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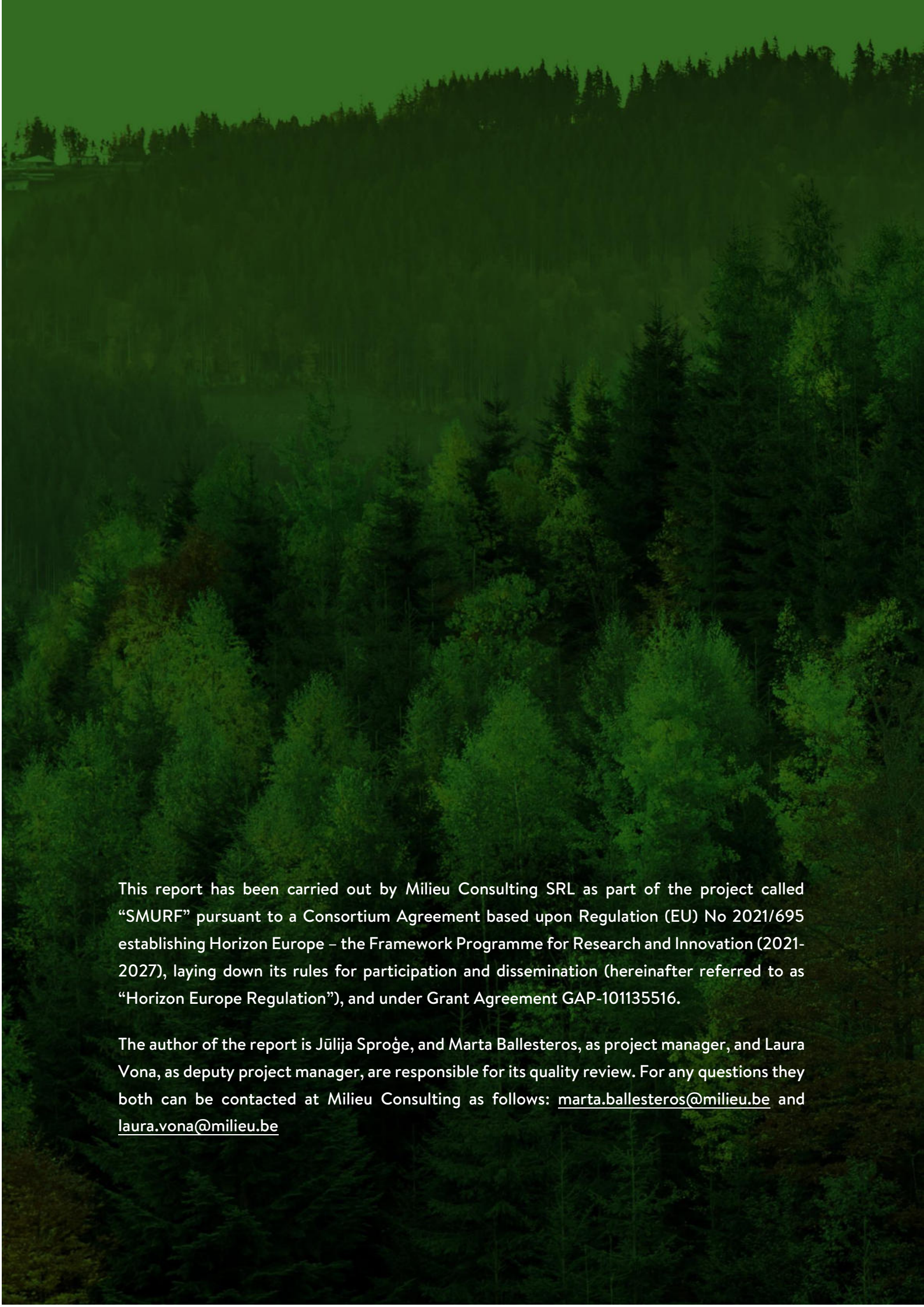
Legal and regulatory framework applicable to Small Forest Owners and Sustainable Forest Management

Country Fact Sheet
Latvia

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Legal and regulatory framework applicable to Small Forest Owners and Sustainable Forest Management (SMURF) - WP2

Executive Summary

Latvia's forestry sector is governed by a combination of national laws, EU regulations, and international agreements. The Law on Forests serves as the primary legislative instrument, outlining forest management practices, ownership rights, and sustainability requirements. The **Forest Management Plan** of the Joint-Stock Company (JSC) Latvia's State Forests (2022-2026) sets forth forest management strategy for the entire country for state-owned forests.

Latvia's forests cover approximately 53% of its territory, with ownership almost equally divided between state-owned forests (50,4%) and privately owned forests (49,6%). Private forests are held by about 150 000 individual owners, with an average property size of 6 hectares. Forest ownership is recorded in the State Unified Computerised Land Register *(Zemesgrāmata)* and the State Cadastre of Real Estate *(Kadastrs)*, which define legal ownership, property boundaries, and associated rights and obligations.

Forest owners have legal rights to manage and utilise their property, subject to sustainability and conservation requirements. The State Forest Service oversees compliance with forestry laws, including obligations related to reforestation, biodiversity protection, and logging regulations. Forest managers and contractors must adhere to environmental impact assessments and sustainable forestry practices.

Sustainable Forest Management in Latvia is legally defined and includes objectives such as biodiversity conservation, ecosystem protection, and responsible resource use. Voluntary Forest Certification Schemes, such as FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) and PEFC (Programme of the Endorsement of Forest Certification), support compliance with international sustainability standards.

There are no major legal restrictions on the sale, division, or inheritance of forest land. While financial incentives for SFM exist, their effectiveness remains uncertain, as the Forest Development Plan 2050 (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) is still under discussion. Forest owners are subject to corporate income tax, property tax, personal income tax and Value Added Tax.

To enhance sustainable forest management in Latvia, it is essential to strengthen support mechanisms for small forest owners, ensuring better access to subsidies, cooperatives, and advisory services. Clarifying and streamlining regulations will help reduce administrative burdens and improve compliance, particularly for smaller landowners. Efforts should also be made to enhance cadastral registration and promote land consolidation, facilitating more efficient forest management. Financial incentives and tax policies should be adjusted to encourage forest

certification and biodiversity conservation while maintaining economic viability for forest owners. Finally, the implementation of the Forest Development Plan 2050 (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) should be closely monitored to ensure that new regulatory measures are effective and do not disproportionately burden small-scale forest owners.

Introduction

This is a Horizon project with a strong research approach. The name of the project is 'Sustainable Management models and value chains for small Forests' known as SMURF with the reference HORIZON-CL6-2023-CIRCBIO-01.

The general objective is to provide an analysis of the legal and regulatory framework in EU Member States applicable to small forest owners (SFO) in their practices aiming to Sustainable Forest Management.

The specific project objectives are:

1. Prepare a report on the legal framework on SFO for most EU Member State.
2. Identify the basic legislation regulating SFO and the specific articles setting rights and obligations and *provide the links* to those basic and articles.
3. Define the rights and obligations for SFO in EU Member States.
4. Define the legal framework for the economic activity of SFO in EU Member States.
5. **Identify the main legal limitations or barriers for SFO in EU Member States.**
6. **Identify needs for legal reforms and propose specific legal improvements, when considered necessary.**
7. Prepare a comparative analysis of the legal framework SFO in the EU Member States.

These guidelines provide the basic information for the elaboration of the report on legal framework applicable to Small Forest owners/holders. It is complemented by a pilot report showing as a model to show the level of depth of the analysis.

When using the term "legal framework" we consider:

- The organizational model of forestry and the forest value chain.
- The institutional framework, identifying the distribution of competences among the different administration levels (European, national, regional and local) and administration sectors (agriculture and rural development, environment, industry, interior, economics and others).
- The regulatory framework, identifying laws and regulations that affect forestry and the forest value chain. The key articles that set basic rules for forestry will be explicitly referred and translated into English.

The analysis will be focused on factors that affect the participation of forest holdings in the market. There is a particular interest in identifying barriers, obstacles and measures or instruments that have had a significant positive impact in the present functioning of the forest markets.

The analysis will describe the nowadays situation of the framework, although a contextual and short reference of the origin and evolution of the framework when needed for a good understanding will be included.

The analysis will consider the national legislation and will only refer to the regional legislation as a way of example to confirm the national legal framework or to show that in some regions the situation may be rather different.

The analysis will take into consideration the forest sector legislation, but not only, because the main barriers and legal limitations might be derived from the inadequacy of other sectoral laws (societal, fiscal, real state and ownership, cadastral, insurances) or requirements in some pieces of national environmental legislation. It will refer to Nature or Biodiversity Conservation law and to the Environmental Impact Assessment legislation while it might also refer to relevant agriculture legislation.

1. Basic legal and regulatory framework applicable to small forest owners

1.1. Context to the legislation

Latvia is the **fourth most forested country in Europe.** In Latvia, forests play a vital role in the national economy, culture, and environmental sustainability. Forests in Latvia encompass a substantial **3 435 million hectares**, covering approximately **53% of the nation's territory**[1].

All **state-owned and managed forests** are comprising **50,4% - slightly more than half** of the nation's forested areas. The remaining **49,6% of forests are privately owned**, distributed among approximately **150 000 individual owners**, with each holding an average property size of merely 6 hectares[2].

'Small forest owners' or **'small forests'** as such are not defined in the legislation, or any relevant policy documents. Thus, the general regulatory framework is applicable to all forest owners, disregarding the size of the forest, or whether the forest is state-owned or privately-owned. The regulatory framework is influenced by both national and EU-level legal norms, including the rules related to environmental protection, sustainable forestry, and rural development. Latvia's membership in the EU means that the country must comply with EU standards on forests, such as those relating to sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, etc.

It is observed, however, that **small forest owners in Latvia face specific challenges.** For instance, small-scale forest owners are expected to be the most impacted by the recent ban on cutting smaller-diameter trees in the forests with a high proportion of new forest stands[3].

1.2. Basic legal instruments

Latvia has the **continental legal system.** The Latvian law does not explicitly prescribe a comprehensive list of sources of law that are applicable in its territory. In accordance with Article 1(5) of the Administrative Procedure Law[4] , the **hierarchy of the legal acts** is as follows:

1) The Constitution of Latvia;
2) Laws adopted by the Parliament;
3) the Cabinet of Ministers regulations;
4) binding regulations of municipalities and external regulatory enactments.

Pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Law, **all the above sources of regulatory rules are legally binding.** This means that the Cabinet of Ministers regulations are also legally binding. In case of discrepancies between the laws adopted by the Parliament and Cabinet of Ministers regulations, the rules set forth in the legal act, which is the highest in the hierarchy, would

[1] Latvian Forest in Facts and Figures
[2] Promoting sustainable forest management among Latvian forest owners; Statistical information published in November 2024
[3] Small-scale forest owners will be mainly affected by the ban on cutting smaller-diameter trees
[4] Administrative Procedure Law *(Administratīvā procesa likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 164, 14.11.2001.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 23, 13.12.2001.

prevail, e.g., in case of discrepancies in the laws adopted by the Parliament and the Cabinet of Ministers regulations, the rules set forth in the laws adopted by the Parliament would prevail. In Latvian legal system, a **court judgement** is used for the law interpretation purposes only.

There is **no specific legal framework** for small forest owners in Latvia. The **general legal framework** relevant to forestry is applicable to all forest owners. This framework is established through a combination of **national laws**, **EU-level legal norms**, and **international agreements.**

Some of the key legal instruments related to forests are listed below.

