APPROVED

by the Implementation and Monitoring Commission of the National Research Programme

“Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025”

(established by Order No. 101of 21 August 2023 of the Minister for Agriculture

**By-laws of the open call for project applications of the National Research Programme “Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025”**

**I. General Matters**

1 By-laws of the open call for project applications (hereinafter – the By-laws) of the National Research Programme “Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025” lay down the procedure for the organisation and implementation of the open call (hereinafter – the Tender) for project applications (hereinafter – the project applications) of the National Research Programme “Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025” (hereinafter – the Programme), on the basis of the Cabinet Regulation No. 560 of 4 September 2018, Procedures for the Implementation of National Research Programme Projects (hereinafter – the Regulation) and in compliance with the Cabinet Regulation No. 502 of 9 August 2023, On the National Research Programme “Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025” (hereinafter – the Cabinet Order).

2 These By-laws have been prepared on the basis of Paragraph 16 of the Cabinet Regulation.

3 The total State budget funding available for the Tender under the Programme is EUR 5 000 000 (five million EUR) (hereinafter – the total funding of the Tender). The total funding of the Tender shall be used in conformity with Paragraph 36 of the Cabinet Regulation:

3.1 to finance projects;

3.2 to implement the measures referred to in Paragraph 37 of the Cabinet Regulation.

4 The project implementation period is 24 months from the date of entry into force of a project implementation agreement (hereinafter – the Project Agreement). Within the framework of the Project Agreement, the project implementation period may be extended for the time period and in accordance with the procedures laid down in Paragraph 39 of the Cabinet Regulation. A project shall be financed over a period of at least 12 (twelve) months.

5 The Tender will finance one project for the implementation of all the tasks set out in Paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Cabinet Order, with a maximum project funding of EUR 4,800,000 (four million eight hundred thousand EUR).

6 The Council shall launch the call for tenders in accordance with the procedure laid down in Paragraph 17 of the Cabinet Regulation and shall administer, support, monitor, and control the implementation of the project under the Project Agreement in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Cabinet Regulation.

7 A project applicant who complies with the provisions of Sub-paragraphs 2.12 and 9.1 of the Cabinet Regulation (Hereinafter – the applicant) shall draft a project application in accordance with Annex 1 “Project Application” to the By-laws (hereinafter – the project application). The deadline for submitting the project application is by 17 November 2023, 15:00 (hereinafter – the deadline for submitting project applications).

8 The Council shall state in the call for tenders:

8.1 the name of the tender;

 8.2 the total funding for the tender;

 8.3 the deadline for the submission of project applications;

 8.4 a website containing the information needed to submit project applications.

9 The applicant shall submit a project application for both sub-programmes set out in Paragraph 5 of the Cabinet Order and for all sub-programme tasks set out in Paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Cabinet Order.

10 In order to achieve the overarching objective of the Programme and the objectives of the sub-programmes set out in Paragraph 5 of the Cabinet Order, each sub-programme shall provide for the following tasks:

10.1 the sub-programme *"Sustainable use of agricultural, including fisheries, resources for the production of safe, quality and healthy food in Latvia"* has the following thematic objectives and sub-objectives:

 10.1.1 the development of sustainable, quality and competitive agricultural production in an environmentally friendly agricultural sector:

* to assess the impact of reduced chemical pesticide load on the productivity and yield quality of the most widely cultivated crop, winter wheat, by comparing different agro-technologies in environmentally friendly cropping systems and evaluating their effectiveness in different regions of LV;
* to investigate the technological elements of the production of economically important fruit trees, shrubs and vegetables to reduce the use of chemical plant protection products, improve soil fertility and sequester carbon;
* investigate new or little-studied pathogens of crops and horticultural plants in relation to changes in climate and cultivation technologies;

10.1.2 The social and economic impact of the European Green Deal on Latvian agriculture and rural space, as well as the creation of new knowledge for the development of a sustainable bio-economy and rural space:

* assess the socio-economic dimension of the impact of the European Green Deal on Latvian agriculture, its impact on local food security, and find solutions for the development of a sustainable and viable agricultural sector, achieving the objectives of the Green Deal;
* opportunities and risks of hydrological restoration in drained organic soils used for agriculture, dynamic groundwater level prediction system for modelling greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in reclaimed and waterlogged organic soils;
* knowledge-intensive research on the strategic development, socio-economic dimension and rural impact of the bioeconomy, developing a bioeconomy monitoring tool and applying a functional land use (agriculture and forestry) approach;

10.1.3 the development of new knowledge, approaches and methods to promote a safe and quality food and feed chain, to improve animal health, welfare and protection and to reduce risks to public health and the environment in accordance with the 'one health' principle, while promoting the development of technological solutions and new products for the production of high-quality and competitive food products:

* to analyse the link between the development of antimicrobial resistance and the use of antibiotics in livestock housing, to study the distribution of the most important zoonotic agents and indicators in order to gain new knowledge and find solutions to reduce the risk of resistance;
* collect food consumption data for the Latvian population, covering all seasons and different population groups, analyse the data, assess changes in consumption and potential hazards in food, taking into account current food, safety and nutrition policy issues, and ensure public availability of food composition and consumption data;
* generate new knowledge for a sustainable food system (raw materials, including by-products, their processing into high quality products complying with food legislation and regulations, preserving bioactive compounds) and for the use of environmentally friendly and recyclable packaging materials for food;

10.1.4 implementing an integrated approach to ensure sustainable exploitation of inland waters for fisheries productivity and high quality ecosystem services:

* development of a stock assessment method for economically valuable lakes, using an integrated approach to analyse recreational, commercial and scientific (active, passive gear and hydroacoustic surveys) catch data and ecosystem services;
* risk-return assessment of economically valuable fish;

10.2 the sub-programme *“Innovative forest management and new forest services, products and technologies for Latvia's growth”* has the following thematic objectives and sub-objectives:

10.2.1 development of forest management practices, improving forest productivity and capacity to play a long-term role in climate change mitigation, enhancing the integration of biodiversity values and facilitating the production of a range of forest ecosystem products and services in a changing environment:

* the guidelines for "nature-friendly forestry" in pine forests;
* the impact of restoration and management practices on genetic diversity in pine stands;
* the recommendations for restoring and replanting pine forests in areas affected by natural disturbance and areas to be rehabilitated;
* the factors affecting the health and quality of pine forest ecosystems;
* the effect of the interaction of tree growth improvement measures (coppicing and stand fertilisation) on the productivity and quality of pine stands;
* increasing the adaptive capacity of pine forests through breeding;
* ensuring a favourable conservation status for protected species in commercial pine forests;
* developing a higher-level method for accounting for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from peat used in forestry and agriculture;

10.2.2 analysis and development of recommendations on the socio-economic aspects, including societal benefits, of the development of multi-purpose forest management, new forest services, products and technologies: the contribution of pine forest ecosystems to the well-being of the Latvian population;

10.2.3 the development of a circular forest bio-economy and the development of innovative technologies and products for using local forest resources to produce competitive and sustainable products, promoting the rational use of wood and developing wood construction in line with the Green Deal:

* the technologies and products to expand the use of wood-based materials in construction in line with the European Green Deal;
* biorefining technologies for the integrated use of forest resources to produce higher value-added products;
* use of wood processing and residues to produce polymer composites and insulation materials;
* original solutions for innovative products based on logging by-products and non-wood materials;
* increase in efficiency and accuracy of the use of wood resources, smart technology solutions.

11 When preparing the project application, the project applicant shall envisage:

11.1 the results of the project in conformity with Paragraph 12 of the Cabinet Regulation (hereinafter – the scientific results) and indicate the numerical indicators of such results in the Information System of the State Scientific Activity (hereinafter – the Information System) in project application Part A “General Information”, Chapter 4 “Project Results", having regard to the tasks laid down for each sub-programme in Paragraph 10 of the By-laws and results laid down in Paragraph 9 of the Cabinet Order;

11.2 the implementation of the thematic objectives and sub-objectives of the sub-programmes referred to in Sub-paragraphs 10.1 and 10.2 of the By-laws, providing the implementation plan for these thematic tasks and sub-tasks in Part I “Thematic and horizontal objectives and results to be achieved” of the project application;

11.3 The implementation of all the common (horizontal) objectives set out in Paragraph 8 of the Cabinet Order, including a plan for the implementation of these objectives in Part I of the project application;

11.4 the achievement of at least one result for each of the outcomes set out in Paragraph 9 of the Cabinet Order, including focusing more on commercialisable research results, and the plan for achieving these results shall be indicated in Part I of the project application;

11.5 making scientific publications open-access and depositing research data in appropriate repositories (using the FAIR*[[1]](#footnote-1)* principles);

**II. Project Participation Conditions for the Project Applicant and the Project Partner**

12 In order to certify the applicant’s compliance with that laid down in Sub-paragraphs 2.12 and 9.1 of the Cabinet Regulation, the applicant shall upload Part D of the project application, “Applicant’s certification”, completed and signed with a secure electronic signature bearing a time stamp (hereinafter – the applicant’s certification), to the information system. If it is not possible to provide a secure electronic signature with a time stamp, the project applicant shall proceed in accordance with that laid down in Paragraph 18 of Annex 2 to the By-laws, “Methodology for the preparation and submission of the project application, the mid-term scientific report and the final scientific report” (hereinafter – the submission methodology).

