Bake, M. A., Sprudza, D., Martinsone, I., Eglite, M., Kanejeva, S., Logina, R., Libora, I., Kovalova, N., Mileiko, M., Reinsons, J., Galahina, A. (2013). Work conditions and risks in Latvia 2012-1013. 10.13140/2.1.2189.3761.
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

Criterion 4.2 – Feedstock sourcing benefits communities

Element	Description and analysis
4.2.1	**Negative social and community impacts shall be identified and avoided.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** Forestry has multiple impacts on local communities. Employment and incomes typically have positive impacts whereas conflicts may arise in land use, access to forest resources, nature or water protection. Preservation of cultural landscapes may also raise debate. Spatial land use planning is usually based on the common understanding of the desired objectives in land use. Forest land is allocated for forestry or other uses of forests including protection. Latvian legislation on land use planning sets only the minimum requirements for public engagement. The Cabinet of Ministers has issued complementing regulations but, in general, legislation requires only public display of planning documentation and a public hearing. Environmental impact assessments (EIAs) are required for projects with potential adverse impacts on the environment and special procedures apply if the activities may have an impact on Natura 2000 areas. Road construction and reconstruction of drainage systems also require an EIA. Forestry operations on land allocated to forestry without any protection areas do not require an EIA.

4.2.1 continued *Findings continued*	Regarding forestry operations in specific areas, national nature conservation organisations are active in dialogue if there are important environmental values at stake. Recently also, local organisations have become more active in debating local land use. In Latvia, the responsibility of land-use planning is delegated to municipalities that draft spatial land-use plans. The planning process includes stakeholder consultations, and the resulting plan allocates land areas for urban development, infrastructure, forestry and agriculture. The plan also recognises protected areas and potential safeguards around them. If the land is allocated for forestry, the Law on Forests applies and the consultative elements in forest management planning are limited. The purpose of the Law on Forest is to promote economically, ecologically and socially sustainable management and use of the forest by ensuring equal rights, inviolability of the ownership rights, and independence of economic activity of all owners or lawful possessors of the forest and determining equal obligations. The law provides for the right to access the public forests (owned by the state and local government) in Section 5. Private forest owners may restrict access if it is shown on the property. Sections 6 and 16 define the activities not authorized and allowed activities for a person accessing a forest. Section 31 provides public participation in the preparation of the State Forest management plan including the scope of forestry works and the arrangement thereof. Apart from land use planning and forest management planning in state forests there are no statutory mechanisms for public engagement in forestry. However, forest owners must inform the State Forest Service of any planned harvesting operation which provides an opportunity for the authority to react if the operation is against regulations. Voluntary FSC- or PEFC-certification sets more requirements for the consideration of stakeholder views and mitigation of possible conflicts. Forest industry companies are increasingly aware of the importance of building dialogue with stakeholders and settling potential conflicts in their early stages. The above discussion implies that while the Law on Forests provides a framework for public engagement in forestry operations, public companies are taking steps to avoid negative social and community impacts altogether. Moreover, stakeholder consultation in Latvia did not point to any serious negative social and community impacts of feedstock sourcing in the country. **Enforcement and monitoring** Legislation on spatial planning and forest management sets the minimum requirements for stakeholder engagement and consideration of public opinions. Development of satisfactory dialogue with stakeholders is in practice the responsibility of LVM, other forestry companies and stakeholder organisations. **Risk conclusion and justification** The risk for sourcing wood from forests where forestry operations have had unmitigable adverse impacts on local communities is low.
Means of verification	– Legislation – Enforcement – Public information – Voluntary certification requirements

4.2.1 continued *Evidence reviewed*	– Development Planning System Law (08.05.2008) – EU Regional Development Fund, Interreg Baltic Sea Region: "Latvia – Context for Participatory Planning". https://participatory.tools/before-you-start/context-for-participatory-planning-in-four-member-countries/latvia-context-for-participatory-planning/ – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development: "Regional development". https://www.varam.gov.lv/en/regional-development
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
4.2.2	**Feedstock sourcing shall positively contribute to the local economy, including employment.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** Latvia is a country with the third highest regional disparities among the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The GDP is in the poorest of the five regions, with only one-third of the GDP in the capital region. Forests are a renewable and growing resource occupying half of the country's territory and providing substantial economic, ecological and social functions. Forests are one of the main Latvian natural resources having principal economic, social and ecological value. The forest sector (including the forest industry) constitutes 6.5% of GDP (and accounts for 19% of the country's total exports. Forestry provides employment and income to local communities. The forest sector employs 4.6% of the country's labour force. Forestry and forest harvesting employ 54,000 people (Investment and Development Agency of Latvia 2022 and State Forest Service 2022). In 2021, the State Forest Enterprise LVM contributed EUR 90.5 million to the State. A shadow economy where wages are paid in cash without registration to the State Revenue Service is a problem in the Latvian economy. In such cases, the state and local communities do not get tax income from the activity. The shadow economy also distorts competition between companies and may lead to the withdrawal of the enterprises that pay all statutory fees and thus should charge a higher price for their services. The State Labour Inspection has a priority in monitoring the statutory registration of employees and in informing workers of their rights and benefits in the registration. The share of violations to the regulations in registration is not reported separately for the forestry sector but overall monitoring in 2021 brought up breaches to the regulations in 47% of inspected companies; a total of 877 employees were identified with gaps in working contracts or registration. Wood is an important source of thermal energy and allows for shifting from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources in rural areas. Wood is used for heating both in households and in municipal energy plants. Households use about 33% of wood biomass allocated for domestic energy production in the country (State Forest Service 2022). The forest sector exports 70–80% of its products including timber and biomass feedstock, amounting to about EUR 3.6 billion per year (Investment and Development Agency of Latvia 2022). This has encouraged investment in the sector. The forest sector is a net contributor to the local economy and its role in rural development is significant.

4.2.2 continued *Findings continued*	**Enforcement and monitoring** The state follows the implementation of national policies for the forest sector and Ministries, and the industry report on the sector's contributions to national and local economies. **Risk conclusion and justification** The forest sector (including processing sub-sectors such as harvesting and sawmilling) has developed and can meet the increasing demand for wood and wood fibre. The expanding forest sector and industry contributes to the local economy and provides employment opportunities in rural areas whose development is a priority in national policy. A significant part of the forest sector's economic contribution comes through forest harvesting and wood processing that provides feedstock. The risk of failing to conform to this indicator is low.
Means of verification	– Analysis of contribution – Sectoral analysis reports from the Ministry of Agriculture
Evidence reviewed	– Investment and Development Agency of Latvia. 2022. Forest Sector. Riga. Latvia. – LVM Annual Report 2021. https://www.lvm.lv/en/about-us/finances – Ministry of Agriculture: "Homepage". https://www.zm.gov.lv/en – Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development: "Regional development". https://www.varam.gov.lv/en/regional-development – State Forest Service. (2022). Latvian Forest Sector in Facts and Figures 2022
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
4.2.3	**Food, water supply or high conservation values (HCV) that are essential for the fulfilment of basic needs of communities shall be maintained or enhanced.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** Local communities are mainly using forests for recreation and collection of non-wood forest products i.e. berries and mushrooms. In addition, forests are important for recreation and may present cultural heritage values. With permission, local people may have the right to hunt or cut firewood in a forest area. Local communities are not dependent on the forest for their basic needs i.e. water or food. The right to free access to the state and municipal forests is guaranteed in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia and the Law on Forests. The Constitution and Law on Forests allow forest owners to restrict access to the forest and the Law on Forests outlines cases when access to the forest can be restricted.

4.2.3 continued *Findings continued*	About 50% of Latvian forests are public forests. The State Forest Enterprise, Latvijas Valsts Meži (AS LVM), is the enterprise managing state forests. It is general practice that LVM allows the local inhabitants to collect logging residues from cutting areas upon notification. In addition, local people can buy fuel wood without any restrictions. The market analyses indicate that there is not a lack of fuel wood for local people and that forest operations do not cause and influence a lack of basic needs for local people. **Enforcement and monitoring** N/A **Risk conclusion and justification** The risk of compromising the basic needs of local communities in forestry operations is low.
Means of verification	– Interviews with local communities and other stakeholders indicate that subsistence needs are not endangered – Agreements exist on resource rights where these impact the needs of communities
Evidence reviewed	– Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development: "Homepage". https://www.varam.gov.lv/en – The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (15.02.1922). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57980-the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-latvia
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
4.2.4	**Legal, customary, and traditional tenure and use rights of indigenous people and local communities related to the Supply Base shall be identified, documented, and respected.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** There are no groups of indigenous people in the Latvian population. Latvians are the native inhabitants of their homeland. The Latvian Constitution safeguards equal rights for ethnic minorities and the right to own property. In 2005, Latvia also ratified the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Civil Law specifies further different types of ownership and management rights and defines under which conditions a person has the right to harvest wood in forests. The Law on Forests Section 5 provides for the right of access and free movement in the state and local government forests if there are no special restrictions defined e.g. in regulations or other decisions. Private forest owners may restrict access to their forests. The law also restricts the use of vehicles on roads and carriageways. Section 16 specifies the right to use non-wood values of forests i.e. recreational values and non-wood commodities (berries, fruit, nuts, mushrooms, medicinal plants). To camp or make a fire in the forest, additional permission is necessary from the landowner. The collection of wild animals and hunting is regulated by other legislation.

4.2.4 continued *Findings continued*	The use rights to non-timber forest products in state conservation areas are defined by special regulations allowing local communities to collect berries and mushrooms as well as fishing activities, assuming they follow special provisions. **Enforcement and monitoring** According to the Law on Forests and State Forest Service Law, it is the responsibility of the State Forest Service to enforce the Law on Forests that outlines the rights for access and use of forests. There is no information about justified violations of free access to public forests by the State Forest Service or local governments. Neither are there any recognised acts or violations of traditional and/or customary rights, including use rights, cultural interest or traditional cultural identity. In Latvia, representatives from ethnic minorities and Latvians have the same land use rules and rights. At the national level, public participation is provided for by several laws, in particular the Environmental Protection Law, the Law on Pollution, the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment and the Spatial Development Planning Law. Moreover, several Cabinet of Ministers regulations complement these laws. The Environmental Consultancy Board, consisting of twenty annually elected environmental NGO representatives, participates in environmental decision-making. All draft planning documents and draft legal acts are listed on the website of the Ministry of Environment where they can be commented on. **Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the available information, the risk of not complying with this indicator is low.
Means of verification	– Legislation – Enforcement – Customary and traditional tenure and use rights are identified and documented – Public information
Evidence reviewed	– Civil Law (28.01.1937). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/225418-civil-law – Hunting Law (08.07.2003). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/77455-medibu-likums – Law on Forests (24.02.2000). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – State Forest Service Law (1.1.2000) – The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (15.02.1922). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57980-the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-latvia
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

4.2.5	**Mechanisms shall be in place for resolving grievances and disputes relating to tenure and use rights of the forest and other land management practices.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** Property and tenure rights are defined in the Latvian Constitution and the Civil Law and recorded in land Cadastre https://www.kadastrs.lv/. Only a person / organisation that is recognised as an owner in the register has ownership rights. The appeals related to property or tenure rights are typically addressed in courts. Grievances related to the use of non-wood forest products under use rights or use agreements (e.g. hunting) are addressed first by the parties and secondly, but rarely, in courts. Disputes related to forest management practices in specific areas on public land are resolved between the appealing parties and the State Forest Enterprise (LVM) or forestry company or, if there is a legal basis, they can be brought to court. Work-related grievances are resolved according to the procedures defined in Labour Law. An appeal to the State Labour Inspectorate is the first step if the conflict cannot be solved between the parties or with the help of trade unions. The property / tenure rights are well recorded in Latvia despite the fact the land restitution is not yet fully finalised. The State Land Service (in Latvian: Valsts zemes dienests) is a governmental agency under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Justice of Latvia, dedicated to the management and documentation of the Latvian land, as well as any property on it. State property and tenure rights are registered in regional Land Books (land registers) that are public documents. The data is stored collectively and is accessible via the official Land Book website or the Cadastre. Formal disputes on property and tenure rights are settled in courts. There has been discontent in rural areas about selling land (farms and forests) to foreign investors. To mitigate such concerns, the Latvian state has established a State Land Fund (Altum) that can purchase mainly farmland from a private person and possibly lease it back for farming with an option for repurchase later. This approach has alleviated the pain caused e.g. by forced selling due to debts. Altum may provide financing for the development of forestry activities. The grievances related to the access and use of non-wood forest products and services in public forests are not common in Latvia. If encountered, they are discussed between the state forest enterprise LVM and the appealing party. The procedures to address labour-related conflicts are well established. Latvia grants the public, specifically individuals and NGOs, very broad access to justice in environmental cases i.e. the right to defend common interests. Everyone has the right to complain to the responsible administrative institution or file an appeal before the administrative court on environmental matters without any other specific conditions i.e. a complaint may be lodged if a person considers that an administrative decision, a real action or an omission violates the law protecting the environment and nature or threatens to cause damage to the environment. The intensity of forest harvesting has slightly increased to an annual level of 13 million m^3 in the past ten years; this has raised criticism, especially among environmental organisations. Based on the right to lodge an environmental complaint to court, the main ENGOs (Latvian Fund for Nature (LDF), the Latvian Ornithological Society (LOB) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have strongly criticised the government for lowering the minimum size of harvestable trees and for extending access to higher harvesting volumes during the current energy crises.

4.2.5 continued *Findings continued*	The ENGOs claim that the Law on Forests and related regulations were changed without following the statutory consultation procedures established for enacting a law. The conflict was filed in court in December 2022. The debate on the issue has been ongoing for two years. In state forests, the share of stands where a decision on final felling is based on target diameter will be 0.8% of the harvested forest stands in 2023. **Enforcement and monitoring** The State Labour Inspectorate monitors labour-related conflicts and enforces the Labour Law. Public concerns about ownership or use rights are discussed between the parties and possibly brought to court if there is a legal basis for a court case. The State Land Service under the Ministry of Justice enforces and addresses any appeals related to property rights. The law on Forests is enforced by the State Forest Service. **Risk conclusion and justification** There are working mechanisms at different levels of society to resolve grievances and appeals. The ultimate level is the court. The procedures to settle disputes related to tenure and labour rights and the use of forests present only a low risk.
Means of verification	– Existing legislation – Level of enforcement – Public information
Evidence reviewed	– Altum: "State Land Fund of Latvia". https://www.altum.lv/en/services/land-fund-of-latvia/ – Constitutional Court of the Republic of Latvia: ENGO case No 2023-01-03. https://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/en/cases/ – Dzenovska, D. (2022). Good enough sovereignty, or on land as property and territory in Latvia. https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2022.2139253 – European Commission. (2019). The Environmental Implementation Review 2019 – Country Report Latvia. https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eir/pdf/report_lv_en.pdf – Labour Law (20.06.2001). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/26019-labour-law – Land Register Law (22.12.1937). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/60460-land-register-law – Latvian Forest Sector in Facts & Figures. 2022. NGO "Zaljās mājas". Latvian Ornithological Society, dispute: https://www.lob.lv/2023/01/iniciativas-zalais-barometrs-sudziba-par-koku-cirsanas-noteikumu-grozijumiem-versamies-pie-satversmes-tiesas-ka-vidutaja/ – Law on Trade Unions (06.03.2014). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/265207-law-on-trade-unions – Lursoft: Databases of Enterprises. https://www.lursoft.lv/en/data-bases-of-enterprises – State Immovable Property Cadastre Law (01.12.2005). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/124247-state-immovable-property-cadastre-law – State Land Service: https://www.vzd.gov.lv/lv
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

4.2.6	**Where indigenous peoples' rights are identified in the supply base, and Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) has not been achieved for the proposed and planned activities, consultation and, if required, accommodation process shall be put in place.**
Findings	**Scale of assessment** The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia. **Analysis** In Latvia, this indicator applies only to local and traditional communities. There are no native indigenous peoples in Latvia that have claimed to meet the UN definitions. The indicator on indigenous people is not applicable in Latvia. Local communities can participate in land use planning as stipulated in the legislation on land use planning that sets the provisions for general-level stakeholder consultations. If the land is allocated for forestry use, the Law on Forests applies. If it is allocated for conservation, the respective regulations define the allowed use. The main interests of local communities in non-wood forest products are related to recreation and mushroom and berry picking. These activities are important for many people for leisure or perquisite income. The right to free access to the state and municipal forests is guaranteed in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (Satversme), The Civil Code of the Republic of Latvia, the Forests Law and other legal acts. With a few exceptions, all forests are available for berry and mushroom picking. Exceptions include strict nature reserves only. The law on Forests or other applicable legislation on harvesting rights do not require consultation when operations are planned or implemented. The indicator is not directly applicable in Latvia. **Enforcement and monitoring** N/A **Risk conclusion and justification** A low risk is designated for this indicator based on the above analysis.
Means of verification	– N/A
Evidence reviewed	– N/A
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk
4.2.7	**Designated cultural heritage sites shall be preserved.**

Findings

Scale of assessment

The scale of assessment covers all legally defined forests in Latvia.

Analysis

Latvia has accepted but not ratified the World Heritage Convention (1975). The country has two cultural heritage sites and one natural site on the tentative list.

