**Annex 7**

to the By-laws of the open call for proposals of the State Research Programme

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

**Methodology for Carrying out the Expert-examination**

(**for the Project application, the Project mid-term/final scientific report)**

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# Introduction

"Methodology for carrying out the expert assessment" (hereinafter referred to as - the Methodology) has been developed in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 560 of 4 August 2018 “Procedures for the Implementation of State Research Programme Projects” (hereinafter referred to as - Cabinet Regulation), Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 462 of 9 August 2023 "On the National Research Programme "Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025" (hereinafter referred to as - the Cabinet Order) and, having regard to the to the By-laws (hereinafter referred to as - the By-laws) of the open call for proposals (hereinafter referred to as - the Call for Proposals) of the National Research Programme "Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025" 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” on \_\_\_\_\_\_ 2023.

The methodology has been developed for the international experts who carry out the scientific evaluation of the project applications and the mid-term and final scientific reports.

According to Section 35(1) of the Law on Scientific Activity, a national research programme is a state commission to carry out scientific research in a specific economic, educational, cultural or other sector of national priority, with the aim of promoting the development of that sector.

The target audience of the Methodology is the applicants (hereinafter referred to as - the applicant) of the open call for proposals (hereinafter referred to as - the Call for Proposals) of the National Research Programme "Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025" (hereinafter referred to as - the Programme), who prepare project applications and the necessary documentation for submission within the framework of the call for proposals.

As a government order, the Programme is a policy implementation mechanism that identifies and researches issues of importance for Latvia's sustainability and development, which need to be the focus of the work of Latvian scientific institutions, and identifies relevant scientific research tasks to address them. In the light of the above, the Programme creates favourable conditions for achieving Latvia's sustainable development goals.

The Programme will involve the strongest scientific teams with the best scientists representing the sectors of natural sciences, engineering sciences and technology, and agriculture, forest and veterinary science cooperating to achieve the project objective.

The programme was developed by the Ministry of Agriculture (hereinafter referred to as - the Ministry), and it is financed by the Ministry of Education and Science. State budget funds in the total amount of 5,000,000 euro have been assigned for the implementation of the programme, and the period of implementation will run from 2023 to 2025. Maximum funding of the project to be implemented within the framework of the programme is 4,650,000 *euro*.

According to the Cabinet Order, the overarching objective of the programme is to use natural resources sustainably and rationally, increasing their added value in a changing environment.

The overarching objective is to be achieved through the implementation of two sub-programmes:

1. "Sustainable use of agricultural, including fisheries, resources for the production of safe, quality and healthy food in Latvia", which aims to increase the knowledge base on sustainable use of agricultural resources in the production, processing and control of quality food raw materials and products in Latvia to provide consumers with healthy and safe food products of local origin, promoting the growth and competitiveness of the agriculture and food sectors;
2. “Innovative forest management and new forest services, products and technologies for Latvia's growth”, which aims to ensure sustainability of forestry and rational use of Latvia's forest resources to produce globally competitive products while preserving biodiversity and social importance of forests for future generations.

Each sub-programme has a number of tasks to be carried out in order to achieve the overarching objective of the programme and the objectives of the sub-programmes:

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

a) Development of sustainable, quality and competitive agricultural production in an environmentally friendly agricultural sector:

* to assess the impact of reduced load of chemical plant protection products 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 explore 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;
* to explore new or little-studied pathogens of crops and garden plants in relation to changes in climate and cultivation technologies;

b) The social and economic aspect 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 bioeconomy and rural space:

* to assess the socio-economic dimension of the impact of the European Green Deal on Latvian agriculture, its impact on local food provision, finding 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 over-wetted organic soils;
* research of knowledge-intensive strategic development of the bioeconomy, socio-economic dimension and impact on rural space by developing a bioeconomy monitoring tool and applying a functional land use (agriculture and forestry) approach;

c) Development of new knowledge, approaches and methods to promote circulation of safe and quality food and animal feeding stuffs, as well as 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 foodstuffs:

* to analyse the link between the development of antimicrobial resistance and the use of antibiotics in livestock housing, to study distribution of the most important zoonotic agents and indicators in order to gain new knowledge and find solutions to reduce the risk of resistance;
* to collect food consumption data for the Latvian population, covering all seasons and different population groups, analyse the obtained 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;
* to 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;

d) Implementation of integrated approach to ensure sustainable exploitation of inland waters for fisheries productivity and high quality ecosystem services:

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

2) The following thematic tasks and sub-tasks are provided for the sub-programme *"Innovative forest management and new forest services, products and technologies for Latvia's growth"*:

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

* guidelines for "more nature-friendly forestry" in pine forests;
* impact of pine stand restoration and management methods on genetic diversity;
* recommendations for restoration and replanting of pine stands in areas affected by natural disturbance and areas to be rehabilitated;
* factors affecting the health and quality of pine forest ecosystems;
* the impact of interaction of improvement of tree growing circumstances (thinning and forest stand fertilisation) on the productivity and quality of pine stands;
* increasing the adaptation capacity of pine forests through plant breeding methods;
* ensuring a favourable protection status for protected species in commercial pine forests;
* development of higher-level method for registration of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from peat used in forestry and agriculture;

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

c) development of a circular forest bio-economy and development of innovative technologies and products for the exploitation of local forest resources for the production of competitive and sustainable products, promoting rational use of wood and developing wood construction in line with the Green Deal:

* technologies and products to expand the use of wood-based materials in construction in line with the European Green Deal;
* bio refining technologies for complex 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.

# 1 Used Terms

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| **No.** | **Term** | **Explanation** |
| **1** | **Scientific Group** | Scientific staff and scientific technical staff (persons who have the necessary technical knowledge and experience in one or several fields and who, under the supervision of scientists, participate in scientific activities by carrying out technical tasks. Scientific technical staff includes engineers, technicians, laboratory technicians, technologists, operators involved in the implementation of the project. The scientific group includes the project manager, the key project implementers (if required) and the project implementers. |
| **2** | **Scientific Staff** | Leading researchers, researchers, scientific assistants, academic staff and students. |
| **3** | **Applicant** | Applicant is a scientific institution registered in the Register of Scientific Institutions of the Republic of Latvia (body governed by public or private law) or an institution of higher education, as well as meeting the definition of a research organisation. Applicant is responsible for the implementation of the project and the achievement of the overall project results |
| **4** | **Project Partner - Scientific Institution** | A scientific institution registered in the Register of Scientific Institutions of the Republic of Latvia (body governed by public or private law) or an institution of higher education, as well as meeting the definition of a research organisation, participating in the project with its own staff or research infrastructure. |
| **5** | **Project Partner - Public Institution** | A public institution which is required to carry out scientific activities by an external legal enactment, its by-law or articles of association, and is engaged in the implementation of the project with property, intellectual property, funding or human resources in its possession or ownership |
| **6** | **Project Manager** | The scientist who manages the project and ensures its implementation. The Project Manager plans and supervises the execution of the project tasks, is responsible for the activities of his/her own and those of other persons involved in the project in accordance with the tasks set out in the project, scientific ethical norms, timely preparation and submission of documentation describing the scientific progress of the project in accordance with the procedure provided for in the Cabinet Regulation. The Project Manager is registered in the National Scientific Activity Information System (hereinafter referred to as - the Information System). |
| **7** | **Key Project Implementers** | The scientists implementation of the project or sub-project and responsible for the implementation of its parts. |
| **8** | **Project Implementers** | Members of the scientific group who carry out individual scientific tasks in the implementation of the project and are responsible for carrying out relevant parts of it. |
| **9** | **Students of the Institution of Higher Education** | Student involved in the project scientific group is a bachelor student, a professional student, a master student (masters), a medical resident and a PhD student. Students of the institution of higher education must be involved in the project according to the provisions of Clauses 22-25 of the By-laws. |
| **10** | **Project Contact Person** | A natural person who is registered in the information system, fills in information on the project application, uploads its annexes, as well as, where necessary, maintains contact with the staff of the Latvian Council of Science (the project contact person may also be the Project Manager) and the staff of the Ministry of Education and Science during the project submission and implementation. The project applicant shall indicate the project contact person in Chapter 1 'General information' of Part A of the project application. If the project has collaborating partners, their contact persons shall also be indicated. The contact person and the Project Manager can be the same person. |

# 2 Scientific Expert Assessment of the Project Application

1 The scientific evaluation process of all the project applications submitted under the Call for Proposals is organised by the Latvian Council of Science (hereinafter referred to as - the Council).

2 If the project application fulfils the criteria for administrative evaluation, the Council shall, on the basis of Clause 37 of the By-laws, involve two or more suitably qualified experts to carry out the scientific assessment of the project application.

3 Before accessing the project application in the information system, the expert:

3.1 Shall declare that he/she has no conflict of interest and undertakes to respect the requirements of confidentiality by signing and sending to the Council, by electronic mail, Annex 5 to the By-laws, "Declaration of absence of conflict of interest and respect of confidentiality" (hereinafter referred to as - the "Declaration of the Expert");

3.2 Shall enter into a contract with the Council - Annex 6 to the Rules, "Contract for the Examination" (hereinafter - the "Examination Contract").