13 The project partner shall comply with that laid down in Sub-paragraph 2.18 of the Cabinet Regulation. The project applicant shall engage project partners in accordance with Sub-paragraph 9.3 of the Cabinet Regulation. In order to certify the cooperation within the project, the project applicant shall ensure that the project partner signs Part E “Certification of the project partner - scientific institution” (hereinafter – the Certification of the project partner– scientific institution”) or Part F “Certification of the project partner – public institution” (hereinafter – the Certification of the project partner – public institution) of the project application with a secure electronic signature bearing a time stamp which the project applicant shall attach to the project application. If a secure electronic signature cannot be provided, the project partner shall proceed in accordance with that laid own in Paragraph 22 or 26 of the Submission Methodology.

 14 In order to certify the conformity of the project applicant or the project partner – scientific institution with the provisions of Sub-paragraph 2.12 of the Cabinet Regulation, the head of the scientific institution concerned shall submit the financial management and accounting policy of the scientific institution and the financial turnover report (Part G of the project application “Financial turnover report form”) for 2020 - 2022. If the scientific institution has private investors, it must provide a free-form declaration that the results of the research related to the project application will not be used for commercial purposes. The documents referred to in this Paragraph shall be attached as an annex to the applicant’s certification and to the certification of the project partner – scientific institution, in accordance with Sub-chapters 3.2 and 3.3 of the Submission Methodology.

15 The documents referred to in Paragraph 14 of the By-laws shall not be provided by the applicant or project partner which has been recognised as meeting the definition of a research organisation for open call for proposals of 2023 for basic and applied research projects[[2]](#footnote-2) and open calls for proposals of 2023 for National Research Programmes.

16 Within the framework of the project implementation, the project partner may be eligible for funding from the indirect eligible costs allocated to the project in proportion to the share of direct eligible costs allocated to the project partner, subject to the provisions of Sub-paragraph 14.2 of the Cabinet Regulation.

17 If the project partner is involved in the implementation of the project, including with human resources of its own, they will participate in the implementation of the project as principal investigators or promoters (which may include students). Information on the involvement of the project partner in the implementation of the project with its own human resources shall be indicated in Part A “General information”, Chapter 2 “Scientific Group” of the project application.

**III. Conditions of the Scientific Group for the Participation in the Project**

18 The project applicant shall form a scientific group for the implementation of the project, in accordance with that laid down Sub-paragraph 2.22 of the Cabinet Regulation.

19 In the project application, the project manager, the main project contractors and project contractors must comply with that laid down in Sub-paragraphs 2.13, 2.14 and 2.15 of the Cabinet Regulation. The remuneration of the staff of the research group involved in the execution of the project shall be determined in accordance with the remuneration policy and rates of remuneration of the project applicant and of the project collaborating partner (if any).

20 A scientist may only be named as a project manager in one project application per tender. If a scientist is listed as a project manager in more than one project application under the call, the Council will contact all the applicants concerned and ask them to indicate, within one working day, for which project application the scientist is project manager and in what capacity the scientist will be project manager for the other project applications (if applicable).

21 The workload in full-time equivalent (FTE) of one person, being the project manager, the main project contractor and project contractor, other than the student, shall be planned in such a way that the workload indicated in a single project application, as well as in the case of project implementation, does not exceed 1,0 FTE.

22 For the students included in the research groups indicated in the project application, and in the case of project implementation, the total average workload of all students over the duration of the project shall be at least 2.0 FTE.

23 The project application, as well as the project implementation, shall require that each student is employed in the project for at least 0.25 FTE on average during the project implementation period.

24 If a student completes a level of study during the project period and starts the next level of study within four months at the latest, his/her involvement in the project during the four-month period shall be deemed to be in conformity with that laid down in Paragraphs 22 and 23 of the By-laws regarding engagement of the student in the project implementation.

25 If a doctoral student successfully completes the doctoral study programme and defends his/her doctoral thesis during the project period, his/her involvement in the project shall henceforth be deemed to be in conformity with that laid down in Paragraphs 22 and 23 of the By-laws regarding engagement of the student in the project implementation.

**IV. Activities and Costs to be Supported**

26 The applicant shall complete Part H of the project application “Non-economic activities”, which provides information on the conformity of the activities planned in the project application with Sub-paragraph 2.2 of the Cabinet Regulation.

27 The project applicant shall include the information on the eligible cost items of the project in Part A, Chapter 3 “Budget” of the project application in conformity with Paragraph 14 of the Cabinet Regulation.