Laws on the Protection of Cultural Monuments or Intangible Cultural Heritage are applicable in some cases to forests.

The legislation, notably, the Law on Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, requires the protection of cultural monuments, including archaeological sites and intangible cultural heritage. Local governments may have additional restrictions on forest use based e.g. on spatial land use plans or protected heritage areas.

Law On Protection of Cultural Monuments provides that newly discovered objects having historical, scientific, artistic or other cultural value, irrespective of the ownership thereof, shall be under State protection until the decision to include such objects in the list of State protected cultural monuments has been taken. This requirement applies also to forest land in cases where objects with historical and cultural value are encountered.

The Law on Forests requires a forest management plan and submission in advance of site-specific information on all planned harvesting activities to the Latvian State Forest Enterprise (LVM) which provides a safeguard to protect possible cultural remnants. The State Forest Enterprise LVM and National Heritage Board currently have an ongoing exchange of information and the risk of damaging a cultural heritage site is minimised when appropriate location-specific information is available to forest managers. LVM and National Heritage Board are committed to taking all possible mitigation measures if any damage to a site occurs.

Concerning HCV Category 6, there are numerous cultural areas and objects of cultural heritage associated with trees and forests. Some forests of cultural importance are inside cities, manor parks, urban forests and forests on important historical sites. Cultural forests are owned by both the state and private owners. Such places are managed according to various regulations and management plans.

Historical places are managed under the supervision of the Cultural Heritage Inspection, and urban forests and parks are managed by municipalities/local governments. A working database of cultural heritage value exists, and all identified objects of cultural heritage are preserved through the implementation of the Law on Protection of Immovable Cultural Properties. For example, about 150 objects of cultural heritage – manors and manor parks, forests – out of approximately 500 are protected by the Law on Protection of Immovable Cultural Properties. However, there are numerous old manor parks, dendrology plantations and pathways that have been established at manors and establishments associated with Baltic German culture, but many of them have been abandoned over time and converted to forests.

Enforcement and monitoring

The National Heritage Board (formerly the State Inspection for Heritage Protection) enforces the Laws on the protection of cultural heritage while the State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests.

Risk conclusion and justification

The risk that forest operations harm sites of cultural heritage is considered to be low.

4.2.7 continued *Means of verification*	– Legislation – Enforcement
Evidence reviewed	– Historia.lv: https://www.historia.lv/raksts/lvm-veicot-nesaskanotu-mezizstradi-madonas-novada-nodarijusi-butiskus-postijumus-avotinu – Intangible Cultural Heritage Law (29.09.2016). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/285526-intangible-cultural-heritage-law – Law on Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Paris, 1972 (17.02.1997, amendments 26.02.1997). https://likumi.lv/ta/id/42381-par-konvenciju-par-pasaules-kulturas-un-dabas-mantojuma-aizsardzibu – Law on Protection of Cultural Monuments (12.02.1992). https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/72551-on-protection-of-cultural-monuments – Ministry of Culture: "Conservation of historic monuments". https://www.km.gov.lv/en/conservation-historic-monuments – National Heritage Board (formerly – State Inspection for Heritage Protection) https://www.nkmp.gov.lv/lv – State Forest Enterprise LVM, protection of heritage sites: https://www.lvm.lv/jaunumi/5959-as-latvijas-valsts-mezi-un-nacionala-kulturas-mantojuma-parvalde-vienojas-par-ciesaku-sadarbibu-kulturas-vertibu-saglabasana – UNESCO World Heritage Convention: "States Parties". https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/
Risk rating	**Low risk** Specified risk

Annex 2 List of experts consulted and contacts of Working Body

List of experts consulted and contacts of Working Body

Expert	Affiliation & role
Dr Sepul Barua	Team Leader and Co-ordinator of the Working Body. Risk assessment expert with a focus on SBP RRA indicators under Principles 1 (feedstock is legally sourced) and 2 (feedstock sourcing does not harm the environment). Senior Consultant and Forest Economist at Indufor.
Ms Hanna Nikinmaa	Working Body member. Certification and sustainability expert with a focus on SBP RRA indicators under Principle 4 (feedstock sourcing benefits people and communities). Senior Advisor at Indufor.
Mr Gatis Eriņš	Working Body member. Latvian forestry, certification and bioenergy expert.
Ms Saija Papunen	Working Body member. Forest Inventory and GIS expert with a focus on SBP RRA indicators under Principle 3 (feedstock is only sourced from supply bases where the forest carbon stock is stable or increasing long term). Analyst at Indufor.
Mr Rabins Gaudel	Forest Resources Mapping Expert; Consultant at Indufor.

Working Body: Indufor Group
Co-ordinator: Dr Sepul Barua sepul.barua@induforgroup.com +358 50 331 8217

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Annex 4 List of Stakeholders

No.	Organisation	Type of organisation
1	PEFC Latvia	Certification scheme
2	Preferred by Nature	Certification Body
3	BM certification	Certification Body
4	The Ministry of Agriculture, Forest Department	Government / State Forests
5	State Forest Service	State Institution / Forestry
6	Nature Conservation Agency	State Institution / Nature
7	Joint Stock Company “Latvia’s State Forests” (LVM)	State Forests
8	Latvian Forest Owners' Association	Forest Owners’ Organisation
9	Latvian Forest Industry Federation	Industry organisation
10	Latvian Association of Wood Processing Entrepreneurs and Exporters	Industry organisation
11	Latvian Association of Biomass LATbio	Industry organisation
12	Latvian Association of Independent Timber Harvesting Companies	Industry organisation
13	Latgran SIA	Biomass Producer
14	Scandbio SIA	Biomass Producer
15	Latvian State Forest Research Institute “Silava”	Academia / Research
16	The Forest Research Station	Academia / Research
17	Ogre Technical College	Education / Training
18	Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre/ Forest Advisory Service Centre	Advisory / training body

Annex 4 List of Stakeholders continued

No.	Organisation	Type of organisation
19	Pasaules Dabas Fonds (associated partner to WWF)	Civil Society Organisation
20	The Latvian Ornithological Society (LOB)	Civil Society Organisation
21	Latvian Forest Certification Council	Civil Society Organisation
22	Forestry Workers Trade Union	Trade Union
23	Enefit Green	End-user

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report

Stakeholder consultation report

The draft SBP RRA Revision for Latvia with a cover letter was sent by email to 23 stakeholders (see Annex 4) on 19 April 2023. The cover letter can be seen below. A reminder email was sent to the stakeholders on 12 May 2023.

Dear Recipient,

Greetings from Indufor Oy in Helsinki, Finland!

Indufor is an international forestry consultancy (www.induforgroup.com). The Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP) appointed Indufor to update SBP's Regional Risk Assessment (RRA) for Latvia, Version 1.0 which was published in September 2017.

SBP RRA Procedure requires conducting consultation with relevant stakeholders on the draft RRA Update for Latvia – that Indufor prepared under SBP's guidance – before a revised draft can be prepared. As a valued stakeholder, I am reaching out to you to request your feedback on the draft RRA Update for Latvia (attached herewith). Information about SBP and the background, purpose and scope of the RRA Update for Latvia are given below.

May I request you give your feedback on the attached draft SBP RRA Update for Latvia by May 19, 2023, to sepul.barua@induforgroup.com? If you have any questions, please contact us by e-mail or phone. Thank you for thinking and contributing!

Dr. Sepul Barua, Team Leader and Coordinator, Indufor Oy
sepul.barua@induforgroup.com

Mr. Gatis Erins, Independent Latvian Consultant
gatis@environment.lv / +371 26554613

Godātais saņēmēj / Cienītā saņēmēja!

Sveicieni no Indufor Oy Helsinkos, Somijā!

Indufor ir starptautisks mežsaimniecības konsultāciju (www.induforgroup.com). Koksnes biomasas sertifikācijas sistēma "Sustainable Biomass Program" (SBP) ir izvēlējusies Indufor, lai aktualizētu SBP reģionālo risku novērtējuma (RRA) versiju 1.0 Latvijai, kas sākotnēji veikts un publicēts 2017. gada septembrī.

Lai sagatavotu aktualizēto reģionālo risku novērtējumu, SBP RRA procedūras ietvaros ir nepieciešams veikt konsultācijas ar attiecīgajām ieinteresētajām pusēm par aktualizēto SBP reģionālo risku novērtējumu, ko Indufor sagatavo saskaņā ar SBP vadlīnijām un norādījumiem.

Vēršos pie Jums kā pie ieinteresētās puses, lai lūgtu Jūsu komentārus un ierosinājumus par sagatavoto aktualizēto RRA projektu Latvijai (pievienots šim e-pastam).

Vēlos lūgt Jūsu komentārus un ierosinājumus par pievienoto aktualizēto SBP reģionālo risku novērtējumu projektu Latvijai līdz 2023. gada 19 maijam. Komentārus lūdzu sūtīt uz e-pastu sepul.barua@induforgroup.com. Tālāk sniegta pamatinformācija par SBP un aktualizēto RRA Latvijai, tā mērķiem un darbības jomu. Ja Jums ir kādi jautājumi, lūdzu, sazinieties ar mums pa e-pastu vai tālruni. Jau iepriekš paldies par iedziļināšanos un līdzdalību!

Ar cieņu,

Dr. Sepul Barua, RRA aktualizācijas darba grupas vadītājs, Indufor Oy
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Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP)

The Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP) is a certification scheme designed for woody biomass used in industrial, large-scale energy production. SBP has developed a certification scheme to provide assurance that woody biomass is sourced both legally and sustainably allowing companies in the biomass sector to demonstrate compliance with regulatory requirements, as a minimum. The SBP certification scheme has been designed by using a risk-based approach. This requires SBP certificate holders to focus their efforts on the indicators of SBP Standard 1 that have been identified to represent a specified risk in their supply base.

Background to SBP RRA update

The SBP system allows two pathways to conduct the risk assessment – either each certification holder develops their assessment (called Supply Base Evaluation – SBE) or a regional risk assessment (RRA) is developed by experts and is required to be used by all certificate holders, removing the burden of each certificate holder to develop their own SBE. In this case, all certificate holders active in the geographic region must design their SBP certification management system based on the approved RRA.

As of March 2023, SBP has approved six RRAs covering the following countries / regions: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Denmark, and British Columbia and Quebec in Canada. There are two other RRAs (i.e. the Province of New Brunswick, Canada, and Portugal) in the pipeline (SBP-endorsed Regional Risk Assessments – Sustainable Biomass Program (sbp-cert.org)).

All SBP standards (Standards 1–6) have been updated on March 16, 2023, following a comprehensive review process. Like other standards, the criteria and indicators of the SBP Standard 1: Feedstock Compliance Standard is updated to version 2.0 (v2.0) on 16 March 2023.

Indufor Oy is appointed by SBP as the Working Body to update the RRA for Latvia, Version 1.0 (published in September 2017) following the updated SBP Standards.

Purpose and scope of RRA update for Latvia

Each SBP RRA is valid for a certain period of time and needs to be updated after the end of that period. The SBP RRA Update for Latvia updates the RRA for Latvia, Version 1.0 which was published on 22 September 2017. The updating is done following SBP RRA Procedure Version 1.2 and the SBP Standard 1: Feedstock Compliance Standard, Version 2.0 (March 16, 2023).

Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP)

Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP) ir koksnes biomasai, kas tiek izmanto rūpnieciskajā liela mēroga enerģijas ražošanā, paredzēta sertifikācijas sistēma. SBP ir izstrādājusi sertifikācijas sistēmu, lai nodrošinātu, ka koksnes biomasa tiek iegūta legāli un ilgtspējīgi, ļaujot biomasas nozares uzņēmumiem apliecināt resursa atbilstību normatīvajām prasībām. SBP sertifikācijas sistēma ir izstrādāta izmantojot uz risku novērtējuma balstītu pieeju. Pieeja paredz, ka SBP sertifikāta turētāji koncentrēt savus centienus uz SBP Standard 1 definētajiem indikatoriem, kas ir identificēti kā specifisks risks izejvielu piegādes bāzē.

SBP RRA aktualizācijas pamatojums

SBP sistēma pieļauj divas risku novērtējuma pieejas – vai nu katrs sertifikāta turētājs izstrādā savu novērtējumu (turpmāk "Piegādes bāzes novērtējums" – SBE), vai arī speciālisti izstrādā reģionālo risku novērtējumu (RRA), ko tad izmanto visi sertifikāta turētāji, novēršot nepieciešamību katram sertifikāta turētājam izstrādāt savu SBE. Vienota RRE novērtējuma gadījumā visiem sertifikāta turētājiem, kas darbojas attiecīgajā ģeogrāfiskajā reģionā, sava SBP sertifikāta pārvaldības sistēma ir jāizstrādā par pamatu ņemot apstiprināto RRA.

2023. gada martā SBP ir apstiprinājusi sešu reģionālo risku novērtējumu aktualizāciju šādām valstīm/reģioniem: Latvijai, Lietuvai, Igaunijai, Dānijai, kā arī Britu Kolumbijai un Kvebekai Kanādā. Lēmums par vēl divu RRA aktualizāciju (New Brunswick Kanādā un Portugālei) tiks pieņemts tuvākajā laikā (informācija pieejama SBP-endorsed Regional Risk Assessments – Sustainable Biomass Program (sbp-cert.org)).

Pēc vispusīga izvērtējuma 2023. gada 16. martā tika aktualizēti visi SBP standarti (Standards 1–6). 2023. gada 16. martā, līdzīgi kā citos standartos, kritēriji un indikatori, kas ietverti SBP Standard 1: Feedstock Compliance Standard tika aktualizēti uz versiju 2.0 (v2.0).

SBP ir izvēlējies Indufor Oy, kā atbildīgo reģionālo risku novērtējuma Versijas 1.0 (publicēta 2017. gada septembrī) aktualizācijai Latvijai, atbilstoši 2023. gadā veiktajai SBP Standarta aktualizācijai.

Aktualizētā reģionālo risku novērtējuma uzdevums un darbības ietvars Latvijai

Katrs sagatavotais SBP reģionālo risku novērtējums ir derīgs noteiktu laika posmu un to nepieciešams aktualizēt, kad šis periods tuvojas noslēgumam. SBP RRA aktualizācija Latvijai paredz aktualizēt Latvijas RRA Versija 1.0, kas publicēta 2017. gada 22. septembrī. Aktualizācija tiek veikta atbilstoši SBP RRA Procedūras Versijai 1.2 un SBP Standard 1: Feedstock Compliance Standard, Versija 2.0 (2023. gada 16. marts).

A total of ten stakeholders out of 23 initially contacted with the draft RRA Revision responded to the request to provide feedback. This means the response rate was about 43.48%. Nine stakeholders gave comments and one stakeholder (Latgran SIA) did not give any comments. Six stakeholders gave follow-up comments on the revised draft RRA. The stakeholder comments are responded below.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
On Draft RRA revision for Latvia		
Government body	The section that the comment is about (in 2.1 Regional Background, page 1): "The territory of Latvia (Figure 2.1) belongs to the boreal region in the European biogeographical region classification, being 'halfway between' the temperate and boreal regions. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and the State Environmental Service carry out reporting for Latvia related to Natura 2000 conservation areas to the EU Commission along this biogeographical region." NCA's comment: please do correction – Nature Conservation Agency is responsible authority for Nature Directives and Natura 2000 reporting as well as implementation of nature policy in Latvia.	The text is revised accordingly.
	The section that the comment is about (in 2.1 Regional Background, page 1): "State-owned forests are managed by the state company "Latvia's State Forests" or State Forest Enterprise (LVM, Latvijas Valsts Meži)." State owned forests are managed by [..] too. [..] has to manage 122,723.26 ha of state owned land and from that amount there are 60,546.96 ha of forests and 26,186.37 ha of bogs and mires. [..] mainly manages state land in reserves and some strictly protected parts in national parks.	The text is revised accordingly.
	The section that the comment is about (in 2.1 Regional Background, page 1): "The private forests, except for some small holdings, are certified." [..] comment: Does some factual data prove it? There is large number of private forest owners (owning 1-10 ha of forest) and just small part of them are involved in co-operation schemes, so this conclusion overestimates situation.	The text is revised accordingly.
	The section that the comment is about (in 2.1 Regional Background, page 1): "For logging, an operator shall have a valid forest inventory and a forest management plan, along with a felling permit issued by the State Forest Service (VMD, Valsts Meža Dienests)". [..] comment: According to legislation, forest management plan must be developed just in some cases and it is not requirement for logging in all situations. Please take into account Forest Law – https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests (see Section 31 and 32.)	The text is revised accordingly.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Government body continued	A forest owner or lawful possessor have an obligation to develop a forest management plan if the total area of the forest to be managed exceeds 10,000 hectares. Besides regulation of protected areas foresees that forest management plan is obligatory for national parks (each national park has own regulation).	
	The section that the comment is about (in 2.1 Regional Background, page 1): "All issued felling permits and forest inventory data are available in the public forest registry online database (State Forest Service: "The State Forest Registry")." NCA's comment: all issued felling permits are not available on online database – these are not open data. Open data are only these https://data.gov.lv/dati/lv/dataset/meza-valsts-registra-meza-dati	The text is revised accordingly.
	The comment is related to table 3.2 on page 4 (Principle 2: Feedstock sourcing does not harm the environment). NCA's comment: For information: NCA conducted EU habitat mapping from 2017-2022. Latvian national legislation does not protect EU habitats outside protected areas (and even in protected areas protection level depends on functional zoning).	The information is used to update Section 2.1 and other relevant places of the RRA update.
	Indicator 1.1.1, section "According to the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories, tree felling is prohibited in SPAs. Sections 35-38 of the Law on Forests and related government regulation lays out specific provisions for the protection of nature in the forests." NCA's comment: It is allowed to cut trees, even in clear cuts in protected areas.	The relevant analysis is revised accordingly. Not fulfilled in Latvia.
	Indicator 1.1.1, section "There is no evidence of the violation of the above articles in Latvia on any notable scale." NCA's comment: There are cases when bird nests are destroyed with aim that then there will be no restriction to protect it. There 2-3 cases per year, but they are not fixed in registers, as it is impossible to find who did it (even if we have suspect about forest owner). But yes – in general there is not so large amount of violations.	