1) Laws adopted by the Parliament:

- Law on Forests[5] (adopted and entered into force in 1997, as last amended in 2023) - sets out the legal framework for forest management in Latvia, including requirements for sustainable management and the protection of forest biodiversity. Responsible authority: the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Environmental Protection Law[6] (adopted and entered into force in 2006, as last amended in 2020) - this law outlines general environmental protection principles, including the protection of forests as valuable natural resources. It provides the legal basis for the regulation of forestry practices, the assessment of environmental impact, and the protection of biodiversity and habitats. Responsible body: the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development.
- Law on privatisation of state and municipal property[7] (adopted and entered into force in 1994, as last amended in 2024) - this law played a critical role in the privatisation of forest land following the restoration of Latvia's independence. It enabled the redistribution of forests to private ownership, allowing small forest owners to own their lands with forests. Responsible body: The Ministry of Justice.
- Law on Environmental Impact Assessment[8] (adopted and entered into force in 1998, as last amended in 2023) - the purpose of the law is to prevent or mitigate the adverse environmental impact of planned activities or planning documents by individuals and legal entities. Responsible body: The Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development.

[5] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.

[6] Environmental Protection Law *(Vides aizsardzības likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 183, 15.11.2006.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 24, 28.12.2006.

[7] Law on privatisation of state and municipal property *(Par valsts un pašvaldību īpašuma objektu privatizāciju)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 27, 03.03.1994.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 6, 31.03.1994.

[8] Law on Environmental Impact Assessment *(Par ietekmes uz vidi novērtējumu)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 322/325, 30.10.1998; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 23, 03.12.1998.

2) Cabinet of Ministers regulations:

- **Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 348 "Forest protection rules"**[9] (adopted and entered into force in 2023) - establishes requirements for protecting forests from pests, diseases, and other threats, including provisions for monitoring and control measures. Responsible body: The Ministry of Agriculture.
- **Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 935 "Regulations on Tree Felling in Forests"**[10] (adopted in 2012, entered into force in 2013, as last amended in 2024) Responsible body: The Ministry of Agriculture.
- **Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 308 "Regulations on Forest Regeneration, Afforestation, and Plantation Forests"**[11] (adopted in 2012, entered into force in 2012, as last amended in 2024). Responsible body: The Ministry of Agriculture.

1.3. Basic Regulatory framework

The regulatory framework for forest owners in Latvia, including small forest owners, is built around ensuring sustainable forest management, the conservation of biodiversity, and alignment with EU legal norms and programmes. The key components of the regulatory framework include:

- The **Forest Management Plan** of the JSC Latvia's State Forests [12] (2022-2026) – sets forth forest management strategy for the entire country for state-owned forests, emphasising the conservation of forest biodiversity, restoration efforts, and the expansion of forested areas. It also focuses on enhancing the economic value of forests, promoting sustainable forestry practices, and ensuring the sector's competitiveness. Responsible body: The State Forest Service.
- Latvian Forest Policy[13] (from 1998-ongoing) – aligns the overall development objectives of Latvia's forest sector; defines a strategy for achieving these objectives: (a) to balance the opportunities for the realisation of public interests, (b) to create a favourable environment for economic development, (c) to preserve the ecological value of Latvia's forests, ensuring the social functions of forests, improving legislation. Responsible body: The Ministry of Agriculture.
- **Two** leading **certification schemes**[14] – PEFC (Programme of the Endorsement of Forest Certification) and FSC (Forest Stewardship Council). Both schemes have two types of certificates: forest management and chain of custody certificates. Responsible bodies:

[9] Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 348 "Forest protection rules" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr. 348 "Meža aizsardzības noteikumi"*), Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 124, 29.06.2023.OP numurs: 2023/124.16.

[10] Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 935 "Regulations on Tree Felling in Forests" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.935 "Noteikumi par koku ciršanu mežā"*), Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 203, 28.12.2012.
OP numurs: 2012/203.42

[11] Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 308 "Regulations on Forest Regeneration, Afforestation, and Plantation Forests" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.308 "Meža atjaunošanas, meža ieaudzēšanas un plantāciju meža noteikumi"*), Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, Latvijas Vēstnesis, 70, 08.05.2012.

[12] State Forest Service, Forest management plan 2022-2026.

[13] The Lavian Forest Policy

[14] Portal for the Sustainable Management of Latvia's Forests and Land

SIA BM Certification, SIA NEPCon, SCS Global Services, GFA Certification, Bureau Veritas, SGS and *Vides kvalitāte* (Quality of the Environment).

- **Latvia's sustainable development strategy to 2030**[15] (established in 2010) – is developed to meet the needs of the present generation by carefully balancing the welfare of society, environmental preservation, and economic progress. This approach ensures that the environmental standards are uphold and natural diversity is preserved, thereby safeguarding the ability of future generations to fulfil their own needs without compromise.

[15] Latvia's sustainable development strategy to 2030

2. Governance and institutional framework

2.1. Distribution of competences between the State and Regional authorities.

- **According to the legal framework, what are the relevant competences and responsibilities regarding decisions on forest management and forest management practices at the different State level (national, regional, municipal) in your country?** Please describe the situation stating the legislation and relevant provisions.

Legal background

In Latvia, the **governance structure for forest management** is defined by a **combination of national, regional, and municipal competences.** The management of forests involves the coordination of various institutions and authorities at different levels, ensuring that forest resources are used sustainably while balancing environmental, economic, and social interests. The distribution of these competences is outlined in a range of legal frameworks, including the Law on Forests[16], the Environmental Protection Law[17], and the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment[18].

National competences

- **Legislation and Policy Development:** At national level, the **Ministry of Agriculture** is responsible for **forest policy** development and implementation. This Ministry oversees the sustainable management, conservation, and development of forests, ensuring they align with national environmental and economic goals[19]. The **State Forests of Latvia** (the joint stock company, where 100% of the shares of the capital are held by the Ministry of Agriculture) plays a key role in implementing forest policy and regulations in the state owned forests[20]. Additionally, the **Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development** is primarily responsible for ensuring that Latvia's forests are managed in a way that complies with EU norms and international agreements. This includes managing protected areas such as **Natura 2000** sites and coordinating efforts to combat **forest degradation and deforestation**[21].
- **Forest Control and Enforcement:** The State Forest Service operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture and is responsible for regulating and overseeing forest management practices, ensuring compliance with national laws. The Service monitors logging activities, enforces regulations related to sustainable harvesting, and conducts

[16] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.; Web-page of Latvian State Forests

[17] Environmental Protection Law *(Vides aizsardzības likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 183, 15.11.2006.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 24, 28.12.2006.

[18] Law on Environmental Impact Assessment *(Par ietekmes uz vidi novērtējumu)*, Latvijas Vēstnesis, 322/325, 30.10.1998; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 23, 03.12.1998.

[19] Ministry of Agriculture

[20] State Forest Service

[21] Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development

inspections. It also provides forest owners with the necessary guidance and support on forest management practices[22].

Regional competences

Latvia does not have regional authorities in the traditional sense, as the country is administratively divided into **municipalities** (local governments) rather than regions. For forest management in Latvia, the **regional level** (in terms of territorial demarcation, rather than administrative classification) primarily involves coordination and support for forest management through regional environmental boards and agencies, which operate under the supervision of the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development[23]. The regional division of power entails specific competences related to forest policy implementation at the local level, including:

- **The Regional Boards** - the State Forest Service is divided into multiple regional forest boards across Latvia. These regional boards are responsible for monitoring forest management practices, ensuring compliance with national forestry laws, issuing permits for forest activities (such as logging), and enforcing regulations. The regional forest boards are as follows: Eastern Forest Board, *Vidzeme* Forest Board, Southern Forest Board, Central Forest Board, *Kurzeme* Forest Board. Each regional board oversees its designated territory and works closely with private forest owners, municipalities, and other stakeholders. These Boards assist in monitoring forest health, biodiversity, and compliance with forestry regulations. They report on the implementation of national forest management strategies and policies and assist with data collection related to forest cover, timber volumes, and the condition of forest ecosystems. The Boards also act as intermediaries between the national government and municipal authorities, providing technical expertise and ensuring that local forestry initiatives align with national sustainability goals[24].
- **Environmental Impact Assessments** - the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development oversees the environmental assessment of large forestry projects at regional level that may have a significant impact on the environment. This includes reviewing forest management plans that affect protected areas or involve land use changes that could impact biodiversity or ecosystem services[25].

Local/municipal competences

At the **local/municipal level**, competences are more focused on specific land use decisions, local forest management, and the implementation of national regulations within local contexts. While municipalities do not have direct legislative or regulatory powers over forests, they do have certain responsibilities related to local forest governance, such as:

[22] State Forest Service
[23] Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development
[24] State Forests of Latvia
[25] Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development

- **Land use and zoning:** municipalities play a key role in land use planning and zoning, which may affect forestry practices. They are responsible for ensuring that forest management plans conform to local planning regulations and that any land development projects, such as urban expansion, are compatible with forest protection goals[26].
- **Local forest protection initiatives:** these initiatives are merely managed by the Natura Protection Agency (LatViaNature[27]) and State Forest Service, whereby local authorities are responsible for implementing specific local conservation measures, which may include the creation of local protected areas, setting up local biodiversity conservation programs, or overseeing the management of public forests within municipal boundaries[28].
- **Permitting and licensing:** the State Forest Service together with municipalities are involved in the issuance of permits for activities like timber harvesting or the creation of new roads within forests, although the primary responsibility for regulating these activities rests with the national authorities. They also enforce local regulations related to forest fire prevention and other emergency measures[29].
- **Community engagement:** municipalities may facilitate community engagement in forest management by organising public consultations, educational programs, and encouraging local participation in sustainable forest use initiatives[30].

Forest coordination and advisory bodies

In addition to the direct competences of state, regional, and municipal authorities, there are several key **coordination and advisory bodies** that help shape forest governance in Latvia:

- **Forest Advisory Board:** this body consists of representatives from government, academia, industry, and non-governmental organisations. It advises the Ministry of Agriculture and other authorities on forest policy, including best practices for sustainable management, biodiversity conservation, and forest protection[31].
- **State Environmental Service:** the Service supports the implementation of environmental regulations, including those related to forest conservation. It works closely with regional and municipal authorities to ensure compliance with national environmental standards and helps coordinate the monitoring and assessment of forest ecosystems[32].
- **Non-Governmental Organisations:** organisations, such as *Zaļā brīvība*[33] (Green freedom) and *Zaļie*[34] (Greens), are focused on environmental protection, also play an advisory

[26] Land Management Law *(Zemes pārvaldības likums)*, Official Journal: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 228, 15.11.2014.OP number: 2014/228.25.
[27] Home - LatViaNature
[28] State Forest Service
[29] State Forest Service
[30] For example, the *Ādaži* municipality has recently introduced an initiative aimed at establishing tourist routes through all the forests located in this municipality. The project seeks to educate visitors about the distinctive characteristics of the forest environment
[31] Forest Advisory Board
[32] State Environmental Service
[33] Zaļā brīvība
[34] Zaļie

role. They advocate for policies that prioritise biodiversity, conservation, and sustainable forestry practices. These organisations often work alongside government bodies to influence forest management practices at all levels.

2.2. Key representation organisations of the forest sector

Latvian forest sector is characterised by a multitude of key representation organisations that play pivotal roles in shaping the policy, management, and future direction of the forestry industry. These organisations represent various stakeholders, from individual forest owners to forest industry professionals, ensuring a balanced and collaborative approach to forest management across the country.