28 Indirect eligible costs which are not directly related to the achievement of the project results, but support and ensure appropriate conditions for the implementation of the activities to be supported under the project and for the achievement of the results, shall be planned as a single cost item, applying a flat rate of indirect costs up to 15 (fifteen) per cent of the total amount of direct eligible costs referred to in Sub-paragraph 14.1 of the Cabinet Regulation, except for direct eligible costs referred to in Sub-paragraph 14.1.6 of this Regulation incurred in relation to the costs of external services (including work under enterprise contracts). The project applicant and the cooperation partner(s) (if any) must have established and approved internal procedures for the use and control of the indirect eligible costs of the project, the board of which is entitled to request and the project applicant (implementer) shall present to the board. If the project applicant engages a cooperation partner(s), the indirect eligible costs of the project shall be shared between the project applicant and the cooperation partner(s) in proportion to the direct eligible costs of the project shared between the project applicant and the project partner(s). The project applicant, when preparing and submitting the financial report referred to in Sub-paragraph 44.1 of the Cabinet Regulation, shall not provide the information and supporting documents on the use of indirect eligible costs calculated at the flat rate of indirect costs laid down in Sub-paragraph 14.2 of the Cabinet Regulation.

**V. Procedures for the Preparation and Submission of the Project Application**

 29 The project application shall be completed and submitted to the Council in electronic form in the Information System within the deadline for the submission of project applications.

30 The applicant shall complete and submit the project application in accordance with the submission methodology.

 31 In order to certify the project application as a whole, the project applicant shall sign Part D of the project application “Applicant’s Confirmation” using a secure electronic signature with a time stamp.

**VI. Administrative Evaluation of Project Applications**

32 The administrative evaluation of project applications shall be carried out by the Council in conformity with Annex 3 to the By-laws, “Methodology for the evaluation of the conformity of the project application with the administrative evaluation criteria”, assessing the conformity of the project application with the administrative criteria laid down in Paragraph 19 of the Cabinet Regulation and the supplementary administrative criteria laid down in Paragraph 33.3 of the By-laws within two calendar weeks from the deadline for the submission of project applications.

33 The project application will be assessed according to the following administrative evaluation criteria:

33.1 The administrative criteria laid down in Sub-paragraphs 19.1 and 19.2 of the Cabinet Regulation, which are to be supplemented (hereinafter – the supplementary administrative criteria);

 33.2 The administrative criteria laid down in Sub-paragraphs 19.3, 19.4, 19.5, 19.6, 19.7 and 19.8 of the Cabinet Regulation, which are not supplementary (hereinafter – non-supplementary administrative criteria);

33.3 in addition to the administrative criteria which cannot be supplemented:

33.3.1 shall cover all the common (horizontal) objectives of the programme as defined in Paragraph 8 of the Cabinet Order;

33.3.2 cover all the results laid down in Paragraph 9 of the Cabinet Order to be achieved during the programme implementation.

34 The Council, taking into account the results of the administrative assessment of the project application, shall complete the form set out in Annex 4 to the By-laws “Administrative Assessment Criteria Form”, taking into account Paragraph 20 of the Cabinet Regulation.

35 If the project application does not meet one of the administrative criteria:

35.1 If the project application does not meet any of the supplementary administrative criteria, the Council shall request the applicant to update the project application by sending a letter to the applicant’s official e-mail address. The applicant shall submit the updates within one working day of the date of the Council’s letter by sending a letter to the Council’s official e-mail address: pasts@lzp.gov.lv;

35.2 If a project application does not comply with one of the non-additional administrative criteria or if a project application does not comply with one of the additional administrative criteria which is not fulfilled after the submission of an updated project application, the Council shall, after the completion of the administrative evaluation, send to the Programme Implementation and Monitoring Commission (hereinafter – the Commission) a list of project applications evaluated against the administrative criteria which do not comply with the administrative criteria laid down in the By-laws, together with the reasons for each non-compliance. The Commission shall evaluate the abovementioned list and, in accordance with Sub-paragraph 8.3.2 of the Cabinet Regulation, make a decision to reject the project application.

**VII. Scientific Evaluation of the Project Application**

36 The Council shall, in accordance with that laid down in Chapter III. of the Cabinet Regulation, organise the scientific expert-examination of project applications (hereinafter – the expert-examination), carrying out the evaluation measures laid down in Chapter VII of the regulations.

37 For the evaluation of the project application, the Council shall, in accordance with Sub-paragraph 7.5 of the Cabinet Regulation, select and engage two or more scientific experts (hereinafter – the expert) who meet the requirements laid down in Paragraphs 23 and 24 of the Cabinet Regulation in order to qualify for the evaluation tasks specified in Paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Cabinet Order. An expert may carry out the evaluation of several project applications according to his/her scientific qualifications and experience.