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Government body continued	**Indicator 1.1.3,** section "Latvia has signed and ratified the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (The Washington Convention. 1973) (CITES). In addition to CITES, trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora is regulated by several EU directives that extend the scope of species within the European Union. None of the local tree and plant species is listed in the Annexes of the Washington Convention (1973)." NCA's comment: all wild orchids in Latvia are included in CITES. But there is not any harvesting of them for commercial use.	The information is added in the relevant indicator.
	Indicator 1.1.3, section "An individual licence issued by the Ministry of Environment must be presented for each consignment of animals and plants, parts thereof or articles made of them." NCA's comment: it is not clear here, what kind of licence from ministry? All permits and licences are issued by NCA.	The information is corrected now.
	Indicator 1.1.3, section "Based on an annual report from the Nature Conservation Agency of the Republic of Latvia in 2012, 10 persons were convicted for illegal importing and sales of CITES animals and plants, however, there is no information if these were related to animal or plant species." NCA's comment: there are available reports on illegal CITES trade in Latvia with more actual information. For example see https://www.traffic.org/publications/reports/an-overview-of-seizures-of-cites-listed-wildlife-in-the-eu-in-2020/, and https://cites.org/sites/default/files/EST/AITR/AITR_Analysis_2022.pdf – there are seizures every year. There have been recent years some seizures and confiscations of tree products, but wood carvings, not timber.	The relevant part of the analysis is revised.
	Indicator 1.1.3, section "Based on an annual report from the Nature Conservation Agency of the Republic of Latvia in 2012, 10 persons were convicted for illegal importing and sales of CITES animals and plants, however, there is no information if these were related to animal or plant species." NCA's comment: CITES seized products include live and dead animals, cosmetic products, leather products. During last 10 years just few cases with plants and plant products.	The relevant part of the analysis is revised accordingly.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Government body continued	**Indicator 2.1.1,** section "the current level of information on biodiversity is sufficient to identify most places where large concentrations of protected species are located." NCA's comment: There are still gaps for protected species (data are fragmented), but not all important places for habitats are protected. Even if we know "hotspots", the procedure to make legal protection status is slow and land owners can still do cutting while protected area is going to be established.	The relevant part of the analysis is revised accordingly.
	Indicator 2.1.1, section "It can be stated that major sites for rare, threatened and endangered species are known, and protected territories have been established for most species and are known." NCA's comment: Here https://www.daba.gov.lv/lv/media/11340/download?attachment You can see information about needs to improve Natura 2000 network for species and habitats. The main reasons regarding species mentioned "...at the beginning of 2020 the Latvian Natura 2000 network was not completed, since there are three species (Unio crassus, Osmoderma eremita, Barbastella barbastellus) and 7 habitat types (1 marine, 6 terrestrial) for which there is a need to designate one or more sites of the Community importance (see infringement case 2019/2304).	The relevant part of the analysis is revised accordingly.
	Indicator 2.1.1, AS LVM has their data system LVM GEO, where company uses data from NCA and other institutions when planning forest management. AS LVM has additional information about species and their own decided conservation areas (mainly for bird nesting places), but these data are not available for public.	The relevant part of the analysis is revised accordingly.
	Indicator 2.1.3, section "There are provisions in the regulations mentioned for seasonal harvesting operations, i.e., some final felling and thinning works are not allowed from 1st April until 1st of July." NCA's comment: forest felling prohibitions during birds nesting season is not set in legislation for all forest area and all forest stands.	The relevant text is revised accordingly.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Civil Society Organisation	The certified forest managers / owners are regularly checked by independent certification bodies, therefore indicators 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 3.2.3, 3.3.1, 4.1.8 and 4.2.5 should be assigned with low risk. The forest management standards that are applicable in Latvia fully covers SBP requirements.	The analyses related to all indicators mentioned are revised based on inputs from stakeholder consultation and further research. The revised analyses led to low risk for indicators 3.3.1 and 4.2.5, while the original specified risk class remained for the other indicators.
	We suggest to assign with low-risk threshold all indicators pertaining HCV identification / protection (2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 3.2.3). In Latvia key species, habitats, ecosystems and areas of HCV are identified and protected. Latest National level Nature Census was carried from 2017 until 2020 by Nature Conservation Agency.	
	Regarding indicator 2.2.3, the data provided by the State Forest Service does not reflect unsustainable exploitation. An average of approximately 12 million m^3 of round wood harvested each year in Latvia's forests, which is less than the annual increment, therefore forestry in Latvia can be considered as sustainable. Also, there are no evidences provided that the harvesting volumes has led to "the loss of WKH and habitats of EU importance – mostly due to clearcutting, removal of dead wood, drainage and modifications in hydrological functioning, soil damage, the spread of invasive species, habitat fragmentation and isolation as well as disturbance in relation to bird species." The statement shall be deleted.	We did not find the quoted statement in indicator 2.2.3. Nevertheless, it can be confirmed that this statement is no more included in any part of this RRA update.
	In Latvia there are no customary rights (statement included in the indicator 4.2.4). In Latvia free access to recreation, berry and mushroom collection granted in the forest law.	The text is modified, term use-right is used.
	Roma people, Russians, Jews, Belarusians, and other nationalities cannot be considered as traditional communities (indicator 4.2.4).	Changed to ethnic minorities.
Certification Body	**Section 2.1:** Intensively managed forests – not managed forests – make up approximately 72% of the forest land. Ministry of Defence and Nature Conservation Agency also manage some state forests. Other four regions have FSC-controlled wood certification.	The text is revised accordingly.
	Are trees outside forests included in the RRA update?	TOFs are not under the scope of this RRA as explained in Section 2.2.
	Indicator 2.1.1: Woodland Key Habitats (WKH) is not used as a term in legislation. They are under the Habitats of EU Importance.	The relevant text is revised accordingly.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Certification Body continued	A general comment: risk justifications and argumentation in our opinion are lacking important sources of information, such as analysis of non-conformities from SBP audit reports. SBP audit reports (public summary sections, containing the non-conformity reports) are publicly available and a review of non-conformity statistics would give additional value to the risk designation and findings. For example, indicator 4.1.10. Also, important source of information is State Audit Office reports where the deficiencies of state authorities and management systems are outlined. We are also not seeing references to interviews to industry professionals and acknowledged experts in the analysis sections of the risk assessment.	The analyses in relevant places throughout the RRA Update for Latvia are revised based on the inputs from the stakeholder consultation and additional research by the Working Body. The reviewed sources provided adequate evidence for indicator 4.1.10 on safeguards to protect the health and safety of workers. Audit reports and interviews would have given valuable additional information which, however, was not deemed essential under this indicator.
	2.1.1 Key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation value (HCV) pertaining to biodiversity in the supply base shall be identified. Authors of the risk assessment are designating a "specified risk" status to HCV category 1. It is not clear from the description of the risk assessment, however, what is the object of the HCV category 1 risk. Is it Bird's directive Annex I species as defined specifically in the current version (v.1) of the SBP regional risk assessment for Latvia or authors are referring to rare, threatened and endangered (protected) species in general? Information on FSC High Conservation Value forests category 5 and category 6 is missing in the description. Risks related to non-forest lands have not been analysed by the authors. Since significant share of feedstock by biomass producers in Latvia is sourced from non-forest lands, it is not clear from the risk assessment if there are risks in sourcing feedstock from areas that may include non-forest HCVs, typically non-forest habitats (biologically valuable grasslands, meadows, pastures etc.). It is also not clear whether the same "specified risk" applies to all forests or to private owned forests like it is in the existing risk assessment. Therefore, it is not clear if the current designation. What about the state and other forest managers (other state forests managed not by the AS LVM)?	The relevant part of the analysis is revised. Under the Nature Census, the mapping of the habitats of EU importance in Latvia is done during 2017-2022. However, mapping the protected species was not the task of the Nature Census. Therefore, data on protected species was not collected comprehensively during Nature Census surveys. Consequently, as the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests, the data on protected species is fragmented, and not all locations of the protection of species are mapped and protected. According to the Nature Conservation Agency (Prioritised action framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 in Latvia), suitable protection areas could not yet be designated for three species (Unio crassus, Osmoderma eremita, Barbastella barbastellus) and 7 habitat types of the EU importance (1 marine, 6 terrestrial). Another related challenge in Latvia is that LVM data are not publicly available thus limiting options to verify that wood has not been sourced from locations of protected species. Moreover, the procedure to make legal protection status is slow and landowners can still do cutting in an area while it is being legally established as protected area.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

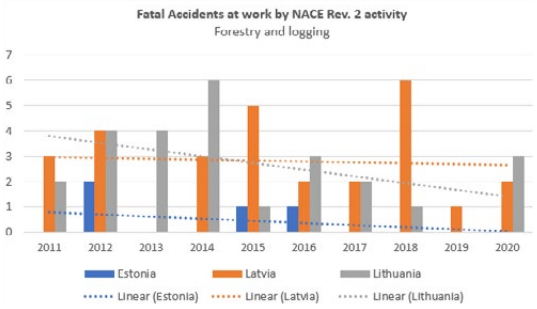
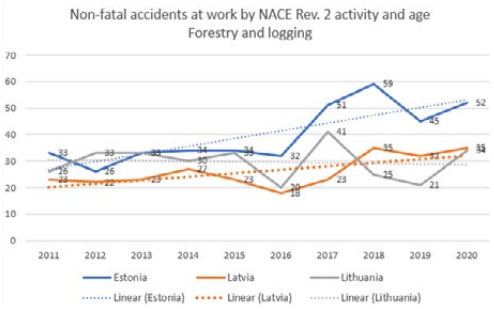
Organisation	Comment	Response
Certification Body continued		Consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests about 5,000 ha of forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia have been lost due to clearcutting since 2017 (see, Nature Census data: In Latvia, grasslands are the worst at the moment, other habitat groups also need thoughtful long-term management – Nature Conservation Agency (daba.gov.lv)). It is also highlighted that, according to the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency and Latvian Ornithological Society, there are cases of deliberately destroying bird nests within the forests so that there is no restriction to protect it. The Latvian Ornithological Society estimated – in the Species Conservation Plan for Hazel Grouse – that annually, about 51,000 birds' nests are destroyed by logging activities in state forests alone in Latvia. Furthermore, Latvian Fund for Nature has collected data on the destruction of nests of a lesser spotted eagle (Clanga pomarine) (https://www.birdlife.org/news/2022/09/05/of-clearcuts-and-birds-part4-latvia/). This data is used for several court cases (see http://mazaiserglis.lv/en/news/the-latvian-fund-for-nature-wins-in-court-in-the-proceedings-of-the-state-forest-service-regarding-the-abolition-of-micro-reserves-for-the-lesser-spotted-eagle). Thus, the risk class remains specified. HCVs 1-4 that are related to ecosystem and biodiversity and thus included in this indicator. Non-forest land is outside the scope of this RRA Update. This is explained in Section 2.2. As the revised analysis implies, the specified risk for all forests.
	2.1.2 Threats to and impacts on the identified key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation value (HCV) pertaining to biodiversity in the supply base shall be identified and evaluated. The risk assessment is vague and it is not clear what is the essence of risks in relation to threats and impacts on species, habitats, ecosystems and areas of high conservation values.	The relevant part of the analysis is revised now. The analysis suggests that there is a risk that the threats to and impacts on some protected species and their habitats are not fully identified and evaluated particularly in areas with HCV 1 objects. Thus, the risk class remains specified.