1. **Forest owners:**

The primary body representing the interests of forest owners in Latvia is the Latvian Forest Owners' Association. This Association advocates for the rights of both private and small-scale forest owners, who collectively manage a significant portion of Latvia's forested areas. The Association supports its members in forest management practices, provides information on legal requirements, and works to influence national policies and legislation that affect forest ownership. It also helps to ensure that forest owners are aware of the various financial support schemes available through national and EU funding programmes[35].

2. **Forest municipalities:**

In Latvia, the role of forest municipalities is represented by the Latvian Association of Local Governments. This organisation provides a forum for municipal authorities to discuss various topics, including forest management, as many of municipalities are responsible for managing public forests within their localities. It advocates for the integration of forestry with local development plans, facilitates cooperation among municipalities to ensure that forest management is harmonised and that environmental concerns are addressed at the local level[36].

3. **Forest industry:**

The Latvian Forest Industry Federation is the primary representative organisation for the forest industry in Latvia. It represents the interests of forestry companies, timber manufacturers, and other industry players involved in forest-based production. The Federation lobbies for policies that enhance the profitability and competitiveness of the forest industry, promotes sustainable forestry practices within the sector, and advocates for the development of forest-based products such as timber, paper, and bioenergy. The Federation also works to foster the growth of export markets for Latvian forest products. The association's members account for 65% of the sector's total turnover, employ 35% of the workforce within the industry, and contribute 52% of the labour tax revenue generated by the sector[37].

4. **Forest clusters:**

The concept of forest clusters in Latvia is underdeveloped. No such initiatives could be found.

[35] Latvian Forest Owners' Association
[36] Latvian Association of Local Governments
[37] Latvian Forest Industry Federation

5. **Forest contractors:**

Forest contractors in Latvia are represented by organisations such as the Latvian Forest Industry Federation and the Latvian Association of Independent Timber Harvesting Companies.

The Latvian Forest Industry Federation plays a central role in uniting and representing the interests of various organisations and companies within Latvia's forestry and wood-processing industries. The federation acts as the primary advocate for the forest industry at national and international levels. It ensures that the industry's perspectives and priorities are considered in governmental and legislative processes. It coordinates activities and fosters collaboration among member organisations, which include timber harvesting enterprises, wood processing companies, and manufacturers of wood products such as furniture and wooden houses. The Federation actively supports sustainable forest management practices, ensuring that wood processing aligns with Latvian legal standards and environmental sustainability goals. By facilitating the growth and competitiveness of the forestry sector, the Federation contributes significantly to the Latvian economy. Its members generate a substantial portion of the sector's turnover and employment. The Federation provides training, hosts exhibitions, and conducts seminars to enhance technological and economic expertise among its members[38].

The Latvian Association of Independent Timber Harvesting Companies represents timber harvesting enterprises and related service providers in Latvia. The Association safeguards the interests of its members in legislative and administrative matters, promotes cooperation among timber harvesting companies to strengthen the industry and fosters professional development and the adoption of best practices in timber harvesting[39].

6. **Forest Professionals:**

As such, there are no specific organisations which would unite forest professionals (e.g. forest engineers or foresters). Nonetheless, the Latvian Forest Trade Union has been established. It is an independent organisation dedicated to representing and safeguarding the labour and social-economic rights and interests of its members. It unites workers from the forestry, timber processing, paper, and pulp production sectors, encompassing those employed in factories, companies, firms, institutions, and associations within these industries[40].

7. **Forest Agents or rangers:**

Forest rangers in Latvia are represented by the State Forest Service. The Service oversees the regulation and enforcement of forest laws and provides guidance to forest owners on best management practices. Forest rangers play a critical role in monitoring forests, preventing illegal logging, enforcing forest protection laws, and ensuring that national forest policies are implemented effectively. The State Forest Service also provides training for forest agents, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary skills to carry out their duties in an increasingly complex forestry environment[41].

[38] Latvian Forest Industry Federation
[39] Latvian Association of Independent Timber Harvesting Companies
[40] The Latvian Forest Trade Union
[41] State Forest Service

8. **Forest Sciences:**

Forest science in Latvia is largely represented by the **Latvian State Forest Research Institute (*Silava*)**. This institute conducts research on forest management, ecology, biodiversity, and the economic aspects of forestry. *Silava* works closely with universities, forestry experts, and international research bodies to generate new knowledge that supports sustainable forest management. It also provides valuable data and scientific evidence that inform government policies and industry practices, helping to advance the state of forestry science in Latvia[42].

9. **Forest certification:**

Forest certification in Latvia is primarily overseen by organisations such as the **Forest Stewardship Council Latvia**[43] and **Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Latvia**[44]. These certification bodies provide certification schemes for sustainable forest management, ensuring that forests are managed according to internationally recognised environmental, social, and economic criteria. Certification is crucial for Latvian forest owners and companies who wish to access international markets that demand sustainably sourced timber and forest products. The certification organisations also work to raise awareness of the importance of sustainable forestry and support forest owners in achieving certification standards[45]. In addition, **two leading certification schemes**[46] - PEFC (Programme of the Endorsement of Forest Certification) and FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) are present. Both schemes have two types of certificates: forest management and chain of custody certificates. Responsible bodies: SIA BM Certification, SIA NEPCon, SCS Global Services, GFA Certification, Bureau Veritas, SGS and *Vides kvalitāte* (Quality of the Environment).

10. **Public enterprises**

Public enterprises involved in the forest sector in Latvia include the State Forests of Latvia , the state-owned forest management company that manages around half of Latvia's forests. It is responsible for managing, conserving, and sustainably using the country's state-owned forests. The Service plays a central role in the forest industry by generating revenue from timber sales, implementing forest management plans, and ensuring biodiversity conservation in public forests. It also provides services to private forest owners, including technical assistance and forest management planning[47].

11. **Forest cooperatives**

Forest cooperatives in Latvia provide a vital support network for small forest owners. There are several cooperatives. The oldest and largest cooperative is the **Latvian Forest Cooperative *"Mežsaimnieks"***. It unites over 1 000 members from all regions. Established in the year 2011 by 15 forest owners in Western Latvia, it now operates nationwide, with regional offices in various cities: *Kuldīga*, *Valmiera*, and *Rēzekne* cities. The cooperative provides its members with equal opportunities akin to large forest owners, offering a comprehensive range of forestry services,

[42] Latvian State Forest Research Institute (*Silava*)
[43] Forest Stewardship Council Latvia
[44] Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification
[45] Forest Stewardship Council Latvia ; Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification
[46] Portal for the Sustainable Management of Latvia's Forests and Land
[47] State Forest Service

including soil preparation, seedling procurement, planting, pre-commercial thinning, and plant protection. It also supports members with EU project applications and consultations. In addition, the Cooperative offers logging services, encompassing felling preparation, organisation, and timber sales, ensuring members secure competitive prices and conditions. Currently, it also provides free forest consultations, available to both members and other forest owners[48].

12. **Other Forest organisations**

There are no other forest-related organisations in Latvia.

[48] Forest Owners' Cooperative *"Mežsaimnieks"*

3. Forest land ownership structure

- **According to State statistics, what is the ownership structure of the forest in your country (at State level)?** Please include relative and absolute data of forest ownership types, including average size of public and private forests and the number of area of forests in each size category)

3.1. Data on national forests ownership structure

In Latvia, forest ownership is structured rather **distinctively between state and private holdings**, a division reflective of the nation's heritage of responsible forestry and conservation. According to the latest statistics, Latvian forests span an impressive **3 435 million hectares**, covering approximately **53% of the nation's territory**[49], underscoring the significance of forestry to the national landscape and economy.

Slightly more than **half of Latvia's forests** are owned and managed by the state, while the **remaining 49,6%,** are privately owned. These private forests are divided among approximately **150 000 individual owners, with the average property size being a modest 6 hectares**[50].

More detailed statistics is not publicly available.

3.2. Definitions of forest ownership in your country

Please provide the definitions identified in the legislation applicable in your country following the guidelines shared with you.

- **Forest owner**

In Latvia, the concept of forest ownership is defined in Article 1(27), of the Law on Forests, as '**Lawful Forest Possessor'.** This person[51] is either (a) an individual to whom the forest land ownership has been transferred or restored through a decision by a designated institution as part of the land reform process (meaning a person who has received ownership of forest land through a formal decision by an authorised institution as part of a land reform process, either by transfer or restoration of previous ownership rights), with the land being clearly delineated and surveyed in accordance with applicable laws and regulations; or (b) an individual who has acquired ownership of the forest land through inheritance or other legally recognised means[52].

As it follows from the definition set forth in Article 1(27) of the Law on Forests[53], '**Lawful Forest Possessor**' is the legal proprietor of a forested area. This individual or entity holds full ownership rights, including the right to use, manage, and dispose of the forest land as deemed fit, within the constraints of national forestry regulations. Ownership may be held by private individuals,

[49] Latvian Forest in Facts and Figures, Statistics from the year 2022.
[50] Promoting sustainable forest management among Latvian forest owners
[51] In Latvian legal tradition a 'person' is understood as an individual or legal entity.
[52] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[53] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.

corporate bodies, or the state itself, with each owner type subject to specific legal obligations regarding sustainable forest use and environmental protection[54].

- **Forest holder**

As such, this definition is not present in Latvian laws. Instead, only the definition set forth in Article 1(27) of the Law on Forests[55] - **'Lawful Forest Possessor'** is present[56].

- **Forest manager**

This definition is not present in Latvian laws. Instead, only the definition set forth in Article 1(27) of the Law on Forests[57] - **'Lawful Forest Possessor'** is present[58].

- **Forest contractor**

This definition is not present in Latvian laws. Instead, only the definition set forth in Article 1(27) of the Law on Forests[59] - **'Lawful Forest Possessor'** is present[60].

- **Forest**

Pursuant to Article 1(34) of the Law on Forests, **'forest'** (in Latvian: *mežs*) is defined 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[61].

3.3. Forest ownership types in your country

- Please provide a **description of the types of forest ownership** (e.g. public forest, private forest) identified in the legislation applicable in your country. **Are there specific laws** for certain types of collective, communal, vicinal or neighbourhood forests?

In Latvia, the legislation recognises distinct types of forest ownership, reflecting the varied purposes and responsibilities associated with these lands. These classifications include public forests and private forests, each governed by the specific provisions of the laws applicable to both, public and private forests, to ensure sustainable use, conservation, and responsible management. Types of forest ownership in Latvia:

- **Public (state-owner) forests:** public forests in Latvia are those owned by the state, typically managed under the auspices of the State Forests of Latvia agency[62]. These

[54] Meņģele, L., "Par tiesību subjektu, apsaimniekojot un izmantojot mežu", Jurista Vārds, 15. jūnijs 2000 /NR. 24 (177).
[55] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[56] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.
[57] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[58] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.
[59] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[60] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.
[61] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[62] State Forests of Latvia

lands are managed with a primary focus on ecological stability, conservation, and public benefit, including biodiversity conservation and recreation. The laws governing state-owned forests emphasise sustainable practices to safeguard Latvia's natural heritage for future generations[63].

- **Private (privately-owned) forests:** private forests are lands owned by individual proprietors, families, or corporate entities. These forests are utilised for various purposes, ranging from timber production to conservation and recreational use. Private owners are afforded rights to use their forest land as they see fit, though they must adhere to national forestry laws regarding sustainable practices, forest health, and environmental protection. There are specific regulations mandating sustainable forestry practices for private forests to balance economic use with ecological conservation[64].