38 The Council shall ensure that the expert who has agreed to carry out the evaluation of the project application signs and submits to the Council the documents referred to in Annex 5 to the By-laws “Confirmation of absence of conflict of interest and respect of confidentiality” by uploading them into the Information System.

39. The Council shall, with each expert, enter into agreement to carry out the expert-examination using the procedure laid down in Annex 6 to the By-laws “Agreement on the performance of an expert-examination” (hereinafter – the Expert-examination agreement). The Expert-examination agreement may be adjusted during the contracting process in conformity with the content of the project application and the specificities of the expert-examination.

40 The Expert shall evaluate the project application by awarding one to five points for each scientific evaluation criterion laid down in Paragraph 26 of the Cabinet Regulation as follows:

40.1 the scientific quality of the project in conformity with the consideration laid down in Paragraph 27 of the Cabinet Regulation;

40.2 the impact of the project results in conformity with the considerations laid down in Paragraph 28 of the Cabinet Regulation;

40.3 the feasibility of the project and provision in conformity with the considerations laid down in Paragraph 29 of the Cabinet Regulation;

41 Within two calendar weeks from the date of conclusion of the expert assessment agreement, each expert shall assess the project application by completing the individual project application expert-examination form (hereinafter – the individual expert assessment) in the information system, in accordance with Annex 8 to the By-laws “Individual/consolidated assessment form for the expert-examination of the project application” in accordance with Annex 7 to the By-laws “Methodology for carrying out the expert-examination (for the project application, mid-term/closing scientific report of the project)” (hereinafter – the Methodology for carrying out the expert-examination).

42 After receipt of the individual experts assessments on all project applications in the Information System, the Council shall, via online videoconference (real-time video and audio transmission)organise and implement an expert panel discussion for the experts responsible for the preparation of the consolidated expert evaluation of the project applications, setting up an expert panel for all the tasks of sub-programmes referred to in Paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Cabinet Order (hereinafter – the panel).

43 If only one project application is submitted for the implementation of the tasks laid down in Paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Cabinet Regulation, the Council shall not organise a panel on that project application and the expert-examination of such project application shall be carried out in accordance with the procedure laid down in Paragraph 25 of the Cabinet Regulation.

44 Within three working days of the conclusion of the panel, the expert responsible for the preparation of the expert consolidated evaluation of the project application concerned, taking into account the individual expert evaluations of the project application concerned, shall complete the consolidated expert evaluation form for that project application (hereinafter – the consolidated expert evaluation) in the Information System, having regard to Annex 8 to the By-laws “Individual/consolidated assessment form for the examination of the project application”, and within three working days agree it with the other experts involved in the expert-examination of the relevant project application who have individually assessed the project application and submit it to the information system. If the experts are unable to agree on a consolidated assessment due to a difference of opinion, the experts shall inform the Council. In this case, the Council shall engage an additional expert (hereinafter referred to as the additional expert) who shall first carry out an individual evaluation of the project application concerned within the time limit and in accordance with the procedures laid down in Paragraph 41 of the By-laws, submitting the expert’s individual evaluation, and then the additional expert shall consult the individual evaluations of the original experts. The additional expert shall prepare a consolidated assessment within the two calendar weeks, by agreeing with the expert whose individual assessment gives a total score closer to the total score given by the additional expert in his/her individual assessment. The additional expert, following coordination with the other expert, submits the consolidated assessment in the information system.

45 The expert is only allowed to assess 15 pages of the project application, with up to three additional pages if there are supporting documents from the social partners, letters of recommendation on cooperation, etc.

46. On the basis of the consolidated expert evaluations submitted in the Information System, the Council shall, within three working days, calculate in the Information System the consolidated score for each project application (hereinafter – the consolidated score) using the following formula,$K=\left(3A × 0,3\right)+\left(3B × 0,5\right)+\left(3C × 0,2\right), $ where:

46.1 K – consolidated score;

46.2 A- assessment of the criterion (scientific quality of the project) referred to in Paragraph 27 of the Cabinet Regulation and its ratio is 30% of the consolidated mark (K);

 46.3 B- assessment of the criterion (impact of project results) referred to in Paragraph 28 of the Cabinet Regulation and its ratio is 50% of the consolidated score (K);

 46.4 C - assessment of the scientific criterion (feasibility of the project implementation and provision) referred to in Paragraph 29 of the Cabinet Regulation  and its ratio is in the amount of 20% of the consolidated assessment (K).

47 The quality threshold for the consolidated peer review referred to in Paragraph 46 of the By-Laws for the criterion laid down in Sub-Paragraph 26.1 of the Cabinet Regulation (scientific quality of the project), at least three points for the criterion laid down in Sub-Paragraph 26.2 of the Cabinet Regulation (impact of the project results), at least three points for the criterion laid down in Sub-Paragraph 26.3 of the Cabinet Regulation (feasibility and support) and at least ten points for all scientific criteria laid down in Paragraph 26 of the Cabinet Regulation in total.