Organisation	Comment	Response
Certification Body continued	The object of the risk is not explicitly and clearly outlined in the assessment. One may notice Bird's directive Annex I species (not specifically mentioning concrete species, though), woodland key habitats and/or EU habitats (again, not clear if it is forest habitats only or includes non-forest land habitats as well). FSC High Conservation value forest category 6 is also mentioned in line with a risk of damage and/or destruction of high conservation values, without specifying details and the subject of the risk. What is the subject of the risk of high conservation value forest category 6? Risks related to non-forest lands have not been analysed by the authors. Since significant share of feedstock by biomass producers in Latvia is sourced from non-forest lands, it is not clear from the risk assessment if there are risks in sourcing feedstock from areas that may include non-forest HCVs, typically non-forest habitats (biologically valuable grasslands, meadows, pastures etc.). It is also not clear whether the same "specified risk" applies to all forests or to private owned forests like it is un the existing risk assessment. What about the state forests managed by AS LVM and other forest managers (other state forests managed not by the AS LVM?	HCV 6 is not related to ecosystem and biodiversity, but cultural sites and thus excluded from this indicator. Non-forest land is outside the scope of this RRA Update. This is explained in Section 2.2. As the revised analysis implies, the specified risk applies to all forests.
	4.1.8 Training shall be provided for all workers to allow them to implement the conditions set out in all elements of the SBP standards relevant to their responsibilities. Justification for "specified risk" designation in our opinion is vague and it is not clear from the analysis section what is the essence of risk in relation to training for workers. SBP does not require from suppliers specific knowledge and training apart from general forestry related knowledge and training. In contrast to FSC (or PEFC) forest management standard requirements, which contain more specific and, in some cases, more stringent requirements at operational level than the national legislation, and thus require some more specific supplier training on FSC/PEFC requirements. Therefore, in our opinion to justify the "specified risk" for this indicator, a more profound argument shall be used. Also, a referenced statistics from SBP audit public reports on non-conformities whose root cause is related to lack of supplier training in SBP requirements would be beneficial to justify the "specified risk" status.	The wording of the revised SBP criterion states that all workers shall have training that allows them to implement all elements of SBP standards as relevant to their responsibilities. Thus, the scope of training shall cover all elements of SBP standards, as relevant. Forestry education and qualification requirements for forestry work are good, but there is no guarantee that the available training covers ALL elements of SBP standards. Thus, the risk class remains specified. The SBP's direct reference to the SBP standards leaves a potential small gap in the scope of staff's competencies. The issue is largely a semantic one.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Certification Body continued	**4.2.5 Mechanisms shall be in place for resolving grievances and disputes relating to tenure and use rights of the forest and other land management practices.** Risk justification in our opinion is unclear. It is not clear how one case the authors of the risk assessment are referring to (a constitutional court case of Latvian Fund for Nature (LDF), the Latvian Ornithological Society (LOB) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) against government for lowering the minimum size of harvestable trees to have access to higher harvesting volumes) can be attributed to an overall failure or inefficiency of mechanisms for resolving grievances and disputes relating to tenure and use rights, so that it would constitute a "specified risk" for this category. In our opinion for a "specific risk" designation, a more profound justification is required, preferably supported by statistics or stakeholder opinion, including reference to specific cases when the grievances and disputes relating to tenure and use rights would have been denied or rejected by Latvian courts (all levels), or when the court decisions would have been influenced by external parties.	The grievance procedures up to the court cases are in place and functional in Latvia. It is evidence of low access to grievance procedures if external parties can file a court case on suspected administrative violation of the law. In certification, the relevant court cases should be taken into consideration because they demonstrate a risk for non-compliance. The risk category of 4.2.5 is changed to low because there are different access levels to address appeals and disputes.
	4.1.10 Safeguards shall be put in place to protect the health and safety of workers by developing, communicating and implementing policies and procedures. Authors of risk assessment are claiming statistical data provided by the industry show a decreasing trend in lethal accidents in the forestry sector since 2010. Though, authors are not referring to the actual statistical data on accidents at workplace in forestry sector either national or EU (Eurostat) wide. Eurostat data on fatal accidents at work (NACE 2 sector – Foresty and logging) covering the period of last 10 years do not exhibit a substantially decreasing trend for Latvia, as opposed to neighboring countries – Lithuania and Estonia, where the negative trend in fatal accident rate can be in fact clearly observed. See Figure 1 for details. Furthermore, despite increasing mechanisation of harvesting works and rapidly reducing volumes of manual logging works, the statistics (Eurostat data) is showing increasing trend in non-fatal accident rate at work place for NACE 2 category – Forestry and logging. Figure 2 shows the statistics of non-fatal accident rate in forestry sector in all three Baltic countries.	The reference to the statistical data used in the previous RRA assessment is removed. The risk assessment of this RRA (2023) is based on applicable legislation and the required measures to identify and mitigate work-related health and safety risks. The current level of accidents also supports the categorisation of the risk as low.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Certification Body continued	Considering the trends in statistical data as well as still occurring deficiencies in compliance to national health and safety regulations identified in regular audit inspections to suppliers of feedstock conducting manual logging works, we are proposing to designate "Specified risk" for this indicator for harvesting works which are carried out exclusively by manual harvesting means (chainsaws) in non-certified forests. The subject of "specified risk" shall pertain self-employed persons and workers of micro-enterprises, since they are typically exhibiting least awareness and most frequent cases of non-compliances to national health and safety regulations. Figure 1. Fatal Accidents at work by NACE Rev. 2 activity: Forestry and Logging (data: EUROSTAT, HSW_N2_02, 10/03/2023) Figure 2. Non-fatal Accidents at work by NACE Rev. 2 activity: Forestry and Logging (data: EUROSTAT, HSW_N2_01, 01/03/2023)  *Figure 1*  *Figure 2*	
Forest manager	**Section 3.3.1:** The risk classes for the certified and non-certified organisations should differ. Certified companies regularly are checked in third-party audits. Risk descriptions for indicators 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 3.2.3, 3.3.1, 4.1.8 and 4.2.5 needs amendments (please see below).	Certification is a time-bound process and has to be renewed periodically. An area that is certified now may not remain certified in the future. As SBP is a separate standard and risk assessment applies to the entire country, the risk profile has to be assessed independently of any certification standard.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Forest Manager continued		While it is recognised in relevant places of this RRA Update that certification makes it easy to fulfill some requirements of a number of indicators, the overall risk profiles related to key species and habitats and other issues covered by the indicators do not differ much between certified and non-certified organisations. Certified forest management in Latvia does not guarantee the exclusion of EU forest habitats from cutting/clear-cut sites. As an example, JSC Latvias State Forests (LVM) case can be highlighted – all forest areas are certified (all forests PEFC, part FSC); however, the felling of EU forest habitats was planned and carried out. Although there is a commitment at the moment that such practices are not continued, changes to practices cannot be excluded. The analyses and justification for the risk classes are revised in the indicators mentioned.
	Indicator 1.1.1: We disagree with the statement that "Typically, large forest owners or managers like the State Forest Enterprise (LVM, Latvijas valsts meži)4 often conduct clear-cuts at minimum diameter, while smallholders tend to wait until roundwood prices are high". There are no evidence provided. LVM conducts clear felling (regeneration felling) mostly in stands that have reached legally defined harvesting age. Cutting by target diameter is very low (for example, in period from 2018 – 2022 only 0.4% of stands harvested based on diameter). In 2023, 0.8% of stands will be harvested based on diameter. It should be noted that spruce stands can benefit from the reduction of the legal cutting diameters because spruce contains high risk of bark beetle damages.	The relevant part of the analysis is revised accordingly.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Forest Manager continued	**Indicator 1.1.2:** LVM has no management rights in forests reserved for restitution. Please double check, but most likely public reserve lands are managed by municipalities. For your information, all internal evaluations and independent assessments regarding long-term tenure agreements are completed. All independent assessments that were carried out confirmed that the long-term tenure agreements are in compliance with the applicable laws and aligned with best interests of LVM. Also, it should be noted that the legal competent authorities have not identified any breaches of the legal provisions. Therefore, we propose to delete the last two sentences, which states that "It can be noted here that the evaluation of long-term tenure agreements on state-owned forests is initiated. There are concerns that some of these contacts are questionable, but no definitive proof is available."	The text is revised accordingly.
	Indicator 2.1.1: It is not clear why the specified risk for this indicator was assigned. Previously, the risk designation for the indicator 2.1.1 HCV category 1 was designated as low risk (source: SBP Regional Risk Assessment for Latvia, September 2017). Therefore, it is not clear why now when forests in Latvia have been fully surveyed/mapped, the risk designation changed to 'specified risk' (in 2020, Nature Census was completed)? Looks like as more values identified risk category increases. The statement that "The forests in Latvia have not been examined fully for HCV by the relevant state authority..." is not correct. Please be aware that the term HCV is used only by the certification schemes. In the national conservation system other terminology used, e.g. especially protected species, specially protected habitats of Latvia. In order to harmonize with the national context, we propose the following wording: HCV category 1 includes major locations of concentrations of species mapped and protected under the Habitats Directive and designated as Natura 2000 sites. At the national level management of these areas specified in legal requirements. In Latvia protected areas and areas with different restrictions on economic activities apply to 28.2% from total forest areas. In total 658 areas of especially protected areas have been established that are significant at regional and national levels. Many of these areas are included in NATURA 2000 network of protected territories (source: skaitlifakti_LV_2022 (zm.gov.lv).	The relevant part of the analysis is revised. It is highlighted that Under the Nature Census, the mapping of the habitats of EU importance in Latvia is done during 2017-2022. However, mapping the protected species was not the task of the Nature Census. Therefore, data on protected species was not collected comprehensively during Nature Census surveys. Consequently, as the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests, the data on protected species is fragmented, and not all locations of the protection of species are mapped and protected. According to the Nature Conservation Agency (Prioritised action framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 in Latvia), suitable protection areas could not yet be designated for three species (Unio crassus, Osmoderma eremita, Barbastella barbastellus) and seven habitat types of the EU importance (1 marine, 6 terrestrial). Another related challenge in Latvia is that LVM data are not publicly available, thus limiting options to verify that wood has not been sourced from locations of protected species.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Forest Manager continued	Additionally, to especially protected areas in Latvia key species, habitats are protected through micro-reserves. According to the Nature Agency, 48,410 ha micro reserves and 72,000 ha buffer zones established (source: https://www.daba.gov.lv/lv/aizsargajamo-teritoriju-platiba). Also, the statement that "...active survey and identification of woodland key habitats have taken place in state-managed forests and EU-protected habitats have taken place in all forests, but still, there is limited information on the location of HCVs in non-certified forests" is not correct. Regarding woodland key habitats (WKH) there are no-up-to date information available (WKH is historical term that was used in late 90s referring to single, short time project that was conducted in co-operation with a Swedish company). Nowadays the term WKH replaced by Habitats of EU importance. All the latest information can be found only about Habitats of EU Importance (information regarding the WKH outdated). The web link http://latbio.lv/MBI/ is not Woodland key habitat instrument. The information is misleading, therefore please delete from the verification means listed below. We disagree with the statement that "However, given several important habitat sites, e.g., the nesting areas of many species included in the Birds Directive Annex I, are not identified within the State Register of Forests. This can result in forest management activities threatening the conservation status of many species through habitat removal and fragmentation. Moreover, data on habitats of specially protected species are not complete, thus there are some cases of destruction of such sites, even though the mapping of EU forest habitats was carried out in Latvia from 2017 until 2020 by Nature Conservation Agency. Considering the facts above, there is a specified risk that all key species, habitats, ecosystems, and HCVs on biodiversity under this category are not comprehensively identified." The certified companies are required prior any management activity to conduct EIA and assure protection of especially protected key species, habitats and ecosystems. Annual surveillance audits are being conducted to verify compliance. Additionally, the certified companies on a voluntary basis are contributing and extending already established nationally designated network of protected areas with no compensations.	Moreover, the procedure to make legal protection status is slow and landowners can still do cutting in an area while it is being legally established as a protected area. Consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests about 5,000 ha of forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia have been lost due to clearcutting since 2017 (see, Nature Census data: In Latvia, grasslands are the worst at the moment, other habitat groups also need thoughtful long-term management.Nature Conservation Agency (daba.gov.lv)). It is also highlighted that, according to the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency and Latvian Ornithological Society, there are cases of deliberately destroying bird nests within the forests so that there is no restriction to protect it. The Latvian Ornithological Society estimated – in the Species Conservation Plan for Hazel Grouse – that annually, about 51,000 birds' nests are destroyed by logging activities in state forests alone in Latvia. Furthermore, Latvian Fund for Nature has collected data on the destruction of nests of a lesser spotted eagle (Clanga pomarine) (https://www.birdlife.org/news/2022/09/05/of-clearcuts-and-birds-part4-latvia/). This data is used for several court cases (see http://mazaiserglis.lv/en/news/the-latvian-fund-for-nature-wins-in-court-in-the-proceedings-of-the-state-forest-service-regarding-the-abolition-of-micro-reserves-for-the-lesser-spotted-eagle). Thus, the risk class remains specified.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Forest Manager continued	**Regarding HCV3 category:** It is not clear why now when forests in Latvia have been fully surveyed / mapped, the risk designation changed to 'specified risk' (in year 2020, Nature Census was completed). Looks like as more values identified risk category increases. Besides, according to the FSC definition HCV3 shall include rare, threatened, or endangered ecosystems habitats or refugia (source: FSC-STD-60-004 V2-1). Therefore, we propose following wording: This includes Natura 2000 sites, concentration territories of Habitats of European Union importance and Specially protected habitats of Latvia. There are no such term as WKH (please see the comment above). All HCV categories in certified forests we propose to designate with low-risk threshold. In year 2020, Nature Census was completed. Specified risk class for HCV4 not justified. The assessment of HCV4 pointing to low risk, for example, it is written that "The risk for this category is considered low due to the strong legal framework the aimed at protection of ecosystem services through protection belt legislation". We propose to amend the risk conclusion and justification stating that the risk class for HCV Category 4 is low due to the strong legal framework. Please be aware that the verification means does not include any means regarding protection belts.	WKH is replaced with the habitats of EU importance. http://latbio.lv/MBI/ is deleted. HCV 3 definition is revised accordingly. The risk classification for HCV 1 is assessed to 'specified' but low for HCV 2 – 4.
	Indicator 2.1.2: All HCV categories in certified forests we propose to designate with low-risk threshold. Forests in Latvia have been fully surveyed / mapped (in year 2020, Nature Census was completed). We disagree with the statement that "..in the absence of information related to several important habitat sites, e.g., the nesting areas of many species included in the Birds Directive Annex I, woodland key habitats and / or EU habitats, this can result in forest management activities threatening the conservation status of many species through habitat fragmentation and removal". The certified organisations are required prior to any management activities to conduct EIA and assure protection of especially protected key species, habitats and ecosystems. Annual surveillance audits are being conducted to verify compliance.	The analysis is revised based on the inputs from the stakeholder consultation. The analysis suggests that there is a risk that the threats to and impacts on some protected species and their habitats are not fully identified and evaluated, particularly in areas with HCV 1 objects. Thus, the risk class remains specified.

Organisation	Comment	Response
Forest Manager continued	Besides it is written that "Information on rare, threatened and endangered (RTE) species protected territories, nesting sites and habitats, recognised and protected by national legislation is available from the National Nature Data Management System OZOLS where biodiversity-related data is stored. NCA is responsible for the maintenance and development of the system, as stated in the national regulations. Data stored in the system have multiple uses in the implementation of national legislation regarding nature conservation (issuing permits, control, planning, environmental impact assessments, reporting on the habitat and species conservation status, etc.). Data held in the State Register of Forests (SRF) administrated by the State Forest Service are also cross-checked during the processing for issuing felling permits against limitations of forest management activities", which proves that Latvia has system in place to assure protection for key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation values. The certified organisations are required to assure protection for rare, threatened and endangered species, including bird species (e.g. black stork, lesser spotted eagle for instance). Additional to legal requirements certified organisations are implementing various voluntary measures, which aim to minimise negative impacts of economic activity. For example, LVM imposes seasonal ban in biodiversity core areas, in Capercaillie lek sites, in bufferzones around nests of protected bird species and many other protection means that are checked during the annual certification audits. We disagree with the statement that "one of the nature conservation-related problems in forests owned by the State Forest Enterprise (LVM), and private forest owners is wood sourcing form forest sites mapped as forest habitats of EU importance under the EU Habitats Directive. Legislation in Latvia does not prohibit the State Forest Service to issue cutting permits on sites where EU forest habitats are mapped. Expert consultation suggests that there have been some changes recently with the State Forest Service declining permits for cutting EU forest habitats within Natura 2000 sites. Expert consultation suggests that there are a couple of court cases on those issues recently in Latvia (one involving the State Forest Enterprise, LVM)." The statement is misinterpreting of the EU directives. The Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, states that the aim of Directive being to promote the maintenance of biodiversity, taking account of economic, social, cultural and regional requirements. The member States shall bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with the Directive. The member States shall periodically review: degree of representation; degree of conservation; global assessment of the value of the site for conservation; degree of isolation etc.	

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Forest Manager continued	In Latvia legal protection status for habitats of EU importance assured through existing Natura 2000 network, Specially Protected Nature Areas, and Microreserves. "The aim of the Natura network is to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats, listed under both the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive". (source: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm). Additionally, LVM on voluntary basis outside of legally protected areas identifies habitats of EU importance as well as concentration places of habitats of EU importance. Also, ensures protection according to the certification requirements. The risk threshold for certified organisations should be low risk. The National regulations already assuring and safeguarding major locations of concentrations of species protected under the Habitats Directive. Additionally, the certified companies on voluntary basis are contributing and extending already established nationally designated network of protected areas with no compensations. Also, national legislation is being improved (please review annotation of the Cabinet of Ministers' Regulations: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/public_participation/92165df1-66ff-432d-b85c-cc6942e11af3 (as result 76 new nature reserves will be established and 6 existing nature reserves extended, in total 21,000 ha affecting, 90% on LVM lands.	
	Indicator 2.1.3: The certified companies are required prior any management activity (including prior melioration maintenance works and construction of forest roads) conduct EIA and assure protection of especially protected key species, habitats and ecosystems. Annual surveillance audits are being conducted to verify compliance. The certified organisations are required prior any management activity to conduct EIA and mitigate identified impacts. Annual surveillance audits are being conducted to verify compliance. Regarding means of verification, the web link http://latbio.lv/MBI/ is not Woodland key habitat instrument. The information is misleading, therefore please delete from the verification means listed below. The term WKH replaced by Habitats of EU importance.	The Working Body would like to highlight that the detailed assessments (with revised analyses) done for indicators 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 suggests that the risks and threats to certain protected species and their habitats (related to HCV category 1 in all forests) are not identified and evaluated. Without such identification and evaluation, there is a risk that those key species and habitats cannot be maintained or enhanced adequately. Thus, the risk remained specified. The link http://latbio.lv/MBI/ is deleted.
	Indicator 2.2.4: Residue collection is part of logging and is subject to the same regulations, e.g. water and soil protection, seasonal restrictions etc. Please be aware that removal of logging residues from poor soil types can help to preserve those habitat types.	The relevant parts of the analysis are now revised.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Forest Manager continued	**Indicator 2.2.7:** In forests, only small amounts of herbicide are used to control spread of invasive plant hogweed (Heracleum sosnovskyi). Regarding application of herbicides to control spread of the invasive plant, LVM is outsourcing such works. Application of the herbicides are done by certified contractors who are allowed to use and store chemicals. LVM employees are conducting regular surveillance of works. The statement that "plant protection product-related legislation have been registered by the State Forest Service" is not correct. In Latvia, the State Plant Protection Service maintains register of all pesticides that are allowed to import, manufacture, sell or use.	The relevant parts of the analysis are now revised accordingly.
	Indicator 3.2.3: The certified organisations are required prior any management activity to conduct EIA and assure protection of especially protected key species, habitats and ecosystems. Additionally, the certified organisations on voluntary basis are contributing and extending already established nationally designated network of protected areas. Annual surveillance audits are being conducted to verify compliance. Therefore, the risk classes for the certified and non-certified organisations should differ.	Indicator 3.2.3 is reviewed based on the information. The risk classification remains 'specified' (see our response to the issue of certification in the previous comments).
	Indicator 3.3.1: The risk threshold for certified organisations should be classified to be low. LVM's sales procedures excludes cases when valuable assortments would be used for biomass. LVM conducts clear felling (regeneration felling) mostly in stands that have reached legally defined harvesting age. Cutting by target diameter is very low (for example, in period from 2018 – 2022 only 0.4% of stands harvested based on diameter). In 2023, 0.8% of stands will be harvested based on diameter. Please provide more detailed information regarding reduction of the legal cutting diameter as the changes were insignificant. Besides there are countries where no limitations regarding harvesting and diameters exists. Risk for producing biomass from wood that could be used for other purposes is very low. Risks only arise in a distorted market situation, which is relatively rare. In Latvia, the risk of small-scale diversion of the market over the last 30 years has only occurred once for 2 months. Given the rarity of the risk, it can be argued that there is no risk in Latvia.	Indicator 3.3.1 is revised accordingly. The risk classification is changed to be low.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Forest Manager continued	**Indicator 4.1.8:** The certified organisations are required to ensure that all workers have the necessary qualifications and skills. Annual surveillance audits are being conducted to verify compliance. Therefore, the risk threshold for certified organisations shall be classified to be low.	The scope of training shall cover all elements of SBP standards as relevant. Forestry education and qualification requirements for forestry work are good, but there is no guarantee that the available training covers ALL elements of SBP standards. Thus, the risk class remains specified.
	Indicator 4.2.1: It is written that "however, the level of allowed participation is often limited, and decisions are made by elected deputies", but no example provided. We are not aware of any case when participation would be restricted. It is not clear what "normal forestry operations" means? Even for construction / reconstruction of roads and the reconstruction of drainage systems EIA is needed. Any construction requires a building permit and technical provisions issued by the State Environmental Service.	The referred sentence is removed as being unclear and vague. "Normal forestry operations" mean forestry activities for wood production on land allocated for forestry use. The wording is clarified.
	Indicator 4.2.4: It is not clear what the term traditional communities means. Could you please provide the definition? It is quite doubtful that Roma people, Russians, Jews, Belarusians, and other nationalities could be considered traditional peoples.	The term is changed to ethnic minorities.
	Indicator 4.2.5: LVM conducts clear felling (regeneration felling) mostly in stands that have reached legally defined harvesting age. Cutting by target diameter is very low (for example, in period from 2018 – 2022 only 0.4% of stands harvested based on diameter). In 2023, 0.8% of stands will be harvested based on diameter. Please provide more detailed information regarding reduction of the legal cutting diameter as the changes were insignificant. Besides there are countries where no limitations regarding harvesting and diameters exists. For the statement that "the intensity of forest harvesting has increased..." evidence not provided.	The share of target diameter logging in 2023 was added. Reference is added, the text is revised. The risk category is changed to low.
	Indicator 4.2.6: According to the FSC definition, HCV5 should include sites and resources fundamental for satisfying the basic necessities of local communities or Indigenous Peoples (for example for livelihoods, health, nutrition, water), identified through engagement with these communities or Indigenous Peoples. In Latvia, recreation, mushroom and berry picking cannot be considered as resources fundamental for satisfying the basic needs.	It is stated that Indicator 4.2.6 is not applicable in Latvia.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Forest Manager continued	**Indicator 4.2.7:** Regarding Avotini Castle Hill, it was found that National Heritage Board and LVM had different co-ordinates of the burial site. This is the only case with a significant data discrepancy, on the basis of which no comprehensive conclusions can be drawn. The regular exchange of data between LVM and National Heritage Board is currently ongoing and the possibility of a risk occurrence has been eliminated.	Text modified taking into consideration the comment.
Trade Association*	**Indicators 2.1.1 – 2.1.3** should be low risk as protected areas (e.g. woodland key habitats) even in private forests are mapped about three years ago.	The analyses in these indicators are revised based on the inputs from the stakeholder consultation. The analyses suggest that the risk classes remain specified for all these indicators.
	Indicator 3.3.1 should be low risk as the market regulates cascading. Except for a certain period after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a negligible amount of higher value log goes to energy use.	The indicator 3.3.1 is revised accordingly. The risk classification is changed to be low.
	Indicator 4.1.8 should be low risk as the forestry sector companies train their people. In case of private forests, the State Forest Service check if the operations (e.g. regeneration, harvesting etc.) are done correctly. Chain-saw harvesting is rare. Most harvesting is mechanized and done by trained people	4.1.8 The scope of training shall cover all elements of SBP standards, as relevant. There is no guarantee that the available training covers ALL elements of SBP standards.
	Indicator 3.2.3: Should be low risk because normally wetland areas (that are HCV with high carbon stock) are harvested in Latvia as the cost of harvesting is high and mostly low quality wood is produced	The indicator 3.2.3 is reviewed. The risk classification remains unchanged.
	Indicator 3.3.1 should be low risk because the market usually regulates (except for a certain period after the Russian invasion of Ukraine) the cascading. High quality wood (of birch, pine, spruce and oak) is not sold to bioenergy producers in a very large volume. However, low quality wood, e.g. about 50% wood of aspen and alder is sold to such producers.	The indicator 3.3.1 is revised accordingly. The risk classification is changed to be low.
	Indicator 4.1.8 should be low risk because wood harvesting is done by the trained professionals.	4.1.8 The scope of training shall cover all elements of SBP standards as relevant. There is no guarantee that the available training covers ALL elements of SBP standards. Thus, the risk class remains specified.