- Are there well-established programs for forest land consolidation? Are there public bodies promoting or responsible for these programs?

Latvia has recognised the value of forest land consolidation as a means of improving land management and increasing forestry productivity. While well-established programmes for forest land consolidation are relatively limited in scope, there are national initiatives and policies in place aimed at encouraging such efforts:

- **Public Institutions Supporting Consolidation:** Public institutions, such as the State Forest Service[65], play an indirect role in supporting consolidation efforts by providing information, resources, and management expertise to private forest owners. The Service assist forest owners with the practicalities of sustainable management, which can include guidance on land amalgamation to form more viable forests[66].
- **Consolidation incentives:** Latvia offers certain incentives to private owners interested in consolidating smaller, fragmented forest plots. These incentives, while modest, are designed to encourage sustainable management and improve forest productivity. However, Latvia's approach is more facilitative than prescriptive, focusing on providing regulatory support and advisory services[67]. Nonetheless, there are no specific programmes for such consolidation[68].

[63] State Forest Service
[64] Meņģele, L., "Par tiesību subjektu, apsaimniekojot un izmantojot mežu", Jurista Vārds, 15. jūnijs 2000 /NR. 24 (177).
[65] State Forest Service
[66] State Forest Service
[67] Ministry of Agriculture
[68] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.

3.4. Proof of ownership: Land registry and Cadastre

In Latvia, forest ownership is formally recognised and managed through a structured system involving land registration, cadastre, and property verification, all administered by official authorities. This system provides a comprehensive legal framework for proving ownership, ensuring accuracy and transparency in forest land ownership records. The register system is precise and up-to-date[69].

- How is ownership proved?

When land is acquired (including forest land), the owner must submit legal documents, such as purchase contracts or inheritance records, or transfer, to prove ownership. Ownership of forest land must then be registered in the State Unified Computerised Land Register *(Zemesgrāmata)*[70] and the State Cadastre of Real Estate *(Kadastrs)*[71]. The benefit of registration is protection of right to real property regarding third parties. The State Unified Computerised Land Register relates solely to ownership, while the State Cadastre of Real Estate relates to ownership and also provides technical and valuation data about real estate.

- **Is there a legal obligation to register ownership/property?**

Yes, there is a legal **obligation to register all property ownership in Latvia.** The registration under the State Cadastre of Real Estate is mandatory. Moreover, any transaction involving land—whether purchase, inheritance, or transfer—must be recorded in the State Unified Computerised Land Register to establish formal ownership. This registration ensures legal recognition and protection of property rights, which are essential for both private and state owners of forest land[72].

- Is there a registration fee?

A **registration fee** applies to the process of recording land ownership. The fee varies depending on factors such as the type of forest land and the value of the property being registered. The fee for registering property rights in the State Unified Computerised Land Register in Latvia would range between 1,5% of the property's value for natural persons and 2% of the property's value for legal entities. Lower percentage could be applicable if property is passed from one family member to another, or persons mentioned in a testimonial[73]. If acquisition of a property took place through donation agreement – the fee for registering property would amount to 3% of the property's value[74].

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[69] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.
[70] State Unified Computerised Land Register
[71] State Cadastre of Real Estate
[72] Land Register Law *(Zemesgrāmatu likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Republikas Augstākās Padomes un Valdības Ziņotājs, 16/17, 29.04.1993.; Likumu un Ministru kabineta noteikumu krājums, 38, 30.12.1937.; Diena, 87, 07.05.1993.
[73] Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 1250 "Regulation Regarding State Fee for Registering Ownership rights and Pledge Rights in the Land Register" *(Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.1250 "Noteikumi par valsts nodevu par īpašuma tiesību un ķīlas tiesību nostiprināšanu zemesgrāmatā")*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 175, 04.11.2009.
[74] Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 1250 "Regulation Regarding State Fee for Registering Ownership rights and Pledge Rights in the Land Register" *(Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.1250 "Noteikumi par valsts nodevu par īpašuma tiesību un ķīlas tiesību nostiprināšanu zemesgrāmatā")*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 175, 04.11.2009.

- **Is there an official register of forest owners and of forest holdings? Is it shared with agricultural registers? Is it harmonized with the general property/ownership register?**

Latvia does not have a dedicated register of forest owners and forest holdings. However, the State Unified Computerised Land Register records all types of land property ownership, and consequently information on forest owners and forest holdings can be retrieved. This system includes detailed information on forest properties and is closely coordinated with the agricultural register to streamline data and provide a complete overview of land use[75].

- **Is the Cadaster/register well updated and reflecting real forest owners/holders?**

The State Cadastre of Real Estate is well maintained and regularly updated to reflect current ownership and holding statuses for all forest lands. The accuracy of these records is prioritised to ensure they reflect the real owners and holders of forest properties. Updates occur promptly upon transactions, ensuring that the Cadastre is a reliable source of information for legal, planning, and environmental management purposes[76]. The State Unified Computerised Land Register is updated simultaneously when the data to the State Cadastre of Real Estate is introduced; the two systems are thus interconnected[77].

[75] State Unified Computerised Land Register
[76] State Cadastre of Real Estate ; Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.
[77] State Unified Computerised Land Register

4. Rights and obligations: forest owner/holder and forest contractor

4.1. Overview

- **According to the legal and regulatory framework what are the rights and obligations of forest owners/holders and forest managers in your country?**

Under the Law on Forests, **Lawful Forest Possessors** have distinct rights and obligations designed to support sustainable forest use while safeguarding ecological integrity. While Lawful Forest Possessors may enjoy economic benefits from their forests, they are equally bound by responsibilities to maintain forest health and adhere to sustainable practices. Lawful Forest Possessors, whether private individuals, companies, or the state, are entrusted with substantial rights over their properties, including usage and management autonomy, as well as certain economic incentives. However, these rights are complemented by legal obligations to prevent environmental degradation, uphold biodiversity, and ensure that any economic activity, such as logging, is conducted responsibly[78].

The definition of forest holders is not present in Latvian laws. Forest managers and contractors are not defined either in the national legislation. Respectively, no specific rights are granted to these categories. Only the category of Lawful Forest Possessors is defined[79].

4.2. Legal rights of the forest owner/holder

- **Right to financial support/tax exemptions/subsidies? What are the requirements?**

Financial support

As such, all forest owners, disregarding the size of the forest, are subject to the same regulations, including financial regulation[80]. The Rural Support Service of the Republic of Latvia[81] which supports farmers in their activities, is also offering some financial support initiatives for Lawful Forest Possessors, such as covering 60% of maintenance expenses within the Rural Support Programme framework, 100% compensation of costs after natural disasters, compensation for CO2 mitigation[82]. If cutting of certain trees is prohibited in the forest – 50% compensation for non-cutting is available[83].

Subsidies

The EU supports Lawful Forest Possessors (owners) in Latvia for activities such as reforestation, restoration of damaged areas, thinning of young forests, and the replacement of unproductive forest stands. This funding is available through the current Rural Development Programme

[78] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[79] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.
[80] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.
[81] Rural Support Service of the Republic of Latvia
[82] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.
[83] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.

administered by the Rural Support Service of the Republic of Latvia**.** Support is particularly focused on projects involving afforestation of shrubland and low-fertility land. Preference is given to small and medium-sized forest owners, as well as those with forestry knowledge or experienced consultants. Funding is also available for the restoration of forests affected by natural disasters such as fires, storms, snow, or flooding. Thinning of young forests and replacement of older, dense or alder forests (over 30 years old) also qualify for funding, with priority given to owners who engage in forest care or the replacement of dense stands[84].

- **Is there a right to decide about the forest management practices in their forest land?**

Yes, pursuant to Article 31 of the Law on Forests[85], Lawful Forest Possessors (owners) in Latvia have the right to determine the management practices for their forest land, provided these practices conform to national forestry laws. Owners may devise management plans suited to their goals—be they economic, recreational, or conservation-oriented—while adhering to legal requirements for sustainable forest use. These rights grant to Lawful Forest Possessors (owners) significant latitude in planning their forest activities, though all practices must be compliant with regulations aimed at maintaining forest health, protecting habitats, and mitigating environmental impact. To define the forest management practice which need to be approved by the State Forest Service, a forest management plan in Latvia is developed based on forest inventory data. Forest owners or legal holders are permitted to include additional information in the plan (see also Section 5). In managing their forests, Lawful Forest Possessors (owners) must ensure the following: (a) the sustainable and even use of wood resources; (b) compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation; (c) the preservation and enhancement of forest productivity and value; (d) adherence to other legal and regulatory provisions[86].

- **Is there a right to harvest?**

Yes, pursuant to Article 4 of the Law on Forests[87], the right to harvest timber is afforded to Lawful Forest Possessors (owners), enabling them to derive economic benefit from their land. However, this right is regulated to ensure sustainability. Harvesting operations are subject to permit requirements, adherence to forest management plans, and compliance with logging restrictions, especially in protected areas or during specific seasons to protect wildlife. This regulated right balances the economic interests of forest owners with the broader ecological considerations essential to Latvia's forestry policies[88].

[84] Latvian Rural Consultations Educational Centre

[85] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.

[86] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.

[87] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.

[88] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.

4.3. Limitations to the rights of forest owner/holder

- **Is there a limitation to change the land use of the land (from forestry to agriculture and/or urbanization)?**

Yes, in Latvia, forest land is subject to stringent regulations regarding land use changes. Lawful Forest Possessors (owners) generally cannot unilaterally convert forest land for purposes such as agriculture or urban development without proper authorisation[89]. The land use purpose is defined either by its current utilisation or by the permitted use specified in the municipal territorial planning. To change the designated use of land, a Lawful Forest Possessor (owner) must submit an application to the local municipality. Such type of land use change may be limited by territorial planning or land drainage regulations, which must be clarified with the local municipality. Overall, changing forest land to other uses requires extensive approval processes and must align with national land-use policies, which prioritise the conservation of forests over conversion to other types of land use[90].

- **Is there a legal limitation to the right to harvest? Is there a ban on clear cutting?**

Yes, pursuant to Article 4 of the Law on Forests, there are legal limitations on harvesting rights for Lawful Forest Possessors (owners). While owners may harvest timber, they must do so within the boundaries of sustainable forestry practices. Latvia has specific regulations governing the frequency and method of timber extraction, and clear-cutting—while not entirely banned—is highly regulated. Clear-cutting is generally permitted only in designated areas and under strict environmental guidelines to prevent deforestation, protect soil quality, and minimise habitat disruption[91]. It has been noted, however, that small forest owners in Latvia encounter particular challenges. For example, small-scale forest owners are anticipated to be the most affected by the recent ban on harvesting trees with smaller diameters in forests that have a high proportion of newly established stands[92].

- **Are there limitations to carry out non-forest activities in forest land (like mining, energy plants, etc.)?**

Yes, Latvian law imposes substantial restrictions on non-forest activities within forested lands. Pursuant to Article 41 of the Law on Forests, activities such as mining, establishing energy plants, or other industrial uses are typically prohibited unless expressly permitted by the relevant authorities. Permission of such activities requires an administrative act to be issued by competent authorities (the Ministry of Agriculture) and compensation to the state for environmental impacts unless exemptions apply. Exemptions include infrastructure construction within forests, habitat restoration, or security-related activities on military sites. The Cabinet of Ministers determines the procedures for calculating and reimbursing compensation[93].

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[89] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025

[90] Blog article: Whether to change the purpose of land use

[91] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.