48 The Council shall forward to the Commission:

48.1 the list of the expert-examinations of the project applications within five working days of the date of submission of the consolidated assessments of experts of all project applications to the information system and application of the formula in Paragraph 46 of the By-laws. This list shall rank the project applications in order of priority according to the score obtained in the consolidated assessment, in accordance with that laid down in Paragraph 32 of the Cabinet Regulation, and shall make the project applications included in this list and the consolidated assessments of experts available in the information system in read-only mode;

48.2 a summary of the recommendations made by the experts in their consolidated evaluations for each project application (hereinafter – the experts recommendations).

**VIII. Evaluation of Project Applications Against Sector-specific Criteria**

49 The Commission, upon receipt of the list referred to in Paragraph 48 of these By-laws, shall, within one week, evaluate the project applications against the following specific criteria in accordance with Annex 9 to these By-laws, “Methodology for assessing the eligibility of a project application according to sector-specific criteria” (hereinafter – the sector-specific criteria), by completing Annex 10 to these By-laws “Individual/overall sector-specific evaluation criteria form”:

49.1 an assessment of the actions and results planned in the project application:

49.1.1 the actions planned in the project application shall be in line with the objectives and sub-objectives laid down in the By-laws and involve the use of data- and evidence-based methodological approaches that could contribute to achieving the defined objectives of the programme ;

49.1.2 the planned actions have been developed on the basis of an understanding of the existing situation in the sector – current issues, problems and trends in the field of the thematic objective, including previous experience of the project promoters in addressing them, e.g. through applied research, sectoral working groups, cooperation with sectoral public organisations;

49.1.3 The planned actions shall be carried out using appropriate material and technical resources and the promoters of the project application have appropriate research expertise and experience, as evidenced by the strategic area of specialisation of the institutions involved or by the experience of the project leader and main contractors involved (signed curriculum vitae of the project leader and main contractors attached to Part C “Curriculum Vitae” of the project application and signed statements of other institutions involved in the implementation of the project application, if planned, attached to Part J “Other documents” of the project application, signed by the signatory);

49.2 Assessment of the results provided for in the project application:

49.2.1 it is intended in the result of researches to prepare and submit to the Ministry of Agriculture the reports with concrete proposals, solutions for each thematic task and sub-task defined in the By-laws, including taking into account national and European Union policies and trends in the respective thematic task area;

49.2.2 the research will lead to the development of original solutions, new services, products and innovative technologies appropriate to the task, taking into account the limited time for the implementation.

50 The Commission shall evaluate the project application by awarding points for each sub-criterion of the sectoral criterion referred to in Sub-paragraphs 49.1 to 49.2 of these By-laws.

51 The Commission shall calculate the total score of each project application for the sectoral criteria using the following formula:

S=(a+b+c+d+e), where

50.1 S – overall score for the sectoral criteria of the project application;

50.2 a, b, c, d, e – the score in each of the sector-specific evaluation sub-criteria 49.1 to 49.2 of this Regulation.

52 The total maximum score to be obtained in the evaluation of the sectoral criteria is 4.5 points, which, according to Sub-paragraph 33.2 of the Cabinet Regulation, is 30 % of the total maximum amount of points awarded in the scientific criteria.

53 The Commission shall sum the assessment referred to in Paragraph 52 of the By-laws with the score indicated for each project application in the list referred to in Sub-paragraph 48.1 of the By-laws.

**IX. Decision to Grant Funding or Reject a Project Application**

 54 The Commission shall, within one week of receipt of the list of project applications and the recommendations of the experts and the list referred to in Paragraph 53 of the By-laws, adopt the decision provided for in Paragraph 8.3.1 or 8.3.2 of the Cabinet Regulation for each project application included in the list of project applications. The decisions made by the Council shall be forwarded to the applicants.

**IX. Entering into a Project Agreement and Financing**

55 The Council shall, within 10 calendar days from the date of entry into force, as per Paragraph 8.3.1 of the Cabinet Regulation, on granting of funding for the implementation of the project shall enter into a project agreement with the project applicant (hereinafter - the project promoter) using Annex 11 to the By-laws “Agreement on the Implementation of the Project of the National Research Programme “Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia” for 2023-2025”. If the Commission has decided on the necessity and validity of implementing the experts’ recommendations, the Council shall include the recommendations in the preparation of the project agreement. The wording of the project agreement may be adjusted during the project preparation process to reflect the specific content of the project.