* Note: The comments are given by [.] president during a face-to-face consultation meeting in Riga on 18 May 2023, and written comments from Association are given and addressed later in this table.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Trade Association* continued	**Indicator 4.2.5** heavily based on the ongoing court case – risk classification should be reviewed.	4.2.5 Risk category changed to low because there are different access levels to address appeals and disputes. Existence of the operational grievance procedures emphasised; the risk of supplying contested wood still exists, due to the court case. Therefore, risk is deemed as specified.
Civil Society Organisation	**Indicator 1.1.1:** You write that "the forest harvesting level in Latvia remains far below annual growth" (page 2). It is not very clear how you came to this conclusion but I hope you didn't compare the State Forest Service data on the harvesting level with the growth data from "Silava". This shouldn't be done due to different methodologies behind these data. Though it is true that the harvesting level is below the annual increment the latest data from "Silava" show that the harvesting volume is 76% of the increment, and I'm not sure it would qualify as "far below". Furthermore, with the logging volume steadily increasing over the last ten years and the increment decreasing within the same period, the gap between the two is becoming ever narrower. The conclusion that "woody feedstock sourcing and biomass production for energy generation in Latvia (..) comply with the applicable national and EU-level laws and regulations" (page 2) contradicts the further conclusions within this assessment but not only that. In the section "Enforcement and monitoring" you refer to Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/3941-law-on-the-conservation-of-species-and-biotopes). Note specifically Section 9, which requires land owners and users "to promote the preservation of the diversity of species and biotopes" and Section 11, which prohibits "destruction or deterioration of breeding sites". As further in the document you clearly show that protected biotopes and habitats of specially protected species are being destroyed, it is clear that both of the aforementioned requirements of the law are not obeyed. Furthermore, we (Latvian Ornithological Society) have estimated that more than 50.9 thousand birds' nests are being destroyed by logging activities annually in state forests alone (see annex of the species conservation plan for Hazel Grouse (in Latvian): https://www.daba.gov.lv/lv/media/5918/download?attachment). This is a clear violation of both the Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes and Birds Directive.	The relevant analysis is revised. This indicator concerns if biomass sourcing and production operations comply with all applicable and existing laws and regulations. As the analysis in the indicator suggests, existing legislation is complied with. It is highlighted that The Law on Forests (2000), Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (1993) and their subordinated regulations, e.g., Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 935 from 2012 on Harvesting of Trees in Forest, Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 309 from 2012 on Harvest of Trees Outside Forest and the General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories fully address the above requirements. Moreover, the Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 686 on 'Rules on sustainability and greenhouse gas emissions savings criteria, criteria for electricity produced from biomass fuel and procedures for justifying, certifying and monitoring compliance with the mentioned criteria ("Noteikumi par ilgtspējas un siltumnīcefekta gāzu emisiju ietaupījuma kritērijiem, no biomasas kurināmā ražotās elektroenerģijas kritērijiem un kārtību, kādā pamatojama, apliecināma un uzraugāma atbilstība minētajiem kritērijiem") was put in place in November 2022. The Regulations address REDII requirements and suggest a mechanism to fulfil them.

* Note: The comments are given by [.] president during a face-to-face consultation meeting in Riga on 18 May 2023, and written comments from Association are given and addressed later in this table.

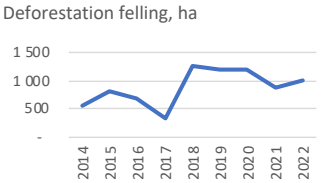
Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Civil Society Organisation continued	Therefore, in my opinion the risk rating for indicator 1.1.1 should be "specified risk".	In addition to the above, it can be mentioned that the European Union published an assessment on the preparation of guidance for the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in RED II in February 2022. According to the assessment, the existing applicable Latvian legislation fully addresses the RED II requirements concerning forest biomass. Since there is no report of notable violation of legislation on any notable scale, it can be concluded that there is no risk of noncompliance regarding this indicator. Therefore, the risk class remains low.
	Indicator 2.1.1: You write that "in Latvia, the information available on the location and geographical distribution of nature conservation areas, rare, threatened and endangered species, habitats and HCV can be considered sufficient," (page 11) which seems to contradict the sentence not much further: "The forests in Latvia have not been examined fully for HCV by the relevant state authority..." and another one still further (page 12): "Moreover, data on habitats of specially protected species are not complete, thus there are some cases of destruction of such sites." It is true that the data on the habitats of specially protected species is far from complete, which is one of the reasons why these habitats are still being destroyed. You refer to a nine-year old document to claim that "Latvian bird populations serve as donor populations for other parts of Europe" (page 12), which is partially not true anymore. E.g., the population of Black Stork is declining in Latvia (and the Baltic States on the whole), while increasing in the rest of Europe (https://nature-art12.eionet.europa.eu/article12/summary?period=3&subject=Ciconia+nigra&reported_name=). In contradiction to other parts of the document you claim that "the remaining relatively small areas of old-growth forests are mostly under protection and partially are included in the strict reserves or strict reserve zones of nature protection territories. Representative samples of natural forest habitats and valuable ecosystems have been surveyed in state forests, identified and protected under the Habitats Directive (..) and designated as Natura 2000 sites." (page 13).	The relevant part of the analysis is revised accordingly. It is highlighted that Under the Nature Census, the mapping of the habitats of EU importance in Latvia is done during 2017-2022. However, mapping the protected species was not the task of the Nature Census. Therefore, data on protected species was not collected comprehensively during Nature Census surveys. Consequently, as the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests, the data on protected species is fragmented, and not all locations of the protection of species are mapped and protected. According to the Nature Conservation Agency (Prioritised action framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 in Latvia), suitable protection areas could not yet be designated for three species (Unio crassus, Osmoderma eremita, Barbastella barbastellus) and seven habitat types of the EU importance (1 marine, 6 terrestrial). Another related challenge in Latvia is that LVM data are not publicly available, thus limiting options to verify that wood has not been sourced from locations of protected species.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Civil Society Organisation continued	Also note that Nature Conservation Agency recently reported that "during the last five years about 5,000 ha of old, biologically valuable forests have been lost to clear cuts" (in Latvian: https://www.daba.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/dabas-skaitisanas-dati-latvija-vissliktak-sobrid-klajas-zalajiem-ari-parejam-biotopu-grupam-nepieciesama-pardomata-ilgtermina-apsaimniekosana). Therefore, your conclusion that "the risk level for this subcategory is considered to be low" is not justified. It is not clear why you refer only to "uncertified private forests" when talking about damage to objects of cultural heritage (page 16) as there have been cases when cultural heritage has been damaged in FSC-certified state forests (in Latvian: https://www.nkmp.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/situacija-avotinu-pilskalna-un-senkapos?utm ; https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/latvijas-valsts-mezi-ventspils-novada-nepamana-ka-buve-celu-senkapu-aizsargjosla.a402790/).	Moreover, the procedure to make legal protection status is slow and landowners can still do cutting in an area while it is being legally established as a protected area. Consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests about 5 000 ha of forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia have been lost due to clearcutting since 2017 (see, Nature Census data: In Latvia, grasslands are the worst at the moment, other habitat groups also need thoughtful long-term management. Nature Conservation Agency (daba.gov.lv)). It is also highlighted that, according to the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency and Latvian Ornithological Society, there are cases of deliberately destroying bird nests within the forests so that there is no restriction to protect them. The Latvian Ornithological Society estimated – in the Species Conservation Plan for Hazel Grouse – that annually, about 51,000 birds' nests are destroyed by logging activities in state forests alone in Latvia. Furthermore, Latvian Fund for Nature has collected data on the destruction of nests of a lesser spotted eagle (Clanga pomarine) (https://www.birdlife.org/news/2022/09/05/of-clearcuts-and-birds-part4-latvia/). This data is used for several court cases (see http://mazaiserglis.lv/en/news/the-latvian-fund-for-nature-wins-in-court-in-the-proceedings-of-the-state-forest-service-regarding-the-abolition-of-micro-reserves-for-the-lesser-spotted-eagle). Thus, the risk class remains specified.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Civil Society Organisation continued	**Indicator 2.2.1:** I want to emphasise what the indicator says: "Feedstock shall not be sourced from land that had one of the following statuses..." and one of these statuses include "forests" and "peatlands". The reason why I am emphasising this is that in the section "Analysis" (page 20-21) you describe the regulation on deforestation NOT whether the feedstock is sourced from the deforested areas. Note that the total area of deforestation felling is increasing (https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/en/OSP_PUB/START__NOZ__ME__MEZ/MEZ012/table/tableViewLayout1/) and there is no reason to believe that wood from these areas is not used as biomass feedstock. Therefore, the risk rating "low risk" is not justified.	It is correct that there is deforestation felling in Latvia. However, based on the data from the database (for which the link is given in the comment), there is a fluctuating pattern (please see below).  Source: https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/en/OSP_PUB/START__NOZ__ME__MEZ/MEZ012/table/tableViewLayout1/ Overall, the total area of deforestation felling is small in comparison to the area of harvest. Moreover, there is no systematic data – to the best of the working body's knowledge – on if and how much of wood from such feeling is used as biomass feedstock.
	Indicator 2.2.2: The analysis and conclusions under this indicator contradict what has been described under Element 2.1.1. As correctly stated in this section, species and habitats are basic parts of ecosystems. As has been clearly demonstrated before, these are being destroyed. This justifies risk assessment of "specified risk" also under this indicator.	As the revised analysis in Indicator 2.1.1 suggests, a certain number of protected species (out of many) and their habitats are not adequately identified or designated. However, this indicator deals with broader ecosystems that, in our assessment, function and are maintained well in Latvia. Therefore, the low risk class for this indicator remains.
	Indicator 2.2.9: See my comments about the harvesting level under Element 1.1.1 above.	The relevant text is revised accordingly.
	Indicator 3.2.1: You correctly state that "in the future, the total removals might, at times, exceed the annual increment" (page 38) though downplaying the fact that the harvesting intensity is the main reason for reduction in forest carbon sink. However, in the "Risk classification and justification" section you write that "measures are taken to tackle the increasing harvesting pressures" (page 39). It is not clear what these measures are and I don't know any. In contradiction, recently regulation was amended that will allow even more intensive harvesting: (in Latvian, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/preteji-vides-sargu-iebildem-valdiba-lauj-cirst-jaunakus-mezus-latvija.a462476/).	Indicator 3.2.1 is reviewed accordingly, and the effect of harvesting pressures is indicated more clearly.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Biomass Producer	**Indicator 2.1.1,** section "The forests in Latvia have not been examined fully for HCV by the relevant state authority, even though the major areas with a high concentration of HCVs have been identified and are covered by the network of protected nature areas with different protection regimes. Active survey and identification of woodland key habitats have taken place in state-managed forests and EU-protected habitats have taken place in all forests, but still, there is limited information on the location of HCVs in non-certified forests." Comment: According to the information available to us, the National Data Management System "Ozols"(hereinafter "data management system "Ozols"") maintained by the Nature Protection Agency, is recognised as an appropriate database for determining HCV areas and habitats of bird species in private, including non-certified forests, although in the FSC and SBP certification systems already from 2021. Initially, this database contained information about territories where the survey or registration of survey data was still in process, but already in 2022, in our six wood pellet production plants belonging to AS "Graanul Invest" group, there were no cases of deliveries from territories whose survey data were not available in the data management system "Ozols". The fact that the national data inventory has been completed is also confirmed by the information on the website of the Nature Protection Agency: "Dabas skaitīšana jeb Latvijas pirmreizējā dabas vērtību inventarizācija ir noslēgusies. Pētot pļavas, purvus, mežus, upes un ezerus, piejūras un iekšzemes kāpas, alas un iežu atsegumus kopumā 1,3 miljonu ha platībā, ir iegūti pilnīgākie dati par Latvijas dabu valsts vēsturē. Dati sniedz detalizētu informāciju par šī brīža Latvijas dabas dzīvotnēm, to vērtībām un kalpos kā nozīmīgs pamats plašākām diskusijām, uz faktiem balstītiem lēmumiem par situācijas saglabāšanu, uzlabošanu un dabas vērtību saglabāšanas politiku." Data source: https://www.daba.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/dabas-skaitisanas-dati-latvija-vissliktak-sobrid-klajas-zalajiem-ari-parejam-biotopu-grupam-nepieciesama-pardomata-ilgtermina-apsaimniekosana	The relevant part of the analysis is revised accordingly. It is stressed that Under the Nature Census, the mapping of the habitats of EU importance in Latvia is done during 2017-2022. However, mapping the protected species was not the task of the Nature Census. Therefore, data on protected species was not collected comprehensively during Nature Census surveys. Consequently, as the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests, the data on protected species is fragmented, and not all locations of the protection of species are mapped and protected. According to the Nature Conservation Agency (Prioritised action framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 in Latvia), suitable protection areas could not yet be designated for three species (Unio crassus, Osmoderma eremita, Barbastella barbastellus) and seven habitat types of the EU importance (1 marine, 6 terrestrial). Another related challenge in Latvia is that LVM data are not publicly available, thus limiting options to verify that wood has not been sourced from locations of protected species. Moreover, the procedure to make legal protection status is slow and landowners can still do cutting in an area while it is being legally established as a protected area. Consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests about 5,000 ha of forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia have been lost due to clearcutting since 2017 (see, Nature Census data: In Latvia, grasslands are the worst at the moment, other habitat groups also need thoughtful long-term management. Nature Conservation Agency (daba.gov.lv)).