[92] Small-scale forest owners will be mainly affected by the ban on cutting smaller-diameter trees

[93] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.

- **Are there specific limitations to carry out agricultural activities, like extensive grazing or temporary cultivation, on forest land?**

Yes, although these activities can be carried under authorisation, there are specific limitations on engaging in agricultural activities—such as extensive grazing or temporary cultivation—within forest land. Article 41 of the Law on Forests limits these activities to avoid soil degradation, maintain forest biodiversity, and prevent forest encroachment by agricultural enterprises. Any such activities must receive prior approval from the authorities (the Ministry of Agriculture)[94].

- **Is hunting right linked to ownership right? Is it considered a forest activity or does it have specific regulations?**

Pursuant to the Law on Forests, hunting rights are not automatically linked to forest ownership. Hunting is regulated separately under the Hunting Law, where **hunting rights belong to landowners**. In this regard, Article 1(9) of the Hunting Law states that hunting rights are the rights of the landowner or legal possessor and that the owner or legal possessor of the land may exercise the hunting rights solely for himself or herself or transfer them to another person[95]. Pursuant to Article 12 of the Hunting Law, licences for individuals wishing to hunt in forested and other areas are needed. Also, hunting is not regarded strictly as a forest activity; rather, it is subject to specific rules aimed at preserving wildlife populations and ensuring ethical hunting practices. The rules apply uniformly across the country and to all the hunters, including forest owners[96]. Chapter III (Hunting Areas, Hunting Quota and Hunting Permit) of the Hunting Law sets minimum area requirements for hunting various game species, allowing roe deer and wild boar hunting on at least 350 hectares of mixed land, while red deer requires 1 000 hectares for does and fawns and 2 000 hectares for stags, and elk hunting requires 2 500 hectares, all mainly consisting of forested land; if a district is too small, neighbouring districts may cooperate under a joint agreement that defines shared boundaries and a combined quota. The State Forest Service annually evaluates game populations and sets hunting quotas according to an approved methodology, manages quota-based hunting permits, requires hunting permits and seasonal cards depending on species[97].

- **Are there citizens' rights to collect wild products in forest land? Are they linked to the ownership right or not?**

Latvian law upholds citizens' rights to collect wild products—such as berries, mushrooms, and herbs—in forests. Pursuant to Article 16 of the Law on Forests, these rights are traditionally granted as part of the public's access to forest resources and are not directly linked to ownership

[94] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[95] Hunting Law *(Medību likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 107, 23.07.2003.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 17, 11.09.2003.
[96] Hunting Law *(Medību likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 107, 23.07.2003.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 17, 11.09.2003.
[97] Hunting Law *(Medību likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 107, 23.07.2003.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 17, 11.09.2003.

rights. Such activities are permitted on both public and private forest lands, provided they are conducted responsibly and in a manner that does not harm the forest environment[98].

- **Are there rights to access (walking) on forest land? Are there specific regulations for public use of forest land, hiking, riding, biking, etc.?**

Pursuant to Article 5 of the Law on Forests, public access to forests is generally permitted in Latvia, with rights to walk, hike, and enjoy recreational activities. Natural persons are generally permitted free access and movement within state, local government and private forests, provided no legal restrictions apply. This right does not extend to areas designated as special-purpose plantations, enclosed forested zones for captive wildlife, or protective buffer zones surrounding water extraction sites. Access may be restricted by Lawful Forest Possessors (owners), state or local authorities for safety or environmental protection, or during forest fire risks. Restricted areas must be visibly marked (e.g. by posting signs reading 'Private Property'). Public officials and authorised personnel may access all forests across the country without restriction for official purposes. Restrictions are valid only when clearly marked in compliance with the Law on Forests[99].

4.4. Forest owner/holder obligations and requirements

- **Which requirements or obligations regarding forest management are imposed on owners?**

Pursuant to Articles 31 and 31.[1] of the Law on Forests, Lawful Forest Possessors (owners) are subject to several requirements and obligations regarding the responsible management of their land. These include the development and adherence to forest management plans that align with sustainable forestry practices. Owners are also obligated to maintain biodiversity, conserve soil quality, and protect habitats within their forested areas[100]. Moreover, all forest areas must be regenerated after felling. The forest owner must notify the State Forest Service of any identified damage in the forest. The forest owner must also submit a report to the State Forest Service on the felling carried out.

- **Is there a tax imposed on forest ownership?**

Lawful Forest Possessors (owners) are required to pay **an annual real estate tax** on forest land. The tax rate is set at 1,5% of the cadastral value of the land[101].

The local municipality in Latvia may adjust the real estate tax rate for forest land, with the rate varying across different regions. A higher rate is applied if the property is not maintained according to the current laws and regulations. The municipality sets the rate in its binding regulations, published by 1st of November each year. Payments are made quarterly, based on a quarter of the annual tax amount, though the full amount can be paid upfront. Forest land is

[98] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[99] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[100] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[101] Law On Taxes and Fees *(Par nodokļiem un nodevām)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 26, 18.02.1995.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 7, 13.04.1995.

exempt from the property tax if it has been reforested with a young stand, recognised by the State Forest Service, where the dominant tree species do not exceed certain age limits:

- **40 years for coniferous and hardwood species;**
- **20 years for softwood species;**
- **10 years for white alder[102].**

- **What type of permits the forest owner needs to manage their land?**

Forest owners must obtain permits to undertake certain management activities on their land, particularly those involving **timber harvesting.** Depending on the scale and nature of the work, permits may also be required for **reforestation**, **land clearing**, and other substantial alterations. This permit system ensures that all forest management activities adhere to national sustainability and conservation standards[103]. The permits are issued by the State Forest Service[104].

- **How is the control of forest harvest determined? Is there an obligation to mark every tree to be cut or retained?**

The control of forest harvest in Latvia is carefully regulated through the **forest management plan**, as set in Article 31 of the Law on Forests. There is indeed an obligation to mark trees designated for harvest in some cases, particularly for larger or commercial harvests, to prevent overcutting and protect younger growth. Trees intended for preservation are likewise marked, ensuring a clear distinction and helping to maintain forest balance. These measures ensure that only approved trees are harvested, supporting responsible forest use[105]. Before felling, the boundaries of the final felling area must be clearly visible in the field, and the property boundaries must also be clearly visible.

- **Are there technical, administrative or economic specifications on the forest products market? Are forest harvest contracts legally defined for public or private forests or for some specific types?**

Latvian forest products market is regulated by technical and administrative specifications to standardise quality and encourage sustainable practices. Forest harvest contracts must be legally defined for both public and private forests. In detail:

- **Technical specifications:** forest management and harvesting must follow sustainable forestry principles (Article 2 of the Law on Forests)[106]. Specific rules apply to tree felling, reforestation, forest health, and biodiversity protection (Articles 3, 8, 25, 29.[1] of the Law on Forests[107]).

[102] My Forest Value portal
[103] Land Register Law *(Zemesgrāmatu likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Republikas Augstākās Padomes un Valdības Ziņotājs, 16/17, 29.04.1993.; Likumu un Ministru kabineta noteikumu krājums, 38, 30.12.1937.; Diena, 87, 07.05.1993.
[104] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.
[105] Land Register Law *(Zemesgrāmatu likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Republikas Augstākās Padomes un Valdības Ziņotājs, 16/17, 29.04.1993.; Likumu un Ministru kabineta noteikumu krājums, 38, 30.12.1937.; Diena, 87, 07.05.1993.
[106] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[107] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.

- **Administrative specifications:** forest management is governed by the State Forest Service, which supervises compliance with the Law on Forests. A forest management plan is mandatory for forest, detailing allowable cutting volumes, reforestation plans, and protective measures.

As regards forest harvest contracts, contracts for forest harvesting must be legally defined, pursuant to Chapter II of the Civil law[108], as any other contract under Latvian law, and are binding for both private and public forests.

- **Is there an obligation to prevent forest fires or other risks?**

Pursuant to the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 238 "Fire Safety Regulations", Lawful Forest Possessors (owners) and forest visitors are under obligation to take preventative measures against forest fires and other potential risks. This includes **maintaining firebreaks**, **keeping forest access roads clear**, and **removing deadwood** that could pose a fire hazard. Forest visitors' access to the forest with high fire probability **might be restricted.** Additionally, the division of forest stands and felled areas in **fire hazard classes** should be made. The State Forest Service shall annually determine and announce the **fire-prone period** for forests nationwide, with local governments authorised to adjust this determined period for their areas (e.g. to prolong it or to shorten it). During high fire risk, local authorities may implement preventive measures. For large forest holdings **over 5 000 hectares**, a **comprehensive fire safety plan**, including maps and emergency contacts, must be submitted annually. Additionally, **fire-related activities are strictly regulated**, prohibiting open flames, waste burning, or vehicle use off designated roads during fire-prone periods. Special restrictions apply to piling felling debris near young pine stands. In extreme fire conditions, the State Forest Service may require additional precautions[109].

Pursuant to **Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 348 "Forest protection rules"**[110], requirements for protecting forests from pests, diseases, and other threats, including provisions for monitoring and control measures were established.

From the obligations stipulated above, the obligations of forest owners in Latvia, as outlined in the regulations, primarily revolve around preventing forest fires and managing threats to forest health. Some specific obligations include: (a) fire prevention measures - forest owners must take preventative actions to reduce fire risk; (b) fire hazard assessment, where owners must ensure that forests are classified according to fire hazard levels and take measures based on the assigned risk level; (c) cooperation with authorities, where forest owners must comply with the fire-prone period announced annually by the State Forest Service and adhere to restrictions during this period; (d) fire safety plans for large forests - for forest holdings larger than 5 000 hectares, owners must submit a comprehensive fire safety plan annually, which should include maps and emergency contacts; (e) restriction on fire-related activities - owners must adhere to regulations that prohibit activities such as open flames, burning waste, or using vehicles off designated roads during high-risk periods; (f) protection from pests and diseases - under the "Forest Protection

[108] Civil Law (*Civillikums*), Chapter II – Contracts, Official Journal reference: Valdības Vēstnesis, 46, 26.02.1937.
[109] Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 238 "Fire Safety Regulations" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr. 238 "Ugunsdrošības noteikumi"*), Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 78, 22.04.2016.OP number: 2016/78.5.
[110] Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 348 "Forest protection rules" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr. 348 "Meža aizsardzības noteikumi"*), Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 124, 29.06.2023.OP numurs: 2023/124.16.

Rules", owners are required to monitor and control pest and disease threats, which may involve regular inspections and specific protective measures[111].

- **Is fencing or the use of forest roads regulated?**

Fencing and use of forest roads in Latvia are regulated by Article 5 of the Law on Forests[112] to protect both the forest ecosystem and public access rights.

In principle, landowners are not prohibited from erecting fences or other barriers that would restrict access to fellow forest users. In practice, fencing is merely used for protection of young forests and could be subject to restrictions, especially if a fence could hinder wildlife movement or public pathways[113].

As such, "forest roads" are not defined. However, the State Forests of Latvia's handbook[114] describes forest roads as internal forestry routes connected to state, municipal, or private roads. These roads support various activities, including timber transport, forest management, protection, hunting, and recreation. Natural dirt tracks, usable under specific conditions, are also considered forest roads. Mechanised vehicles are prohibited on forest roads within protected areas, such as in the forested Baltic Sea coastal dunes. Violations may incur administrative fines[115].

- **Is there an obligation for forest owners and/or forest managers to be associated?**

There is currently no legal obligation for forest owners or managers to belong to an association.