56 Project costs are eligible from 1 August 2023, taking into account the specificities of the sector. In the event of non-compliance with the terms of the project agreement, the project and the By-laws, the Council shall require the project promoter to refund all or part of the financing granted to the project, in conformity with the terms of the project agreement.

57 Subject to a minimum project financing period of 12 months, the amount of the advance payment per project financing period shall be specified in the project agreement. If the project promoter needs to extend the project implementation period on the basis of Paragraph 39 of the Cabinet Regulation, it may be extended by up to one year for the consolidation and publication of results without additional funding, for which the project promoter shall submit a reasoned application to the Board at least three calendar months before the end of the project period on the need for the extension and Annex 12 to the project agreement “Plan for the Consolidation of Results”.

58 Where a project involves a project partner, the project promoter shall conclude a cooperation agreement setting out the financial conditions, the arrangements for settling disputes and for non-disclosure of confidential information, the rules governing the entry into force, duration, termination, a detailed cooperation plan and budget, taking into account the project application, as well as the rules on intellectual property rights. The cooperation agreement shall be submitted by the project promoter to the Council within two calendar weeks of the date of mutual signing of the project agreement. The project promoter is responsible for transferring the advance and final instalments of the project to the project partners within the time limits and in accordance with the procedures laid down in the cooperation agreements.

**X. Submission and Evaluation of the Mid-term and Final Scientific Report of the Project**

59 The project promoter shall submit to the Council, through the Information System, the mid-term scientific report of the project within one month from the date on which half of the project implementation period has elapsed; and the final scientific report of the project within one month of the end date of the project as laid down in the project agreement. Where the duration of the project has been extended in accordance with Paragraph 57 of the By-laws, the project promoter shall submit the final scientific report of the project within one month of the expiry of the extension period in the Information System.

60 The Council shall ensure that experts who meet the requirements laid down in Paragraphs 23 and 24 of the Cabinet Regulation are involved in the assessment of the project’s mid-term scientific report and final scientific report of the project in accordance with the procedure laid down in Paragraph 46 of the Cabinet Regulation.

61 The Council:

61.1 shall ensure that the mid-term scientific report or the final scientific report of the project is evaluated by at least two experts within two months in accordance with the procedure laid down in Paragraph 46 of the Cabinet Regulation, by filling out Annex 12 to the By-laws “Individual/Consolidated Evaluation Form of a Mid-term/Final Scientific Report of the Project” in conformity with the methodology for carrying out the expert-examination. If the experts cannot agree on a consolidated assessment of the mid-term scientific report or the final scientific report of the project, the Council shall engage another expert who shall assess the mid-term scientific report or the final scientific report of the project and, taking into account the contributions of the experts previously engaged, i.e. the individual evaluations of the mid-term scientific report and the final scientific report of the project, prepare and submit in the information system a consolidated evaluation of the mid-term scientific report and/or of the final scientific report of the project, subject to prior coordination with the other experts who have provided individual evaluations of the mid-term scientific report and of the final scientific report of the project;

61.2 shall summarise the recommendations included in the consolidated expert evaluation of the mid-term scientific report or the final scientific report of the project and submit them for consideration by the Commission, which shall decide, within its terms of reference, on the necessity and feasibility of implementing those recommendations in the execution of the project concerned, instructing the Council to amend the project agreement accordingly, if necessary.

**XI. Mid-term and Final Report of the Council on the Implementation of the Programme**

 62 The Council shall, in accordance with Paragraph 7.6 and Paragraph 50 of the Cabinet Regulation, prepare the mid-term or final report of the Council on the implementation of the programme (hereinafter – the Council’s report) within four months of the completion of the evaluation of mid-term scientific reports or final scientific reports of all projects of the Programme. In order to ensure transparency of information, the Council may group together all the projects in the Programme when preparing the Council’s report.

 63 The content of the Council report shall include:

63.1 statistics on funded projects (human resources involved, MSc/PhD theses defended);

63.2 The results achieved and a description of them in line with the programme’s objective and tasks in conformity with the Cabinet Decision;

63.3 a description of the scientific cooperation (e.g. at international level, consortia, planned applications to international research and innovation programmes of the European Union, including Horizon Europe);

63.4 socio-economic impact of project results (measures implemented at mid-term, concrete measures implemented at closure in line with the common (horizontal) objectives of the programme);

 63.5 information on the publication of project results in open access, as well as in repositories suitable for depositing research data (using FAIR principles);

63.6 other information as decided by the Commission.

**XII. Information and Publicity Requirements**

64 The project promoter undertakes to publish the project information (including on the project implementation, scientific group, activities and achieved results) on the project promoter’s website and undertakes to ensure that this information is maintained and updated according to the achieved project results for at least five years from the date of signing of the certificate of acceptance-delivery on project execution as laid down in Paragraph 59.1.2 of the Cabinet Regulation, which is an annex to the project agreement.