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Biomass Producer continued	**Indicator 2.1.1,** section "HCV Category 1 Moreover, data on habitats of specially protected species are not complete, thus there are some cases of destruction of such sites, even though the mapping of EU forest habitats was carried out in Latvia from 2017 until 2020 by Nature Conservation Agency. Considering the facts above, there is a specified risk that all key species, habitats ecosystems, and HCVs on biodiversity under this category are not comprehensively identified." From the description, it is not clear on which protected species there is a lack of information and on which facts the specified-risk assessment is based in relation to the criterion. Considering that the nature data inventory has completed and its results are available in the data management system "Ozols", we cannot agree that a specified risk can be recognised in this indicator, so we ask you to review the justification or the result of the risk assessment.	It is also highlighted that, according to the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency and Latvian Ornithological Society, there are cases of deliberately destroying bird nests within the forests so that there is no restriction to protect it. The Latvian Ornithological Society estimated – in the Species Conservation Plan for Hazel Grouse – that annually about 51,000 birds' nests are destroyed by logging activities in state forests alone in Latvia. Furthermore, Latvian Fund for Nature has collected data on destruction of nests of lesser spotted eagle (Clanga pomarine) (https://www.birdlife.org/news/2022/09/05/of-clearcuts-and-birds-part4-latvia/). This data is used for several court cases (see http://mazaiserglis.lv/en/news/the-latvian-fund-for-nature-wins-in-court-in-the-proceedings-of-the-state-forest-service-regarding-the-abolition-of-micro-reserves-for-the-lesser-spotted-eagle). Thus, the risk class remains specified.
	Indicator 2.1.2: In the evaluation of the indicator, it is not clear to which HCV category the specified risk is attributed. We also cannot fully agree with the assessment that the preservation of bird species is threatened as a result of logging processes. In the bird census in 2022, out of 120 species, an increase was found for 26 bird species, and a decrease for 19 species, compared to 2005. A large part of the species that were found to decrease are meadow bird species, so it cannot be clearly defined that the decrease in the number of birds is affected by logging processes. http://www.putni.lv/pdf/Aunins_2023.pdf In the 2020 State Monitoring of Birds, out of 120 species, an increase was found in 30 bird species, and a decrease in 20 species, compared to 2005. https://www.daba.gov.lv/lv/media/13165/download?attachment` We ask you to review the result of the risk assessment or to provide clarifications on the HCV category to which the risk is attributed.	As the revised analysis in Indicator 2.1.1 suggests, a certain number of protected species and their habitats are not adequately identified or designated. However, this indicator deals with broader ecosystems that in our assessment function and are maintained well in Latvia. Thus, the risk class remains specified.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

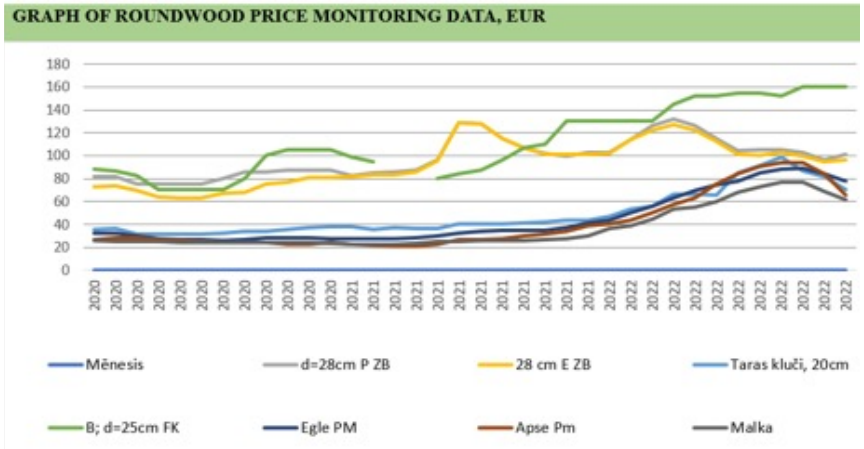
Organisation	Comment	Response
Biomass Producer continued	Indicator 3.2.3: In the description of this indicator mentions the research carried out by the Latvian State Forestry Institute "Silava". Unfortunately, when contacting the institute's leading researcher Mudrīte Daugaviete to receive a specialist assessment on this indicator on May 17, it became clear that the institute's representatives did not receive an invitation to provide their comments on the risk assessment update. Taking into account that at the time of our communication there were only 2 days left until the deadline for submitting comments, the representatives of the institute no longer had the opportunity to give an official written answer, but in a telephone conversation on May 19, Mudrīte Daugaviete informed that she had discussed this indicator with her colleague Guntars Šņepts, researcher of National Forest Inventory group, who is responsible for the National forest resources monitoring group, and they generally concludes that the information provided in the description of the indicator is correct, however, they does not agree that a specified risk could be determined in this indicator and believes that Latvian legislation include sufficient requirements so that the risk of this indicator criteria could be assessed as low risk. Taking into account the contribution of the Latvian State Forestry Institute "Silava" to the research of the criteria defined in this indicator, we ask you to discuss the assessment of this risk with the institute's researcher Guntars Šņepsts (https://www.silava.lv/darbinieki/zinatniskie-darbinieki) and review the result of assessment.	The risk assessment draft was sent to Mr Ansis Actiņš from "Silava". Mr Actiņš was identified as the contact person by our national consultant. Indicator 3.2.3 is reviewed based on the information. The risk remains specified due to other factors that came up in the stakeholder consultation.
	Indicator 3.3.1: Single claims and cases where higher value timber being sold to lower priority industries cannot result in specified risk in the short term and long term price relations between different timber quality classes are not affected. The clear criteria for quality classes have been consistent over time and across specifications. The criteria are publicly available for different sectors and are implemented and monitored uniformly throughout the chain, from forestry to final consumption. There is evidence of uniform wood quality classes in forest management plans, forestry inventories, logging permits, stemwood invoices, waybills, measurement reports, price statistics of the last decade, contracts, all commercial companies in the industry and reports of purchased wood accounting systems. No information or data can be found on regular, large-scale, deliberate, or accidental sales of wood raw materials that would contradict the cascading principle.	Indicator 3.3.1 was revised accordingly. The risk classification was changed to be low.

Organisation	Comment	Response
Biomass Producer continued	Below we provide information on the prices of roundwood assortments from 2020 to 2022.	

ROUNDWOOD PRICE MONITORING, EUR

Gads	Mēnesis	d=28cm P ZB	28 cm E ZB	Taras kluči, 20cm	B; d=25cm FK	Egle PM	Apse Pm	Malka	d=14cm ZB
2020	J	82.00	72.71	35.80	88.00	32.21	26.67	25.96	59.00
2020	F	82.00	73.71	36.20	86.50	32.00	28.33	25.41	59.00
2020	M	75.00	69.83	31.75	82.50	29.75	28.00	25.19	56.80
2020	A	75.00	63.67	31.75	70.00	27.75	27.00	24.84	54.20
2020	M	75.00	62.83	31.75	70.00	26.33	25.50	24.40	55.20
2020	J	75.00	62.83	31.40	70.00	26.33	25.00	24.27	55.20
2020	J	80.00	67.17	32.40	70.00	26.00	24.33	24.20	55.60
2020	A	86.00	67.83	33.80	80.00	26.33	24.50	24.05	56.40
2020	S	86.00	75.43	34.20	100.00	28.00	24.00	23.83	60.67
2020	O	87.00	77.14	35.20	105.00	28.20	22.75	24.04	61.00
2020	N	87.50	81.00	37.00	105.00	28.00	22.67	23.88	61.67
2020	D	87.50	81.29	38.00	105.00	27.60	24.00	23.37	62.00
2021	J	82.14	81.8	38.00	99.00	27.40	23.00	22.58	62.50
2021	F	85.14	83	35.40	95.00	27.50	21.67	22.66	62.83
2021	M	85.71	83	36.80		27.50	21.00	22.72	62.83
2021	A	87.43	85.86	36.60		28.14	21.33	23.20	65.83
2021	M	96.29	95.29	36.00	80.00	30.14	22.33	25.10	71.00
2021	J	128.50	128.83	40.75	84.00	32.57	26.25	25.23	94.00
2021	J	128.00	128.29	40.75	87.50	33.86	26.80	25.68	96.83
2021	A	114.57	114.71	40.50	96.00	35.00	27.33	26.11	87.17
2021	S	107.14	106.86	41.50	107.00	35.00	29.94	26.09	79.33
2021	O	101.86	101.57	42.25	110.00	35.00	31.13	26.99	79.60
2021	N	99.67	101.57	44.00	130.00	36.83	33.57	27.55	79.60
2021	D	102.57	101.57	44.00	130.00	41.57	38.71	30.21	75.50
2022	J	102.86	101.86	47.20	130.00	43.57	40.13	36.43	75.00
2022	F	114.14	114	53.40	130.00	49.86	43.43	38.44	78.67
2022	M	126.57	122.14	56.00	130.00	56.00	50.43	44.65	82.67
2022	A	132.14	127	66.00	145.00	63.29	57.14	53.67	83.33
2022	M	126.57	122	66.00	152.50	69.43	63.29	54.89	82.33
2022	J	115.29	112.57	65.67	152.50	74.38	75.29	59.57	76.67
2022	J	104.43	101.29	85.00	155.00	77.50	84.29	68.16	74.00
2022	A	105.00	100.29	91.67	155.00	84.86	90.83	72.71	83.00
2022	S	105.50	102.71	98.33	152.50	87.86	94.17	76.78	85.00
2022	O	103.00	99.57	86.67	160.00	88.71	94.17	76.98	84.40
2022	N	96.50	94.67	81.67	160.00	84.40	84.33	69.14	82.60
2022	D	100.83	96.67	70.50	160.00	77.60	65.33	61.88	84.60

Data source:
https://latvianwood.lv/ apaļkoku cenu monitorings sākot no 2020.gada līdz 2022.gadam

Organisation	Comment	Response
Biomass Producer continued	 Data source: https://latvianwood.lv/ apaļkoku cenu monitorings sākot no 2020.gada līdz 2022.gadam In the price monitoring table and the data graphic, we can see that the roundwood assortment "malka" (energywood), which is used for the production of wood chips and wood chip pellets, are the cheapest assortment. Therefore, we cannot agree that there is a specified risk that low-quality wood processing companies would be able to use high quality wood in the long term. We cannot agree with the high level of risk in this criterion, so we ask you to review the result of the risk assessment.	
	Indicator 4.1.8, section "The Labour Law requires that employers provide training to workers in safe and healthy working practices. The training obligation does not cover all the elements of SBP standards. The Latvian legislation requires up-to-date training on health and safety and the assigned working tasks. The availability of competent employees in forestry is satisfactory. However, the adequate competence of workers and managers on SBP requirements requires special attention. For this reason, the risk is classified as specified." From the description of this indicator, it is not clear which elements of the SBP standard are not covered by the requirements of Latvian legislation related to health and safety in the forestry sector. We believe that the Latvian legislation on health and safety requirements in forestry cover all the requirements of SBP standards.	The scope of training shall cover all elements of SBP standards as relevant. There is no guarantee that the available training covers ALL elements of SBP standards. For this reason, the risk class remains specified.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Biomass Producer continued	For the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of the SBP standard, work safety audits were organised for the suppliers of the 6 Latvian pellet plants belonging to "Graanul Invest" group: 79 audits in 2022, 62 audits in 2021, and 45 audits in 2020 in order to assess the fulfillment of health and safety requirements in the forestry processes. The audit results show that, in general, occupational health and safety requirements are met, which allows us to conclude that the awareness and knowledge of employees about the requirements is also at a sufficient level. In business, when concluding co-operation agreements the standard practice is to inform the co-operation partner (in the case of "Graanul Invest" Latvian pellets plants – when concluding agreements with feedstock suppliers) about the requirements binding on the company. Subsequently, if the company is certified according to one of the standards (FSC, PEFC or SBP), it will successively inform its partners about the requirements of related standards. We cannot agree with a specified risk in this criterion, so we ask you to review the result of the risk assessment or clarify the specific points of SBP standard requirements that are not covered by Latvian regulations.	
	Indicator 4.2.5, section "Latvia grants the public, specifically individuals and NGOs, very broad access to justice in environmental cases, i.e., the right to defend common interests. Everyone has the right to complain to the responsible administrative institution or an appeal before the administrative court in environmental matters without any other specific conditions, i.e., a complaint may be lodged if a person considers that an administrative decision, a real action or an omission violates the law protecting the environment and nature or threatens to cause damage to the environment. The intensity of forest harvesting has increased and raised criticism, especially among environmental organisations. Based on the right to lodge an environmental complaint to court, the main ENGOs (Latvian Fund for Nature (LDF), the Latvian Ornithological Society (LOB) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have strongly criticised the government for lowering the minimum size of harvestable trees to have access to higher harvesting volumes during the current energy crises. The ENGOs claim that the Law on Forests and related regulations were changed without following the statutory consultation procedures established for enacting a law. The conflict is brought to court in December 2022. The debate on the issue has been ongoing for two years.	The risk category changed to low because there are different access levels to address appeals and disputes.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Biomass Producer continued	The risk for supplying wood from forests where harvesting is done with the revised rules on minimum diameters contested by ENGOs is specified. That conflict is in court. The procedures to settle disputes related to tenure and labour rights and customary use of forests present only a low risk." The description of the risk indicator, in particular the conclusion "The risk for supplying wood from forests where harvesting is done with the revised rules on minimum diameters contested by ENGOs is specified" does not meet the indicator criterion that mechanisms shall be in place for resolving grievances and disputes. The existence and operation of the mechanism for resolving complaints and disputes is confirmed by the fact that this conflict regarding the changes to the Forest Law and related regulations went to court in December 2022. Subsequently, regardless of the court's decision in the resolution of this conflict, it does not affect the already existing and operational complaint and dispute resolution mechanism. Thus, we cannot agree with a specified risk in this criterion, because the complaint and dispute review mechanism in Latvia is valid.	
Trade Association	**Indicator 4.2.5:** Original comment in Latvian: Divas piezīmes par pamatojumu "4.2.5. Mechanisms shall be in place for resolving grievances and disputes, relating to tenure and use rights of the forest and other land management practices." specifiskajam riskam: 1. Tas, ka norit Satversmes tiesa par grozījumiem Nr.935 "Noteikumi par koku ciršanu mežā" vien jau spilgti liecina, ka Latvijā ir strādājošs strīdus risināšanas mehānisms. 2. Satversmes tiesas lēmums būs zināms šajā vasarā, tādēļ neatkarīgi no tiesas lēmuma konkrētais SBP risks nebūs spēkā nākamajā gadā. Proti, ja tiesa atzīs, ka izmaiņas ir atbilstošas Satversmei, nav nekāda pamat neatzīt šo koksni par neatbilstošu SBP dēļ veiktajiem MK grozījumiem. Savukārt, ja tiesa lems, ka izmaiņas neatbilda Satversmes 115. pantam, apstrīdētais punkts nākamgad vairs nebūs spēkā. Auto-translation (DeepL): Two notes on the grounds "4.2.5. Mechanisms shall be in place for resolving grievances and disputes, relating to tenure and use rights of the forest and other land management practices." specific risk: 1. The fact that the Constitutional Court is hearing the amendments to No 935 "Regulations on felling of trees in forests" alone is a clear indication that there is a dispute resolution mechanism in place in Latvia.	The risk category changed to low because there are different access levels to address appeals and disputes.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Trade Association continued	2. The decision of the Constitutional Court will be known this summer, so regardless of the court's decision, the specific risk of the SBP will not apply next year. In particular, if the court finds that the changes are constitutional, there is no reason not to declare the wood unconstitutional because of the amendments made to the Cabinet of Ministers as a result of the SBP. On the other hand, if the court decides that the changes were not in conformity with Article 115 of the Constitution, the contested paragraph will no longer apply next year.	
Government body	Quickly reviewing the document, I did not notice any significant inaccuracies that still need to be corrected. Of course, there is always something to comment and clarify, but in general, I think the assessment is appropriate for the situation.	Noted with thanks.
End-user	Thank you for the revised RRA. We are glad to see that two indicators by our suggestion have been moved from specified to low. Thus two other indicators have been raised up to specified and we would like to ask some clarifications for these as we see that other Biomass producers hadn't made comments about these, probably because they wont have to mitigate these risks. Indicator 1.1.1. states that due to harvesting in EU biotopes there are destroyed 51,000 bird nests. Could you please provide this statement with a research as this argument has been valued so important to rise up the importance of this risk. About 51,000 birds' nests are destroyed by logging activities in state forests alone in Latvia. The above means requirements (iii) and (iv) of EU REDII are at risk of being not fulfilled in Latvia.	In light of the new evidence presented by the stakeholders and further research by the Working Body, the analysis is reviewed and revised. Based on the revised analysis, the risk class of this is indicator is assessed to be low.
	Indicator 2.2.1: absolutely not understandable about grasslands and forests that grow on these lands. Could you please give us some research about exactly year 2008? What is justification of this year? And if these are 15 year old stands than it means you still consider them as grasslands?! Please give us definition of „grassland". Why deforestation in these cases are prohibited? 15 year old trees are considered as a forest not grassland according to Latvian Forest law. And have you discussed these land transformation issues with Latvijas Zemes dienests (VZD) and went through Latvia development plan? However, as the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests – grassland habitats of the EU importance are in very poor state in Latvia. Since beginning of 2000's, some grassland habitats have been converted into afforestation. There is a risk that biomass feedstock is sourced such afforestation (Bankwatch Network 2021).	The Working Body has conducted further research on this matter. It is reported that some grassland habitats in Latvia have been disturbed and even some grasslands have been converted to afforestation. However, there is no concrete data available on how much grassland has been converted to plantations since 2008 and how much biomass is sourced from such plantations. Due to the lack of such evidence, Indicator 2.2.1 is assessed back to low.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
End-user continued	**Risk conclusion and justification** Based on the above analysis, there is a risk of biomass sourcing from afforestation done by converting highly biodiverse grassland after 200, and thus the risk class can be considered to be specified for this indicator.	
	We would like to add more feedback for revised risks.	There is wide-ranging research on the impacts of clearcutting and other harvesting measures on biodiversity and habitats. For example, a study by the European Forest Institute (2022) on Forest Biodiversity in Europe (efi_fstp_13_2022.pdf) concluded that clearcutting has more negative effects on biodiversity than other harvesting methods. It is also recognised that there can be habitat management measures and harvesting methods with positive impacts. For detailed information on pressures and threats as well as favorable management practices of protected forest habitats, we can recommend reading Habitat Conservation and Management Guidelines, forest habitats are Volume No.6 (elaborated by Nature Conservation Agency, those Guidelines were elaborated by leading experts on forest ecology and are based on scientific data from Boreal region and beyond): In English https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/habitat-conservation-and-management-guidelines In Latvian https://www.daba.gov.lv/lv/biotopu-saglabasanas-vadlinijas
	We see that 4 risks (2.1.1., 2.1.2., 2.1.3., and 3.2.3.) are defined taken into account HCV forests and so we would like to: – clarify some scientific evidence that no harvesting (feedstock sourcing) is good for biodiversity in mature and old forests, – review the fact that different harvesting types has different impact on forests: tinning, sanitary cut for example? – different harvesting types has different affect to soil, biodiversity and enhance habitats etc.	
Trade Association	**1.1.1. "Operations related to feedstock sourcing and biomass production shall comply with all applicable and existing laws and regulations."** In the "Technical assistance for the preparation of guidance for the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive" published in 2021, which provides an assessment of the compliance of Latvian biomass with the requirements of the directive, it was concluded that Latvian legislation covers the requirements of the Directive. Evaluating the current legal acts, we think that no significant changes have been made. Consequently, we see no reason to consider this risk as specified. (Source: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1fe27161-abbb-11eb-927e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en)	In light of the new evidence presented by the stakeholders and further research by the Working Body, the analysis is reviewed and revised. Based on the revised analysis, the risk class of this indicator is assessed to be low.