4.5. Forest manager/contractor obligations

There is no specific statutory regulation imposed upon forest managers, as this definition is not present in the national laws. However, numerous rules apply, contingent upon the activities undertaken and the contracts entered into for particular services. In theory, private agreements between landowners and managers would establish binding obligations to manage forests in full compliance with the legal obligations.

- **Which requirements or obligations on forest management are legally imposed on forest managers/contractors?**

In Latvia, forest managers/contractors are not defined. Everyone working in the forest must comply with the Forest Law and the relevant Cabinet regulations.

- **What legal rights does the forest manager/contractor have in your country?**

In Latvia, forest managers/contractors are not defined.

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[111] Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 238 "Fire Safety Regulations" *(Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr. 238 "Ugunsdrošības noteikumi")*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 78, 22.04.2016.OP number: 2016/78.5. ; Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 348 "Forest protection rules" *(Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr. 348 "Meža aizsardzības noteikumi")*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 124, 29.06.2023.OP numurs: 2023/124.16.

[112] Land Register Law *(Zemesgrāmatu likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Republikas Augstākās Padomes un Valdības Ziņotājs, 16/17, 29.04.1993.; Likumu un Ministru kabineta noteikumu krājums, 38, 30.12.1937.; Diena, 87, 07.05.1993.

[113] Blog article: How to protect forest stands from animal damage

[114] The State Forests of Latvia's handbook

[115] The State Forests of Latvia's handbook

- **Is there a requirement of a forest management plan? Are there detailed prescriptions on that?**

Yes, pursuant to Article 31 of the **Law on Forests**, a **forest management plan** is required. This is mandatory for large forest owners. Smaller forest owners must carry out a forest inventory once every 20 years, containing the information needed to make forest management decisions (Article 29 of the Law on Forests[116]). In addition, all forest owners must prepare a special forest management plan if they wish to apply for support payments (see also Section 5). A forest management plan must be based on forest inventory data, with owners or lawful possessors permitted to include supplementary information. When devising the plan, they must ensure: (a) maximum sustainable and balanced use of timber resources; (b) compliance with the Law on Forest provisions; (c) preservation and enhancement of forest productivity and value; (d) adherence to this and other relevant legislation[117].

The **detailed prescriptions** on the development, content and approval of this plan are set forth in the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 67 "Rules on forest management plans". A forest management plan must outline the objectives, the size and location of the managed area, and detailed forest resources information, including land division, summaries of dominant species, non-timber values, protected natural and cultural assets, infrastructure, and designated public spaces. It should specify management measures for tree felling, renewal, protection, infrastructure development, and conservation, alongside an assessment of environmental, resource, and social impacts. Public involvement measures must be included for state and municipal plans. Accompanying materials include a forest land map, cartographic details of protected and cultural areas, recreational zones, and, for state and municipal plans, maps of forestry activities and landscape management. Forest owners must prepare and approve a management plan within one year of acquiring ownership or legal possession if the total managed forest area exceeds 10 000 hectares. The plan shall cover a period of up to 10 years. The approval of forest management plans varies by ownership: state forest plans are approved by the State Forest Service; municipal forest plans must be approved by the local council; private forest plans by the Lawful Forest Possessors (owners). The plans must be prepared by the Lawful Forest Possessor[118]. For instance, there should be a discussion, or at least structured feedback from the forest owners on which biotopes should be prioritised for protection[119].

- **Is there an obligation to register the responsibility of forest manager/contractor?**

Forest managers/contractors are not defined in the national law.

i. Is registration based on product income?

Forest managers/contractors are not defined in the national law.

[116] See also What Is a Forest Inventory and Why Is It Important?

[117] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.

[118] Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 67 "Rules on forest management plans" *(Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.67 "Noteikumi par meža apsaimniekošanas plānu")*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 26, 06.02.2014.OP numurs: 2014/26.11.

[119] Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.

ii. Is there a registration fee?

Forest managers/contractors are not defined in the national law.

- **Is there a tax imposed on the forest manager? Is it based on income or hectares?**

Forest managers/contractors are not defined in the national law.

5. Forest Management plans

- Are forest management plans required in the legislation of your country?

☒ Yes
☐ No

Specify where and the conditions as well as the amount of forest land with plans

Forest management plans are indeed required by Latvian legislation when the total managed forest area exceeds 10 000 hectares. Under Article 31 of the Law on Forests, a forest management plan is mandatory and must be based on inventory data. Owners may add supplementary details to the plan, ensuring sustainable timber use, compliance with forest law, preservation of forest productivity and value, and adherence to all relevant legislation[120]. No statistical data on the amount of forest land with plans is available.

For large forest holdings over 5 000 hectares, a comprehensive fire safety plan, including maps and emergency contacts, must be submitted annually. Additionally, fire-related activities are strictly regulated, prohibiting open flames, waste burning, or vehicle use off designated roads during fire-prone periods. Special restrictions apply to piling felling debris near young pine stands. In extreme fire conditions, the State Forest Service may require additional precautions[121].

- **Are there other type of plans required such as:**

☐ Technical Plan
☐ Financial Plan
☐ Exploitation Plan
☒ Fire prevention Plan
☐ Hunting Plan

As such, **Technical**, **Financial**, **Exploitation** and **Hunting** plans must be included into the Management Plan[122]. A separate plan for **Fire Prevention** is required for large forest holdings over 5 000 hectares. This plan shall include maps and emergency contacts. It must be submitted annually to the State Forest Service. Additionally, fire-related activities are strictly regulated, prohibiting open flames, waste burning, or vehicle use off designated roads during fire-prone periods. Special restrictions apply to piling felling debris near young pine stands. In extreme fire conditions, the State Forest Service may require additional precautions[123].

- **Please indicate the minimum size of forest requiring a forest management plan?**

Forest owners must prepare and approve a management plan within one year of acquiring ownership or legal possession **if the total managed forest area exceeds 10 000 hectares.** The

[120] Law on Forests (*Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[121] Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 67 "Rules on forest management plans" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.67 "Noteikumi par meža apsaimniekošanas plānu")*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 26, 06.02.2014.OP numurs: 2014/26.11.
[122] Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 67 "Rules on forest management plans" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.67 "Noteikumi par meža apsaimniekošanas plānu")*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 26, 06.02.2014.OP numurs: 2014/26.11.
[123] Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 238 "Fire Safety Regulations" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr. 238 "Ugunsdrošības noteikumi")*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 78, 22.04.2016.OP number: 2016/78.5.

plan shall cover a period of up to 10 years. The approval of forest management plans varies by ownership: state forest plans are approved by the State Forest Service agency; municipal forest plans must be approved by the local council; private forest plans by the Lawful Forest Possessors (owners)[124].

- **On which legal basis are they required? Are they legally binding or only guidelines?**

Yes, pursuant to Article 31 of the Law on Forests, a **forest management plan** is required when the total managed forest area exceeds 10 000 hectares and is legally binding[125].

- **Who has the responsibility for the implementation of forest management plans**? Please include national, regional, and local levels as appropriate. Please distinguish between state and private ownership. Please distinguish between different protection status.

Pursuant to Article 31 of the Law on Forests, the responsibility for **implementing forest management plans** varies across different levels of ownership and governance: state forest plans are approved by the State Forest Service and implemented by the State Forests of Latvia agency; municipal forest plans must be approved and implemented by the local council; private forest plans must be approved and implemented by the Lawful Forest Possessors (owners)[126].

- **Are forest management plans being enforced?**

Yes, pursuant to Article 31 of the Law on Forests, **forest management plans are rigorously enforced** in Latvia. These plans are not merely theoretical; they are legally binding documents that must be adhered to by both state and private forest owners. The Latvian authorities, including the State Forests of Latvia agency and regional forestry departments, conduct regular inspections and audits to ensure that the management practices stipulated in the plans are being effectively implemented. Non-compliance can result in legal consequences, such as administrative fines[127].

- Is there an obligation to maintain a **Forest Book** (linked or related to the Farm Book of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)?

No, there is no obligation to maintain a Forest Book. Instead, there is an obligation for forest owners to regularly communicate all the activities in the forest to the **State Forest Register** (not publicly available)[128]. Pursuant to Article 1(28) of the Law on Forests, the State Forest Register is a national information system that records and updates data on forests, forestry activities, adjacent marshes, forest infrastructure, and related clearings, marshes, and glades. Thus, it is a crucial tool for transparency and accountability in forest management[129].

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[124] Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 67 "Rules on forest management plans" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.67 "Noteikumi par meža apsaimniekošanas plānu")*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 26, 06.02.2014.OP numurs: 2014/26.11.

[125] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.

[126] Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 67 "Rules on forest management plans" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.67 "Noteikumi par meža apsaimniekošanas plānu")*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 26, 06.02.2014.OP numurs: 2014/26.11.

[127] Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 67 "Rules on forest management plans" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.67 "Noteikumi par meža apsaimniekošanas plānu")*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 26, 06.02.2014.OP numurs: 2014/26.11.

[128] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.

[129] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.

- **How often do forest management plans need to be updated? Who is responsible for the update?**

Forest owners must prepare and approve a management plan within one year of acquiring ownership or legal possession **if the total managed forest area exceeds 10 000 hectares.** The plan shall cover a period of up to 10 years. The approval of forest management plans varies by ownership: state forest plans are approved by the State Forest Service and implemented by the State Forests of Latvia agency; municipal forest plans must be approved by the local council; private forest plans by the Lawful Forest Possessors (owners)[130].

Forest management plans in Latvia must be updated **every 10 years** as per legal requirements by the forest owners. The responsibility for approving these plans varies by ownership: state forest plans are approved by the State Forests of Latvia agency; municipal forest plans must be approved by the local council; private forest plans by the Lawful Forest Possessors (owners)[131].

- Are specific mechanisms put in place to guarantee that national legislation is in line with European guidelines and **criteria on forest management plans** (i.e. Natura 2000 Forest Management Plans?

Yes, pursuant to Article 43 of the Law on Forests, Latvia has established mechanisms to ensure that national forestry legislation aligns with EU guidelines, particularly in relation to protected areas such as those under Natura 2000. The country's forest management plans are designed to meet the ecological criteria set forth by the EU, ensuring that conservation objectives—such as biodiversity preservation and habitat protection—are upheld in all relevant forested areas[132].

- Are there any specific requirements for the **forest management plans** in terms of content, structure or criteria? If yes, please elaborate.

Yes, specific **requirements for forest management plans** are clearly stipulated in the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 67 "Rules on forest management plans". A forest management plan must articulate objectives, define the size and location of the managed area, and provide comprehensive details on forest resources, including land classification, summaries of dominant species, non-timber values, protected natural and cultural assets, infrastructure, and designated public spaces. It should outline management measures for tree felling, renewal, protection, infrastructure development, and conservation, accompanied by assessments of environmental, resource, and social impacts. Public participation provisions are required for state and municipal plans. Supporting materials must include a forest land map, cartographic details of protected and cultural areas, recreational zones, and, for state and municipal plans, maps detailing forestry activities and landscape management[133].

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[130] Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 67 "Rules on forest management plans" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.67 "Noteikumi par meža apsaimniekošanas plānu"*), Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 26, 06.02.2014.OP numurs: 2014/26.11.

[131] Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 67 "Rules on forest management plans" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.67 "Noteikumi par meža apsaimniekošanas plānu"*), Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 26, 06.02.2014.OP numurs: 2014/26.11.

[132] Law on Forests (*Meža likums*), Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.