65 The project promoter shall, within the procedures and deadlines laid down in the project agreement, provide publicity information to the Ministry of Agriculture and Council, which shall carry out communication and public information activities for the implementation of the project financed via the call for proposals. The Council shall compile this information and make it available to the public. The project promoter shall cooperate with the Council and participate in public information and communication activities organised by the Council, including the production of project design material, content development and joint workshops on the progress of the project.

66 To promote the visibility of the project, the project promoter shall use the common graphic identity of the National Research Programmes[[3]](#footnote-3) as a basis and may additionally create a visual identity mark describing the project and including an abbreviation of the project name, which shall be consistent with the common graphic identity of the National Research Programmes. If the project’s established visual identity is used, it shall be used only in conjunction with the common graphic identity (or programme logo) of the National Research Programmes.

67 The project promoter and project partners (if applicable) shall refer to the name of the programme, the source of funding and the project number when carrying out public information activities, publishing scientific articles and other project results, participating in conferences or otherwise presenting project results and activities, or shall use the project’s visual identity mark referred to in Paragraph 61 of the By-laws. “The Guidelines for publicity activities under FLPP and VPP projects" (approved by Council Order No. 13 from 14 April 2021) are available here: <https://www.lzp.gov.lv/lv/media/25/download?attachment>.

**XIII. Closing Provisions**

68 Questions regarding the preparation and submission of the project application shall be sent to the following e-mail address no later than two working days before the deadline for submission of the project application: vpp@lzp.gov.lv. Answers to questions sent by a project applicant are sent electronically, frequently asked questions and answers are published on the Council’s website [www.lzp.gov.lv](http://www.lzp.gov.lv). Other questions about the implementation of the Programme should also be sent to the above-mentioned e-mail address.

69 Information on project applications approved by the Commission is published on the websites: [www.zm.gov.lv](http://www.zm.gov.lv) and [www.lzp.gov.lv](http://www.lzp.gov.lv).

**Annexes**

**Annex 1** “Project Application”;

**Annex 2** “Methodology for the Preparation and Submission of the Project Application, the Mid-term Scientific Report, and the Final Scientific Report;

**Annex 3** “Methodology for the Evaluation of the Conformity of a Project Application with the Administrative Evaluation Criteria”;

**Annex 4** “Administrative Conformity Evaluation Criteria Form”;

**Annex 5** “Confirmation of Absence of Conflict of Interest and Respect of Confidentiality”;

**Annex 6** “Agreement on the Performance of the Expert-examination”;

**Annex 7**”Methodology for Carrying out the Expert -examination (Project application, Mid-term/Final Scientific Report)";

**Annex 8** “Individual/Consolidated Assessment Form for the Expert-examination of the Project Application”;

**Annex 9** “Methodology for the Evaluation of the Conformity of a Project Application with the Criteria Specific to the Sector”;

**Annex 10** “Form for the Individual/Total Evaluation Criteria Specific to the Sector”;

**Annex 11** “Agreement on the Project Implementation of the National Research Programme “Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025””:

11.1 Annex “Project Application”;

11.2 Annex “Breakdown of Funding”;

11.3 Annex “Recommendations for the Project Implementation”;

11.4 Annex “Calculation of the Value of Project Results as a Percentage of the Total Project Cost”;

11.5 Annex “Certificate of Acceptance-Transfer on the Implementation of the Project of the National Research Programme”

11.6 Annex “Plan for the Consolidation of Results”;

11.7 Annex “Financial Statement for the Implementation of the Project of National Research Programme of 20\_\_\_”;

11.8 Annex “Changes to the Contractual Amount up to 30% for a Project of the National Research Programme”;

11.9 Annex “Changes in the Scientific Group of a Project of the National Research Programme Exceeding 20%”;

11.10 Annex “Mid-term/Final Scientific Report Form of a Project”;

11.11 Annex “List of Results”;

11.12 Annex “Content Report”;

11.13 Annex “List of the Scientific Group”.

**Annex 12** “Individual/Consolidated Evaluation Form of a Mid-term/Final Scientific Report of the Project”.

**Annex 13** “Establishing, Maintaining and Implementing a Plan for Research Data Management”.

1. Findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable, see here - <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For more information, see here <https://www.lzp.gov.lv/lv/fundamentalo-un-lietisko-petijumu-projektu-2023-gada-atklatais-konkurss> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://izm.gov.lv/images/VPP_grafiska/VPP_GRAFISK_IDENTITTE.pdf> (other materials here in the introduction - <https://izm.gov.lv/lv/zinatne/valsts-petijumu-programmas>) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)