Organisation	Comment	Response
Trade Association continued	**2.1.1. "Key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation value (HCV) pertaining to biodiversity in the supply base shall be identified."** An ambitious natural inventory of Latvia has been carried out, and detailed information is reflected in National Data Management System "Ozols". This management system is maintained by the Nature Protection Agency and is recognised as an appropriate database for determining the HCV areas, habitats and species in forests. Therefore, we consider that identification has been made and this risk should be considered low.	The Working Body would like to highlight that Under the Nature Census, the mapping of the habitats of EU importance in Latvia is done during 2017-2022. However, mapping the protected species was not the task of the Nature Census. Therefore, data on protected species was not collected comprehensively during Nature Census surveys. Consequently, as the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests, the data on protected species is fragmented, and not all locations of the protection of species are mapped and protected. According to the Nature Conservation Agency (Prioritised action framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 in Latvia), suitable protection areas could not yet be designated for three species (Unio crassus, Osmoderma eremita, Barbastella barbastellus) and seven habitat types of the EU importance (1 marine, 6 terrestrial). Another related challenge in Latvia is that LVM data are not publicly available, thus limiting options to verify that wood has not been sourced from locations of protected species. Moreover, the procedure to make legal protection status is slow and landowners can still do cutting in an area while it is being legally established as a protected area. Consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests about 5,000 ha of forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia have been lost due to clearcutting since 2017 (see, Nature Census data: In Latvia, grasslands are the worst at the moment, other habitat groups also need thoughtful long-term management. Nature Conservation Agency (daba.gov.lv)). It is also highlighted that, according to the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency and Latvian Ornithological Society, there are cases of deliberately destroying bird nests within the forests so that there is no restriction to protect it.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Trade Association continued		The Latvian Ornithological Society estimated – in the Species Conservation Plan for Hazel Grouse – that annually, about 51,000 birds' nests are destroyed by logging activities in state forests alone in Latvia. Furthermore, Latvian Fund for Nature has collected data on the destruction of nests of a lesser spotted eagle (Clanga pomarine) (https://www.birdlife.org/news/2022/09/05/of-clearcuts-and-birds-part4-latvia/). This data is used for several court cases (see http://mazaiserglis.lv/en/news/the-latvian-fund-for-nature-wins-in-court-in-the-proceedings-of-the-state-forest-service-regarding-the-abolition-of-micro-reserves-for-the-lesser-spotted-eagle). For the above reasons, the risk class remains specified.
	2.2.1. "Feedstock shall not be sourced from land that had one of the following statuses in January 2008 and no longer has that status due to land conversion: (a) forests, (b) peatlands, (c) wetlands and (d) highly biodiverse grassland." Based on Latvian legislation (Forest Law (Article 21), Protection Zone Law, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation May 2, 2012 No. 308, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation December 12, 2012 No. 935, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation November 2, 2022 No. 686) that significantly limits the possibilities of land transformation, we think that the risk of obtaining raw materials from transformed areas is low.	The Working Body has conducted further research on this matter. It is reported that some grassland habitats in Latvia have been disturbed and even some grasslands have been converted to afforestation. However, there is no concrete data available on how much grassland has been converted to plantations since 2008 and how much biomass is sourced from such plantations. Due to the lack of such evidence, Indicator 2.2.1 is assessed back to low.
	3.2.3. "Primary feedstock shall not be sourced from forest areas in the supply base which according to local definitions or norms, are classified as having combined attributes of high carbon stocks and high conservation value (HCV)." We consider this risk to be low because, according to the international Global Risk Assessment Services GRAS Tool, in Latvia there is no high risk of obtaining wood from areas with a high carbon stocks. (Source: http://gst-prod.gras-system.org/webui/index.html#/country/EU-28)	Indicator 3.2.3 is reviewed based on the information. The risk remains specified as the possibility that unmapped HCV areas overlap with areas with high carbon stocks, such as mature secondary forests, cannot be ruled out.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Trade Association continued	**4.1.8.** "Training shall be provided for all workers to allow them to implement the conditions set out in all elements of the SBP standards relevant to their responsibilities." We disagree that this risk is specified. We consider that Latvian legislation on health and safety requirements in forestry covers all requirements of SBP standards. The description of this indicator does not explain which SBP standard elements are not covered by Latvian legislative requirements.	The scope of training shall cover all elements of SBP standards as relevant. There is no guarantee that the available training covers ALL elements of SBP standards. For this reason, the risk class remains specified.
Biomass Producer	**Indicator 1.1.1** "Operations related to feedstock sourcing and biomass production shall comply with all applicable and existing laws and regulations." In February 2021, the guidelines for the implementation of REDII requirements were published, which provides an assessment of the compliance of Latvian biomass with the requirements of the directive, providing indications about the regulations where the requirements of the directive are included. https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1fe27161-abbb-11eb-927e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en In this assessment it was concluded that the current Latvian legislation controls the requirements included in the directive. We reviewed these regulations on 5th June 2023 and we do not see significant changes in the amendments of these regulations that would have an impact on the fulfillment of the requirements of the directive. In order to ensure the fulfillment of REDII requirements, on November 2, 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers published the regulation No. 686 "Noteikumi par ilgtspējas un siltumnīcefekta gāzu emisiju ietaupījuma kritērijiem, no biomasas kurināmā ražotās elektroenerģijas kritērijiem un kārtību, kādā pamatojama, apliecināma un uzraugāma atbilstība minētajiem kritērijiem", which includes REDII requirements and provides a mechanism for fulfilling these requirements. Based on the above, we cannot agree with the specified risk in this indicator.	In light of the new evidence presented by the stakeholders and further research by the Working Body, the analysis is reviewed and revised. Based on the revised analysis, the risk class of this indicator is assessed to be low.
	Indicator 2.1.1 "Key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation value (HCV) pertaining to biodiversity in the supply base shall be identified."	The Working Body would like to highlight that under the Nature Census, the mapping of the habitats of EU importance in Latvia is done during 2017-2022.

Organisation	Comment	Response
Biomass Producer continued	The definition of the indicator states that key species, habitats, ecosystems and areas of high-value areas must be identified. At the same time, the risk description mentions that "there are cases of deliberately destroying bird nests within the forests so that there is no restriction to protect them". This leads to the conclusion that these nests were identified, and the arguments about the cases of destruction can be attributed to insufficient protection, but not to identification. Likewise, when mentioning "cases", it would be necessary to clarify this information by specifying references where information about the specific cases can be found, so that the risk justification is based on facts and not on utterance. "The current level of information on biodiversity is sufficient to identify most places where large concentrations of protected species are located but not all. As stated above, while the mapping the forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia is done, the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests, the data on protected species is fragmented." This quote claims that the inventory of the forest habitats of EU importance is complete, but data on protected species is fragmented and not all included. We cannot accept the justification for specified risk based on such a statement, it is necessary to provide detailed indications of the identified deficiencies in the inventory data, if any. However, it should be taken into account that processes of nature are constantly changing and it is impossible to identify all natural values and ensure constant renewal of such a database. But if the basic inventory is completed, then the risk of discovering unidentified values cannot be considered specified. We ask you to review the description of the risk classification and reassess the level of risk based on the identification of key species, habitats and ecosystems of the high-value areas specified in the description of the indicator.	However, mapping the protected species was not the task of the Nature Census. Therefore, data on protected species was not collected comprehensively during Nature Census surveys. Consequently, as the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests, the data on protected species is fragmented, and not all locations of the protection of species are mapped and protected. According to the Nature Conservation Agency (Prioritised action framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 in Latvia), suitable protection areas could not yet be designated for three species (Unio crassus, Osmoderma eremita, Barbastella barbastellus) and seven habitat types of the EU importance (1 marine, 6 terrestrial). Another related challenge in Latvia is that LVM data on are not publicly available, thus limiting options to verify that wood has not been sourced from locations of protected species. Moreover, the procedure to make legal protection status is slow and landowners can still do cutting in an area while it is being legally established as a protected area. Consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests about 5,000 ha of forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia have been lost due to clearcutting since 2017 (see, Nature Census data: In Latvia, grasslands are the worst at the moment, other habitat groups also need thoughtful long-term management. Nature Conservation Agency (daba.gov.lv)). It is also highlighted that, according to the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency and Latvian Ornithological Society, there are cases of deliberately destroying bird nests within the forests so that there is no restriction to protect it.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Biomass Producer continued		The Latvian Ornithological Society estimated – in the Species Conservation Plan for Hazel Grouse – that annually, about 51,000 birds' nests are destroyed by logging activities in state forests alone in Latvia. Furthermore, Latvian Fund for Nature has collected data on the destruction of nests of a lesser spotted eagle (Clanga pomarine) (https://www.birdlife.org/news/2022/09/05/of-clearcuts-and-birds-part4-latvia/). This data is used for several court cases (see http://mazaiserglis.lv/en/news/the-latvian-fund-for-nature-wins-in-court-in-the-proceedings-of-the-state-forest-service-regarding-the-abolition-of-micro-reserves-for-the-lesser-spotted-eagle). The identification of key species, habitats, ecosystems, and areas of high conservation value (HCV) pertaining to biodiversity does not only mean finding their locations but also mapping them so that they are permanently protected. Therefore, the deliberate destruction of bird nests may well mean that they are just located and then destroyed so that they cannot be mapped at all. For the above reasons, the risk class remains specified.
	Indicator 2.2.1 "Feedstock shall not be sourced from land that had one of the following statuses in January 2008 and no longer has that status due to land conversion: (a) forests, (b) peatlands, (c) wetlands and (d) highly biodiverse grassland." The data of the Central Statistical Bureau Republic of Latvia clearly shows that the volume of forest and forest land has no tendency to decrease. https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START__NOZ__ME__MEP/MEM010/table/tableViewLayout1/ Similarly, the laws and regulations in force in Latvia set requirements that significantly limit the possibilities of land conversion:	The Working Body has conducted further research on this matter. It is reported that some grassland habitats in Latvia have been disturbed and even some grasslands have been converted to afforestation. However, there is no concrete data available on how much grassland has been converted to plantations since 2008 and how much biomass is sourced from such plantations. Due to the lack of such evidence, Indicator 2.2.1 is assessed back to low.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Biomass Producer continued	– Article 21 of the Forest Law states that the responsibility of owner or legal possessor of the forest is to restore the forest stand ("meža īpašnieka vai tiesiskā valdītāja pienākums ir atjaunot mežaudzi pēc cirtes vai citu faktoru ietekmes, ja mežaudzes šķērslaukums ir kļuvis mazāks par kritisko šķērslaukumu, kā arī nodrošināt atjaunotās vai ieaudzētās mežaudzes kopšanu."). Latvian Forest Law stipulates that reforestation must be carried out within 5 years in most forest types, but within 10 years in wet swamp forests. Along with the felling certificate, instructions on the type of reforestation are also received. There is a natural way of regeneration or planting. The law sets a requirement for the minimum number of trees per 1 ha to be achieved within 5 or 10 years (depending on the type of forest). The law also sets requirements for the care of coppice. – Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 308 (May 2, 2012) "Regulations of forest restoration, reforestation and plantation forest", which determine the procedures for reforestation. – Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 935 (December 18, 2012) "Regulations on felling trees in the forest" define the areas where clear-cutting is not carried out. – The Buffer Zones Act (Aizsargjoslu likums) sets requirements for buffer zones around marshes to preserve biodiversity. – Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 686 (November 2, 2022) "Noteikumi par ilgtspējas un siltumnīcefekta gāzu emisiju ietaupījuma kritērijiem, no biomasas kurināmā ražotās elektroenerģijas kritērijiem un kārtību, kādā pamatojama, apliecināma un uzraugāma atbilstība minētajiem kritērijiem" clause 9 states that fuel biomass must not be produced from feedstock obtained from grasslands and meadows with high biological diversity, which were granted the mentioned status after January 2008. Based on the above-mentioned facts, we believe that the risk of obtaining feedstock from areas where land use is changed is low.	

Organisation	Comment	Response
Biomass Producer continued	**Indicator 3.2.3** "Primary feedstock shall not be sourced from forest areas in the supply base which according to local definitions or norms, are classified as having combined attributes of high carbon stocks and high conservation value (HCV)." According to the internationally used Global Risk Assessment Services (GRAS) database (GRAS Tool), there is no high risk of obtaining wood from areas with a high carbon stock in the territory of Latvia.  Source: http://gst-prod.gras-system.org/webui/index.html#/country/EU-28 Therefore, we do not agree with the specified risk in this indicator and ask you to review the risk classification of this indicator.	Indicator 3.2.3 is reviewed based on the information. The risk remains specified as the possibility that unmapped HCV areas overlap with areas with high carbon stocks, such as mature secondary forests, cannot be ruled out. The carbon stock data provided in the GRAS tool includes the following metadata: "The Total Biomass Carbon map was developed by A. Ruesch and H. Gibbs and is a global map of biomass carbon stored in above and below ground living vegetation for the year 2000." Thus, the data in the tool is not up to date. Moreover, the data is provided in a coarse resolution (1x1-km grid), being a high-level estimate.