[133] Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 67 "Rules on forest management plans" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.67 "Noteikumi par meža apsaimniekošanas plānu"*), Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 26, 06.02.2014.OP numurs: 2014/26.11.

- **Are there any supporting mechanism for the management plans? If yes, please elaborate.**

Latvia has implemented various **supporting mechanisms** to assist forest owners in developing and adhering to their management plans. These include:

  - **Advisory Services**: the State Forest Service and its regional forestry departments provide technical guidance and advice to private forest owners, helping them navigate the complexities of forest management planning[134].
  - **Forest Certification Schemes**: the **Forest Stewardship Council Latvia**[135] and Programme for the **Endorsement of Forest Certification Latvia**[136]. The certification organisations also work to raise awareness of the importance of sustainable forestry and support forest owners in achieving certification standards, which helps ensure that forest management plans meet international standards for sustainability and responsible forestry.
- Are **there impact assessment required** in your country in relation to the adoption of the forest management plans? What mechanisms are in place in your country to ensure that forest management plans are developed to ensure sustainable forest management practices? If yes, please elaborate.

Yes, **impact assessments** are required in some cases in Latvia, in relation to the adoption of forest management plans, particularly for areas that may be subject to **Natura 2000** protection or other high-conservation-value sites. These assessments typically include:

  - **Environmental Impact Assessments** are required for forest management plans which have an impact on forest management activities of forest resources; for such types of activities, the conditions for environmental and social assessments must be done[137];
  - **Strategic Impact Assessments** are obligatory for planning, if such planning is developed by local governments or State Forest Service, and applies to sectors such as forestry, fisheries, as well as regional development and land-use planning documents. It also applies to plans potentially impacting Natura 2000 protected areas[138].
- Are the **Natura 2000 sites plans already implemented and well-coordinated or integrated** with forest management plans? Are traditional forest activities recognized in those plans? Are there guidelines for small forest owners and managers on what they can and can't do?

[134] State Forest Service
[135] Forest Stewardship Council Latvia
[136] Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification
[137] Cabinet of Ministers regulations No 67 "Rules on forest management plans" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.67 "Noteikumi par meža apsaimniekošanas plānu")*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 26, 06.02.2014.OP numurs: 2014/26.11.
[138] Law on Environmental Impact Assessment *(Par ietekmes uz vidi novērtējumu)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 322/325, 30.10.1998; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 23, 03.12.1998.

Yes, it is a requirement that **Natura 2000 sites** in Latvia should be well-integrated into forest management plans, with **specific provisions** to ensure that conservation objectives are met. These provisions include:

- **Coordinated planning**: Natura 2000 sites are incorporated into the broader national and regional forest management strategies. Management plans for these sites must adhere to specific conservation criteria set by the EU, ensuring that habitats for protected species and biodiversity are maintained[139];
- **Recognition of traditional forest activities**: Traditional forest activities, such as selective logging, mushroom picking, and sustainable grazing, are often recognised and incorporated into Natura 2000 plans, provided they do not pose a risk to the ecological integrity of the site[140].

[139] Law on Environmental Impact Assessment *(Par ietekmes uz vidi novērtējumu)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 322/325, 30.10.1998; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 23, 03.12.1998.
[140] Law on Environmental Impact Assessment *(Par ietekmes uz vidi novērtējumu)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 322/325, 30.10.1998; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 23, 03.12.1998.

6. Sustainable forest management.

6.1. Sustainable forest management definition and forestry practices

- **Is sustainable forest management (SFM) defined in your country?**

  ☒ Yes
  ☐ No

Yes, **sustainable forest management** is defined in Latvia. The **definition** of Sustainable Forest Management is included in the Law on Forests**.** According to Article 1(13) of the Law on Forests, sustainable forest management is defined as "the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems"[141]**.**

- **Does the definition of SFM include specific objectives?**

  ☒ Yes
  ☐ No

Yes, the definition of **sustainable forest management** includes specific objectives. According to Article 1(13) of the Law on Forests, these specific objectives are: (a) to maintain biodiversity in forests and forest lands; (b) to ensure productivity of forests and forest lands; (c) to preserve regeneration capacity of forests and forest lands; (d) maintain vitality of forests and forest lands; (e) fulfil ecological, economic, and social functions at local, national, and global levels; (f) prevent damage to other ecosystems[142]**.**

- Does your country have specific guidelines **on Sustainable Forest Management**? If yes, are those mentioned in the legislation?

  ☐ **Yes, they can be found here:**

  ☒ No
  ☐ Other sources defining or implementing Sustainable Forest Management

The entire legislative framework is written in such a way that it should facilitate Sustainable Forest Management[143]**.**

- Does your country have a **Forest Strategy and/or Forest Management Policy** setting policy priorities that implement a SFM approach?

  ☒ Yes, they can be found here: Forest Management Plan: https://www.lvm.lv/
  ☐ No
  ☐ Other sources setting the Forest strategy/policy

[141] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[142] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[143] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.

Forest Management Plan[144] (2022-2026) (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) – sets forth forest management strategy for the entire country, emphasising the conservation of forest biodiversity, restoration efforts, and the expansion of forested areas. It also focuses on enhancing the economic value of forests, promoting sustainable forestry practices, and ensuring the sector's competitiveness. Responsible body: The State Forest Service.

At present moment, the **Forest Development Plan 2050** (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) is being developed, which will define strategic goals and policy priorities for sustainable forest management[145][146]. The **Forest Development Plan 2050** (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) should have been published already in the year 2024, however, new EU Regulations came into effect last year. In order to ensure that these Regulations are also covered, the plan still needed to be further developed. It is expected that the Plan will be published in the year 2025[147].

- **Which requirements/obligations result from the legally binding requirement for SFM?**
  1. For forest owners

At present moment, the **Forest Development Plan 2050** (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) is being developed, which will define strategic goals, as well as the requirements and obligations stemming from sustainable forest management.

  2. For forest managers

At present moment, the **Forest Development Plan 2050** (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) is being developed, which will define strategic goals, as well as the requirements and obligations stemming from sustainable forest management.

- Are **specific criteria and/or indicators** to determine whether SFM is being achieved? Where are they described (see table below)?

At present moment, the **Forest Development Plan 2050** (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) is being developed, which will define strategic goals, as well as the requirements and obligations stemming from sustainable forest management.

- Are some **forest managers implementing sustainable forest management practices voluntarily**? If yes, how are these voluntary management practices taking place? Through citizen initiatives, local initiatives, or other ways? Please explain how forest managers ensure that forest management practices are sustainable.

Yes, **two leading certification schemes**[148] - PEFC (Programme of the Endorsement of Forest Certification) and FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) are present, which are voluntary certification systems. Responsible bodies: SIA BM Certification, SIA NEPCon, SCS Global Services, GFA Certification, Bureau Veritas, SGS and *Vides kvalitāte* (Quality of the Environment).

[144] State Forest Service, Forest management plan 2022-2026.
[145] Ministry of Agriculture, on the development of Forest Development Plan 2050
[146] The public consultation period for these Guidelines commenced in September 2025, Public consultation
[147] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.
[148] Portal for the Sustainable Management of Latvia's Forests and Land

- Which mechanisms are put in place to support the implementation of SFM? Which measures are in place to monitor implementation of the SFM?

At present moment, the **Forest Development Plan 2050** (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) is being developed, which will define the mechanisms to support the implementation of sustainable forest management.

As such, current regulatory framework was initially designed to facilitate sustainable forest management[149], however, the precise mechanisms and monitoring measures will be defined in the **Forest Development Plan 2050.**

- Which forest management practices are required or prohibited by law in your forest/country?
    - ☒ Closer to nature silviculture practices (required)
    - ☒ Clear-cutting (highly regulated)
    - ☒ Shelterwood system (required)
    - ☒ Selective logging (required)
    - ☒ Afforestation and reforestation to enlarge forest areas (required)
    - ☒ Controlled burn (required)
    - ☒ Mandatory salvage logging (required)
    - ☒ Other .....

The 'other' category includes: (a) **Continuous cover forestry** (required) - this approach involves managing forests in a way that maintains a continuous canopy cover, with only a small number of trees harvested at a time. This helps to promote biodiversity, preserve soil quality, and enhance ecosystem resilience; (b) **Agroforestry** (required) - this practice involves integrating trees and shrubs into agricultural systems, providing multiple benefits such as improved soil fertility, increased biodiversity, and enhanced climate resilience; (c) **Riparian zone management** (required) - this involves managing the vegetation and land use along water bodies, such as rivers and streams, to protect water quality, prevent erosion, and enhance habitat for aquatic and terrestrial species[150].

- Are there limitations on the management models to be applied, like clearcuttings or their sizes? **Is there a ban on clear cutting linked to SFM?**

There is **no outright ban on clear-cutting**, but there are significant restrictions on its use, especially in areas of high conservation value or near Natura 2000 sites. The **size of clear-cuts** is strictly regulated, with limits based on the forest type and the ecological sensitivity of the area. In practice, clear-cutting is only allowed in specific forest ecosystems where natural regeneration is unlikely and only in sizes small enough to prevent landscape fragmentation and biodiversity loss. Pursuant to Article 9 of the Law on Forests, clear cutting is permitted if the proposed area, combined with adjacent forest stands, adheres to the maximum clear-cutting limits set by law. Adjacent stands must either be regenerated but not yet mature, awaiting regeneration within the legal timeframe, or comprise non-regenerated areas under one hectare. If there are no

[149] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025
[150] Latvian Agriculture Consultation and Education Centre

adjacent stands, the proposed area alone must meet legal size limits. Clear cutting is also allowed if adjacent stands are fully regenerated and meet the minimum age requirements[151].

- Is there a **defined/legal target for forest land to be managed for conservation and species protection objectives in your country or region?**

Yes, Latvia has **specific targets** for forest land managed for conservation and species protection. These targets are embedded in the country's National Forest Programme and the EU's Natura 2000 network, which includes several forest areas designated for the protection of rare species and habitats. Pursuant to Article 43 of the Law on Forests, the law mandates that a portion of forests be dedicated to conservation objectives, ensuring the protection of biodiversity and the preservation of vital ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration and water regulation[152].

- **Are there forest owner obligations related to forest restoration after harvest?**

Yes, forest owners in Latvia are legally obligated to restore forests after harvesting. Pursuant to Article 21 of the Law on Forests, Lawful Forest Possessors (owners) are obligated to regenerate forest stands after felling or other impacts reducing stand density below critical levels and to ensure the care of regenerated or planted forest stands[153].

6.2. "Closer-to-nature" guidelines and practices

(This section relates to the Commission Guidelines on Closer to nature forest management but also Commission guidance on payment schemes for forest ecosystem services both aiming to provide information and guidance for sustainable forest management)

- Has your country incorporated the **newly published Commission guidelines** in their legal or regulatory framework?

Latvia is currently working on incorporating the European Commission's newly published guidelines on closer-to-nature forest management into its legal and regulatory framework. The Forest Research Institute *Silava* is currently working on the respective definitions and guidelines[154].

- Has your country **recognized under law/regulatory measure a closer-to-nature approach** in forest management? If yes please provide the source where this is explained and elaborate below.

  ☐ Yes

  ☒ No – the definitions are currently being developed by the Forest Research Institute *Silava*[155].

[151] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[152] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[153] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[154] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.
[155] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.

- Does your country have legislation/measures setting specific biodiversity targets/management objectives for sustainable forest management at a national or regional level?
    - ☐ **Yes, at national level – they can be found here:**
    - ☐ Yes, at regional level – they can be found here: ……
    - ☒ No

Please describe them and elaborate:

At present moment, impossible to say with full clarity. The **Forest Development Plan 2050** (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) is being developed, which will define strategic goals, as well as specific biodiversity targets and objectives.

6.3. Climate change and Forest carbon absorption

- Does your country have legislation/measures setting specific climate change targets or objectives for sustainable forest management at a national or regional level?

At present moment, impossible to say with full clarity. the **Forest Development Plan 2050** (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) is being developed.

Also, currently the Climate Law is being developed by the Parliament of Latvia *(Saeima)*. The comprehensive answers could be given after both, the plan and the Climate Law will be published[156].

[156] Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.

7. Forest land market

NOTE: The key objective is to identify and present information on the basic legal framework regulating market of forest land and inheritance processes.

- Are there specific legal requirements or limitations when selling and buying forest land?

No specific requirements or limitations are set.

- **Are there limitations to divide the land by selling or inheritances?**

No specific limitations are present.

- **Are there institutions/bodies providing information related to the forest land market?**

Yes, there are several institutions and bodies in Latvia that provide information regarding the forest land market:

  - The **State Land Service of Latvia** maintains detailed records on land ownership, transactions, and property boundaries[157];
  - In addition, the **Latvian State Forests agency**, as the largest state-owned forest management body, offers valuable insights into the state of forest land and forest management practices[158].

- Are there institutions/**bodies contributing to dynamize that market,** like forest land banks or advisory bodies (similar to the CAP advisory bodies) and others? Is there regular information on the amount of forest land transferred and the prices of transmissions? (Information on this market is usually missing)

Currently, Latvia does not have a dedicated forest land bank akin to those found in other countries.

- Are there **regulations of forest land leasing**? Are they common with agricultural land or independent and with specific requirements?

No such regulations exist.

- **Are there obligations and or access to insurances for forest land or forest activities?**

In Latvia, there are **no mandatory requirements** for forest owners to insure their forest land or activities. However, forest insurance is available[159].

- Are there specific regulations providing, **facilitating or limiting access to financial credits** for forest activities or mortgages on forest land?

No, there are no specific regulations regarding **financial credits** and **mortgages** for forest activities and forest land in Latvia.

[157] State Land Service of Latvia
[158] Latvian State Forests agency
[159] Launch of Forest Insurance - long-term security

8. Forest companies, Forest incentives and taxation.

Forest Companies

- **Is there a register of forest industries? Is there a register of forest contractors?**

There are no such specific registers[160]. All companies are registered within the Register of Enterprises of the Republic of Latvia, in which they state their line of business.

- Is there any specific **regulation on forest ownership, forest cooperatives or other types of forest companies or are they all regulated under the** Company Law?

There are no specific regulations. The general provisions of Company Law and Cooperative Societies Law are applicable. There is a separate regulation for cooperatives, and it also applies to forest owners' cooperatives: **Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 357 "Cooperative Societies Compliance Regulations"**[161] (adopted and entered into force in 2019).

- **Do small forest owners have access to the status of forest companies?**

There are no restrictions set forth in the law[162]. Thus, small forest owners in Latvia have the opportunity to establish or join forest companies or cooperatives.

Forest incentives and taxation

No information on specific incentives was found.

- Are there **effective subsidies** for forest owners and managers to implement SFM? And/or to carry out biodiversity conservation measures? If it does exist, please compare the total amount paid at national level in the last 3 years with available information with the amount defined as necessary at the Prioritised Actions Framework.

At present moment, impossible to say with full clarity. the Forest Development Plan 2050 (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) is being developed. Access to effective subsidies to implement SFM still needs to be determined. Henceforth, it is impossible to say whether any effective subsidies are in place.

- What taxes are applicable to Forest companies and forest owners?

Forest companies and forest owners in Latvia are subject to corporate income tax and property tax on forest land. Additionally, they may incur capital gains tax upon the sale of forest properties[163]. For applying **personal income tax** for the **sale of timber**, the key factor is whether the timber comes from an owner of a forest. If it does and a person is not running a registered business, the income is not treated as business profit. In this case, a company or an

[160] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025; Interview with Forest Owners Association, 15.01.2025.
[161] Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 357 "Cooperative Societies Compliance Regulations" (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr. 357 "Kooperatīvo sabiedrību atbilstības noteikumi"*), Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 150, 25.07.2019. OP numurs: 2019/150.1
[162] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[163] Law On Taxes and Fees *(Par nodokļiem un nodevām)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 26, 18.02.1995.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 7, 13.04.1995.

entity buying timber from a person is responsible for withholding and paying a flat 10% personal income tax to the tax authority, after applying a standard expense deduction (50% for timber, 25% for standing forest). However, if a person cannot prove ownership, the buyer must withhold tax at a much higher rate. If a person has a registered business, a person is obliged to declare it and pay **personal income tax** at the standard progressive income tax rates[164].

Regarding **Value Added Tax**, a private individual may have an obligation to register for Value Added Tax and/or pay it to the state budget when supplying timber or granting logging rights. An individual is deemed to be conducting an economic activity and by this is obliged to pay VAT if at least two taxable transactions are performed (timber supplies or granting of logging rights) within any 12-month period. In some cases, even a single timber supply can be considered an economic activity if it is facilitated by systematic operations, such as forest development or timber preparation[165].

[164] Methodological material - Taxes on timber transactions
[165] Methodological material - Taxes on timber transactions

9. Enforcement: Forest control and penalties.

- Are there specific measures in place to enforce compliance with the legal requirements on forest management?
  Please list only the legislative measures including the responsible body that are specific to forest management requirements.

In Latvia, there are indeed specific legislative measures established to enforce compliance with forest management requirements. The primary legislation includes the Law on Forests, which outlines the standards and practices required for forest owners and managers,[166] as well as the administrative sanctions to be imposed, pursuant to the Law on Administrative Liability[167].

In Latvia, the legislative measures specific to forest management are anchored primarily in the **Law on Forests**, which outlines the legal framework governing all forest practices, forest use, and conservation[168]. The enforcement of these requirements falls under the purview of the **State Forest Service**[169].

[166] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[167] Law on Administrative Liability *(Administratīvās atbildības likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 225, 14.11.2018.OP numurs: 2018/225.1.
[168] Law on Forests *(Meža likums)*, Official Journal reference: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 98/99, 16.03.2000.; Latvijas Republikas Saeimas un Ministru Kabineta Ziņotājs, 8, 20.04.2000.
[169] State Forest Service

10. Conclusions

10.1. Legal or regulatory barriers for SFM

- What are the main legal and regulatory barriers and enablers affecting the implementation of SFM in your country?

In Latvia, the principal legal barrier to implementing Sustainable Forest Management is the general approach to regulation, which can occasionally prove to be burdensome for smaller forest owners. Currently, the uniform regulatory framework is applicable to all forest owners, irrespective of the size or type of forest in question.

Regarding the enabling factors, the existing regulatory framework was originally conceived to support and promote sustainable forest management[170].

- Are there specific legal and regulatory barriers or challenges to implement a closer-to-nature approach in forest management in your country?

At present moment, impossible to say with full clarity. The Forest Development Plan 2050 (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors), together with all the definitions and guidelines is being developed, which will define a closer-to-nature approach to be implemented.

- What are the main legal drivers for implementing a closer-to-nature approach in forest management for relevant actors?

At present moment, impossible to say with full clarity. The Forest Development Plan 2050 (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) is being developed, which will define a closer-to-nature approach to be implemented.

10.2. Legal or regulatory gaps in national forest legislation

Please provide key conclusions based on the information referred to in previous sections.
Based on the information provided earlier, several legal/regulatory gaps can be identified in Latvia's national forest legislation:

- **Comprehensive public involvement mechanisms**: While public involvement is mandated for state and municipal forest management plans, private forests lack similar obligations. This creates a gap in fostering collaborative approaches to broader forest conservation goals. For instance, there should be a discussion, or at least a structured feedback from the forest owners on which biotopes should be prioritised for protection.
- **Gaps in forest management plan enforcement**: Mandatory Forest management plans for areas over 10 000 are set forth in the national law. However, smaller holdings lack similar oversight, potentially allowing unsustainable practices in aggregate.
- **Regulatory vacuum before Forest Development Plan 2050** (Guidelines for the Development of the Forest and Related Sectors) **and the Climate Law:** a number of sustainable forest management approaches, as well as a closer-to-nature approach will

[170] Interview with Authority, 14.01.2025

be clarified when the Plan and the Climate Law are in place. To date, there are certain unclarities as to which approaches need to be taken.

National experts on forest legislation and references

- **Please provide the names and contacts of 3 to 5 experts in forest legislation in your country,**

From the Latvian State Forests agency
The agency manages over half of Latvia's forest area and is a leading organisation in sustainable forest management. Their expertise covers forest legislation, conservation, and sustainable resource utilisation
Contact: Mr. Mārtiņš Līdums, Head of the Committees

- Address: Vaiņodes 1, Riga, LV-1004, Latvia
- Phone: +371 67610015
- Email: info@lvm.lv

Ministry of Agriculture of Latvia - Forest Department
The Forest Department is a key governmental body overseeing forest-related policies and legislation.
Contact: Normunds Strūve, Deputy Director

- Address: Republikas laukums 2, Rīga, LV-1981
- Phone: +371 29263844
- Email: Normunds.Struve@zm.gov.lv

State Forest Service
The State Forest Service is a government agency responsible for supervising forest management, compliance with hunting and nature conservation regulations, and forest fire protection. It maintains the State Forest Register, which compiles information on forests, related economic activities, hunting, and game animals.
Contact: Mr. Normunds Jurkāns

- Address: 13. janvāra iela 15, Rīga, LV-1932
  Phone: +371 67226600
- Email: normunds.jurkans@vmd.gov.lv

Forest Research Institute *Silava*
This institute conducts extensive research on forestry practices, legislation, and ecological impacts in Latvia. They collaborate with policymakers to guide sustainable management practices.
Contact: Mr. Jurģis Jansons, Research Lead

- Address: Rīgas iela 111, Salaspils, LV-2169, Latvija
  Phone: +371 26190266
- Email: jurgis.jansons@silava.lv

Latvian Forest Owners' Association
This is a non-governmental organisation, which unites large and small private forest property owners, companies and municipalities, or the property holders.

- Address: Torņa iela 4, Korpuss 2C-102, Rīga, LV-1050
  Phone: +371 29104286
- E-mail: info@mezaipasnieki.lv

- Provide **key books or articles analysing the national and/or regional forest legislation** in your country, particularly if they compare it with other countries, if they analyse the effect in actual management of SFM.

  - Meņģele, L., "Par tiesību subjektu, apsaimniekojot un izmantojot mežu", Jurista Vārds, 15. jūnijs 2000 /NR. 24 (177).

  Informācija par līdzšinējām pamatnostādnēm:

  - https://www.zm.gov.lv/lv/meza-un-saistito-nozaru-attistibas-pamatnostadnes

  Dabas aizsardzības noteikumi meža apsaimniekošanā:

  - https://likumi.lv/ta/id/253758-dabas-aizsardzibas-noteikumi-meza-apsaimniekosana
  - Privāto mežu apsaimniekošanas un meža īpašumu konsolidācijas un kooperācijas procesa monitorings:
    https://ppdb.mk.gov.lv/datubaze/privato-mezu-apsaimniekosanas-un-meza-ipasumu-konsolidacijas-un-kooperacijas-procesa-monitorings-2020/

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