Organisation	Comment	Response
Biomass Producer continued	**Indicator 4.1.8** "Training shall be provided for all workers to allow them to implement the conditions set out in all elements of the SBP standards relevant to their responsibilities." In the previous round of discussion, we expressed confusion about the lack of training, but the response to our comment does not provide this explanation. The national risk assessment should be carried out by researching the relevant field, providing clear guidelines on what deficiencies have been found in the fulfillment of the requirements of the certification system, and giving the users of the report an understanding of the necessary measures on risk mitigation. The answer "there is no guarantee that the available training covers ALL elements of SBP standards" does not provide any information about the identified deficiencies in the fulfilment of SBP requirements. As long as no research has been carried out, the answer that there is no guarantee that the indicator will be fulfilled can be given for any of the SBP risk assessment indicators. In the following, we conclude that the research in this area has not been completed and we repeatedly ask for clarifications which elements of the SBP standard are considered as specified risk that it is not included in the training of the responsible persons.	The scope of training shall cover all elements of SBP standards as relevant. There is no guarantee that the available training covers ALL elements of SBP standards. For this reason, the risk class remains specified.
Trade Association	I believe that the specific risk mitigation measures in 2.2.1 are not reasonably possible because: 1) There is no database where it would be possible to obtain geolocation of natural grasslands before or in Y2008; 2) Although one of the reasons for the disappearance of natural grasslands is the growth of trees and bushes in these territories, it is mostly not the purposeful actions of foresters (afforestation with planting material), but the result of farmers' inaction (the meadow is not grazed or mowed and it is naturally overgrown with trees) ; 3) Considering the above two circumstances, the only action that the SBP certified person can take is to refuse any purchase of wood from non-forest lands. That would be an overkill because: – natural grasslands make up less than 1% of Latvia's territory. Therefore, there is a statistically small probability that wood originating from non-forest land has been obtained from an area where natural grass has grown in 2008 or later;	The Working Body has conducted further research on this matter. It is reported that some grassland habitats in Latvia have been disturbed and even some grasslands have been converted to afforestation. However, there is no concrete data available on how much grassland has been converted to plantations since 2008 and how much biomass is sourced from such plantations. Due to the lack of such evidence, Indicator 2.2.1 is assessed back to low.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Trade Association continued	– geolocation of natural grasslands is known for sure only in the biotope inventories of European importance, namely the situation for 2019-2021; – there is a possibility that the purpose of wood harvesting is directly to restore the natural grassland; – the ban on buying wood from lands where there used to be natural grassland is adequate only in cases where the landowner aims to destroy the grassland by afforesting it with planting material. On the other hand, in cases where grasslands have already disappeared because the land has been unmanaged for a long time, the ban on the purchase of wood in such areas will not contribute to the preservation of natural grasslands in any way. If you keep this specific risk, then it would be reasonable to change the annual figure from 2008 to 2019, because then it can be realistically reduced and prevented.	
Forest manager	We have assessed the quality of the latest draft SBP Regional Risk Assessment (RRA) for Latvia, dated 26 May 2023. Comparing the drafts we can see that overall many indicators were revised, however from our perspective we still see that the RRA is subjective and do not reflect the present situation in Latvia. We consider that the arguments used to justify specified risk for indicators 1.1.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3 and 3.2.3 are insufficient. The main argument used is that "annually about 51,000 birds nests are destroyed by logging activities in state forest alone in Latvia". The RRA does not provide reference to the methodology used to obtain such figure. According to the LVM data, during the nesting period harvesting and thinning operations only affects less than 1% of the forest lands, therefore the impact of logging is insignificant. Besides certified forest managers/owners have system in place to mitigate harvesting impacts during the breeding season, but complete seasonal ban would have significant negative social impact. In the RRA it is written that "there are cases of deliberately destroying bird nests within the forests so that there is no restriction to protect them" and "intensive logging is linked to the disturbance and loss of forest habitats of several rare, threatened and endangered bird species, particularly in areas important for bird breeding and nesting", however no evidence provided, therefore the information can be considered misleading.	Indicator 1.1.1 – In light of the new evidence presented by the stakeholders and further research by the Working Body, the analysis is reviewed and revised. Based on the revised analysis, the risk class of this indicator is assessed to be low. Indicator 2.1.1 – The Working Body would like to highlight that Under the Nature Census, the mapping of the habitats of EU importance in Latvia is done during 2017-2022. However, mapping the protected species was not the task of the Nature Census. Therefore, data on protected species was not collected comprehensively during Nature Census surveys. Consequently, as the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests, the data on protected species is fragmented, and not all locations of the protection of species are mapped and protected. According to the Nature Conservation Agency (Prioritised action framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 in Latvia), suitable protection areas could not yet be designated for three species (Unio crassus, Osmoderma eremita, Barbastella barbastellus) and seven habitat types of the EU importance (1 marine, 6 terrestrial).

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Forest manager continued	Please be aware that mapping of protected species was part of Nature Census objectives, therefore it is not correct to state that the data are incomplete. The mapping of habitats of EU importance is completed and according to the Nature Census project, the Nature Conservation Agency now has to conduct social-economic assessment and designate additional protected areas. For more information on the aims and objectives of the Nature Census, please visit the website of the Nature Conservation Agency: https://skaitamdabu.gov.lv/public/lat/jautajumi_un_atbildes/ We appreciate very much the work that Indufor Oy has done so far, but we suggest to make further improvements and to provide more detailed analysis.	Another related challenge in Latvia is that LVM data on are not publicly available, thus limiting options to verify that wood has not been sourced from locations of protected species. Moreover, the procedure to make legal protection status is slow and landowners can still do cutting in an area while it is being legally established as a protected area. Consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency suggests about 5,000 ha of forest habitats of EU importance in Latvia have been lost due to clearcutting since 2017 (see, Nature Census data: In Latvia, grasslands are the worst at the moment, other habitat groups also need thoughtful long-term management. Nature Conservation Agency (daba.gov.lv)). It is also highlighted that, according to the consultation with the Nature Conservation Agency and Latvian Ornithological Society, there are cases of deliberately destroying bird nests within the forests so that there is no restriction to protect it. The Latvian Ornithological Society estimated – in the Species Conservation Plan for Hazel Grouse – that annually, about 51,000 birds' nests are destroyed by logging activities in state forests alone in Latvia. Furthermore, Latvian Fund for Nature has collected data on the destruction of nests of a lesser spotted eagle (Clanga pomarine) (https://www.birdlife.org/news/2022/09/05/of-clearcuts-and-birds-part4-latvia/). This data is used for several court cases (see http://mazaiserglis.lv/en/news/the-latvian-fund-for-nature-wins-in-court-in-the-proceedings-of-the-state-forest-service-regarding-the-abolition-of-micro-reserves-for-the-lesser-spotted-eagle). Thus, the risk class remains specified. Indicator 2.1.2 – The analyses for this indicator and also Indicator 2.1.1 suggests that there is a risk that the threats to and impacts on some protected species are not fully identified and evaluated, particularly in areas with HCV 1 objects. Thus, the risk class remains specified.

Annex 5 Stakeholder consultation report continued

Organisation	Comment	Response
Forest manager continued		Indicator 2.1.3 – The Working Body would like to highlight that the detailed assessments (with revised analyses) done for indicators 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 suggests that the risks and threats to certain protected species (related to HCV category 1 in all forests) are not identified and evaluated. Without such identification and evaluation, there is a risk that those key species and habitats cannot be maintained or enhanced adequately. Thus, the risk class remained specified. Indicator 2.2.1 – The Working Body has conducted further research on this matter. It is reported that some grassland habitats in Latvia have been disturbed and even some grasslands have been converted to afforestation. However, there is no concrete data available on how much grassland has been converted to plantations since 2008 and how much biomass is sourced from such plantations. Due to the lack of such evidence, Indicator 2.2.1 is assessed back to low. Indicator 3.2.3 – Indicator 3.2.3 is reviewed based on the information. The risk remains specified as the possibility that unmapped HCV areas overlap with areas with high carbon stocks, such as mature secondary forests, cannot be ruled out.

Annex 6 REDII Level A risk assessment – Latvia

Sustainable harvesting criteria 29(6)

The country in which forest biomass was harvested has national or sub-national laws applicable in the area of harvest as well as monitoring and enforcement systems in place ensuring:

(i) The legality of harvesting operations

Step 1: Identification of applicable laws

Have the applicable law(s) been identified?	✓ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required
List of applicable law(s)	– Law on Forests (2000) – Chapter III (Sections 7 – 14) – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 935 from 2012 on Harvesting of Trees in Forest
Sources	– Law on Forests (2000) – https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 935 from 2012 on Harvesting of Trees in Forest – Noteikumi par koku ciršanu mežā (likumi.lv)

Step 2: Description of enforcement and monitoring

Description of the practical implementation of the law(s)	The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests and related regulations.
Sources	– State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – Stakeholder consultation
Is the enforcement and monitoring ensured for the identified law(s)?	✓ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required

Step 3: Evaluation of the effectiveness of the legal framework on the legality of timber harvesting

Evaluation of the practical implementation of the law(s) and explanation for the evaluation	Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the State Forest Service. According to the EU (2021) report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive, the existing applicable Latvian legislation fully addresses the RED II requirements concerning forest biomass harvesting. Moreover, EU (2021) and stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement and monitoring of the above legislation in terms of harvesting operations in Latvia. This suggests the enforcement and monitoring of the Law on Forests and the subordinate regulation on harvesting are effective.
Sources	– EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium. – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – Stakeholder consultation

Annex 6 REDII Level A risk assessment – Latvia continued

Is legal framework effective?	✓ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required

(ii) Forest regeneration of harvested areas

Step 1: Identification of applicable laws

Have the applicable law(s) been identified?	✓ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required
List of applicable law(s)	– Law on Forests (2000) – Section 21 – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 308 from 2012, on Forest Regeneration, Afforestation and Plantation Forests
Sources	– Law on Forests (2000) – https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 308 from 2012, on Forest Regeneration, Afforestation and Plantation Forests – Meža atjaunošanas, meža ieaudzēšanas un plantāciju meža noteikumi (likumi.lv)

Step 2: Description of enforcement and monitoring

Description of the practical implementation of the law(s)	The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests and its subordinated regulations.
Sources	– State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – Stakeholder consultation
Is the enforcement and monitoring ensured for the identified law(s)?	✓ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required

Step 3: Evaluation of the effectiveness of the legal framework on the legality of timber harvesting

Evaluation of the practical implementation of the law(s) and explanation for the evaluation	Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the State Forest Service. EU (2021) and stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement and monitoring of the above legislation in terms of forest regeneration in harvested areas in Latvia. This suggests the enforcement and monitoring of the Law on Forests and the subordinate regulation on regeneration are effective.
Sources	– EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium. – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – Stakeholder consultation
Is legal framework effective?	✓ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required

Annex 6 REDII Level A risk assessment – Latvia continued

(iii) That areas designated by international or national law or by the relevant competent authority for nature protection purposes, including in wetlands and peatlands, are protected unless evidence is provided that the harvesting of that raw material does not interfere with those nature protection purposes

Step 1: Identification of applicable laws

Have the applicable law(s) been identified?	✓ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required
List of applicable law(s)	– Law on Forests (2000) – Sections 35–38 – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 936 of 2012) on Requirements for Nature Protection Measures in Forest Management – Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (1993) – Chapters IV (Sections 14-27), X (Sections 41 – 46) – General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories (2010) – Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (2000) – Sections 9, 11, 12
Sources	– Law on Forests (2000) – https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 936 of 2012) on Requirements for Nature Protection Measures in Forest Management – Dabas aizsardzības noteikumi meža apsaimniekošanā (likumi.lv) – Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (1993) – https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/59994-on-specially-protected-nature-territories – General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories (2010) – https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories. https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories – Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (2000) – https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/3941-law-on-the-conservation-of-species-and-biotopes

Step 2: Description of enforcement and monitoring

Description of the practical implementation of the law(s)	The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests and its subordinated regulations while the Nature Conservation Agency the Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories and General Regulations on the Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories as well as the Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes and related regulations.
Sources	– State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – Stakeholder consultation – EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium

Annex 6 REDII Level A risk assessment – Latvia continued

Is the enforcement and monitoring ensured for the identified law(s)?	✓ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required
Step 3: Evaluation of the effectiveness of the legal framework on the legality of timber harvesting	
Evaluation of the practical implementation of the law(s) and explanation for the evaluation	Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the concerned agencies. EU (2021) and stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement and monitoring of the above legislation and regulations in Latvia. This suggests the enforcement and monitoring of the relevant Laws and the subordinate regulations are effective.
Sources	– State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – Stakeholder consultation
Is legal framework effective?	✓ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required

Annex 6 REDII Level A risk assessment – Latvia continued

(iv) That harvesting is carried out considering the maintenance of soil quality and biodiversity with the aim of minimising negative impacts

Step 1: Identification of applicable laws

Have the applicable law(s) been identified?	✓ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required
List of applicable law(s)	– Law on Forests (2000) – Chapter III (Sections 7 -14), Chapter VII (Sections 26-28), Chapter IX (Sections 35 – 37) – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 936 of 2012) on Requirements for Nature Protection Measures in Forest Management – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No 248 from 2013, on Procedure for Evaluation of Sustainability of Forest Management – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No 325 From 2013 on restoration of specially protected species and habitats in forest – Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (1993) – Chapters IV (Sections 14-27), X (Sections 41 – 46) – General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories (2010) – Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (2000) – Sections 9, 11, 12
Sources	– Law on Forests (2000) – https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/2825-law-on-forests – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 936 of 2012) on Requirements for Nature Protection Measures in Forest Management – Dabas aizsardzības noteikumi meža apsaimniekošanā (likumi.lv) – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No 248 from 2013, on Procedure for Evaluation of Sustainability of Forest Management – Meža ilgtspējīgas apsaimniekošanas novērtēšanas kārtība (likumi.lv) – Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No 325 From 2013 on restoration of specially protected species and habitats in forest – Noteikumi par īpaši aizsargājamo biotopu un īpaši aizsargājamo sugu dzīvotņu atjaunošanu mežā (likumi.lv) – Law on Specially Protected Nature Territories (1993) – https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/59994-on-specially-protected-nature-territories – General Regulations on Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories (2010) – https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories. https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/207283-general-regulations-on-protection-and-use-of-specially-protected-nature-territories – Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes (2000) – https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/3941-law-on-the-conservation-of-species-and-biotopes

Step 2: Description of enforcement and monitoring

Description of the practical implementation of the law(s)	The State Forest Service enforces the Law on Forests and its subordinated regulations while the Nature Conservation Agency the law on Specially Protected Nature Territories and General Regulations on the Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories as well as the Law on the Conservation of Species and Biotopes and related regulations.

Annex 6 REDII Level A risk assessment – Latvia continued

Sources	– State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – Stakeholder consultation
Is the enforcement and monitoring ensured for the identified law(s)?	✓ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required
Step 3: Evaluation of the effectiveness of the legal framework on the legality of timber harvesting	
Evaluation of the practical implementation of the law(s) and explanation for the evaluation	Regular monitoring of the enforcement is conducted and reported by the concerned agencies. EU (2021) and stakeholder consultation do not point to any shortcomings in the enforcement and monitoring of the above legislation and regulations in Latvia. This suggests the enforcement and monitoring of the relevant Laws and the subordinate regulations are effective.
Sources	– EU. 2021. Final report on the implementation of the new bioenergy sustainability criteria set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive (REDIIBIO – final report). Brussels, Belgium. – State Forest Service: "About us". https://www.vmd.gov.lv/lv/par-mums – Nature Conservation Agency. (2023). "Protected areas". https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/protected-areas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.fi%2F – Stakeholder consultation
Is legal framework effective?	✓ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required

Annex 6 REDII Level A risk assessment – Latvia continued

(v) That harvesting maintains or improves the long-term production capacity of the forest

Step 1: Identification of applicable laws

Have the applicable law(s) been identified?	☐ Yes ✓ No, Level B route is required There is no legislation in Latvia for fulfilling this requirement. Nevertheless, the forest harvesting level in Latvia remains far below annual growth and thus standing stock is growing. According to State Forest Service (2022), about 11 million m^3 of timber was harvested on average per year in the past decade in Latvia. The annual harvesting level remained below the annual increment in forest land during this period. The latest data from Silava show that the harvesting volume is 76% of the annual increment. Consequently, the growing stock increased from 631 million m^3 in 2010 to 682 million m^3 in 2020. This means harvesting maintains or improves the long-term production capacity and carbon stock of the forests.
List of applicable law(s)	Not applicable
Sources	– State Forest Service. (2022). Latvian Forest Sector in Facts and Figures 2022. Riga.

Step 2: Description of enforcement and monitoring

Description of the practical implementation of the law(s)	Not applicable
Sources	Not applicable
Is the enforcement and monitoring ensured for the identified law(s)?	☐ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required

Step 3: Evaluation of the effectiveness of the legal framework on the legality of timber harvesting

Evaluation of the practical implementation of the law(s) and explanation for the evaluation	Not applicable
Sources	Not applicable
Is legal framework effective?	☐ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required

Annex 6 REDII Level A risk assessment – Latvia continued

LULUCF criteria 29(7)	
Paris Agreement ratified?	✓ Yes ☐ No
Submission of a relevant NDC	✓ Yes ☐ No
Sources	– Paris Agreement: UNFCCC's party information about Latvia: https://unfccc.int/node/61097 – NDC: European Commission. (2020). Update of the NDC of the European Union and its Member States. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/EU_NDC_Submission_December%202020_0.pdf
Brief description of how agriculture, forestry and land use are accounted for in NDC	**European Commission (2020):** "Accounting for emissions and removals from LULUCF follows specific rules depending on the land accounting category in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/841. Afforested Land and Deforested Land use baseline zero (gross-net accounting). Managed Grassland, Managed Cropland and Managed Wetland use as baseline the average emissions between 2005 and 2009 (net-net accounting). Managed Forest Land uses as baseline a Forest Reference Level based on continuation of Forest Management Practices between 2000 and 2009 and taking into account the age-class structure of forests, projected through the compliance period. The mere presence of carbon stocks is excluded from accounting."

OR (this option below must be used if the previous point about NDC is not satisfied)

The origin country has national or sub-national laws in place, in accordance with Article 5 of the Paris Agreement, applicable in the area of harvest, to conserve and enhance carbon stocks and sinks, and providing evidence that reported LULUCF-sector emissions do not exceed removals

Step 1: Identification of applicable laws

Have the applicable law(s) been identified?	☐ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required
List of applicable law(s)	
Sources	

Step 2: Description of enforcement and monitoring

Description of the practical implementation of the law(s)	
Sources	
Is the enforcement and monitoring ensured for the identified law(s)?	

Annex 6 REDII Level A risk assessment – Latvia continued

Step 3: Evaluation of the effectiveness of the legal framework on the legality of timber harvesting

Evaluation of the practical implementation of the law(s) and explanation for the evaluation	
Sources	
Is legal framework effective?	☐ Yes ☐ No, Level B route is required