4 The Council shall, upon receipt of the expert's certificate and the conclusion of the expert agreement, give the expert access to the project application and to all the necessary information in the information system to carry out an appropriate assessment of the project application.

5 The expert shall assess the project application by applying his/her professional qualifications and experience in the relevant scientific field and by justifying his/her rating with scientific evidence.

6 The expert shall cooperate with the Council during the examination and comply with the instructions given by the Council pertaining to the performance of the examination in accordance with the By-laws and the examination contract.

7 According to Clause 45 of the Rules, the expert is only authorised to evaluate a project application in the volume of 15 pages, with up to three additional pages, if acknowledgements of social partners, letters of recommendation on cooperation and other documents are attached.

2.1 Individual rating of the project application

8 The individual rating of the project application (hereinafter referred to as - the Individual Rating), drawn up in accordance with Annex 8 "Individual/Consolidated Rating Form for the Examination of the Project Application" to the By-laws, shall be completed and confirmed by the expert in the information system within two calendar weeks from the date of conclusion of the examination agreement and receipt of access to the project application and all necessary information, unless a different deadline is specified in the expert contract.

9 In the Individual Rating, the expert shall evaluate each criterion and provide a score taking into account the considerations set out in Paragraph 13 of the methodology.

10 The expert evaluates the criteria and assigns a score from 1 to 5 for each criterion, where:

10.1 Outstanding - 5 points (excellent project proposal, meets or exceeds the highest standards in the relevant scientific field, any shortcomings in the project proposal are minor);

10.2. Good - 4 points (good project proposal, fulfils the requirements of the criterion in the relevant scientific field, but there are some shortcomings);

10.3 Satisfactory - 3 points (satisfactory project application, generally fulfils the requirements of the criterion in the relevant scientific field, with some shortcomings that will make it difficult to implement the project and achieve high performance);

10.4 Weak - 2 points (weak project proposal, partial or only general compliance with the requirements of the criterion in the relevant scientific field, identifiable shortcomings that make it difficult to successfully implement the project and achieve its objectives);

10.5 Unsatisfactory - 1 point (unsatisfactory project application, does not meet the requirements of the relevant scientific field for the criterion, and the information provided is insufficient for the assessment in the criterion, and there are significant shortcomings that make the implementation of the project and the achievement of the objectives questionable);

10.6. if the project application's score in a given criterion exceeds the requirements of the previous lowest score but does not fully meet the requirements of the next highest score, the score may also be supplemented by a half point, i.e. 0.5.

11 The expert shall provide a reasoned justification for the scoring of each scientific criterion. The expert shall explain in the justification the score awarded, using his/her professional qualifications and experience in the relevant scientific field.

12 Within three calendar days from the date of receipt of the individual assessment, the Council shall assess the compliance of the individual assessment with the considerations referred to in Paragraphs 27, 28 and 29 of the Cabinet Regulation, as well as with the Methodology, where necessary, returning the individual assessment to the expert for specification/revision/improvement, justifying the reasons for the return. In the event of such a return, the expert shall specify, revise and approve the individual evaluation in the information system within three calendar days of the date of receipt of the notification by the Council, sent by electronic mail, of the return of the individual evaluation of the expert.

13 The expert shall complete the individual evaluation in the information system (see Annex 8 "Individual/consolidated evaluation form for the examination of the project application" to the By-laws) according to the following criteria and considerations:

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| **Individual/consolidated assessment of the project application** | | | |
| Project title:  Expert(s): | | | |
| **1** | **Criterion: Scientific quality of the project** | | Maximum 5 points |
| **1.1** | Consideration: scientific quality, reliability and novelty of the research | *The expert shall justify the score given by taking into account the fulfilment of the criterion as a whole and of each criterion consideration.*  *1 Specific information for the criterion is given in Chapter 1 'Scientific excellence' of the project application, as well as in subsections 2.4 'Scientific results of the project and ensuring their availability' and 3.1 'Proposer and scientific team', but it is the project application as a whole that should be taken into account when assessing the criterion.*  *2 The scientific excellence of the project, including the chosen research strategy and methodological solutions, the ability to generate new knowledge or technological insights, as well as the ability to build and develop an interdisciplinary and inclusive team of internationally competitive scientists using research methods and technologies that are recognised among scientists worldwide, shall be assessed according to the specificities of the relevant scientific field or fields and the project, as well as the specificities of the institutions of the applicant and the project's collaborating partners (if any).*  *3 The evaluation shall take into account the thematic objective of the call for proposals (in accordance with points 6 and 7 of the Cabinet Order) and the horizontal objectives of the programme, the results (in accordance with points 8 and 9 of the Cabinet Order) and their feasibility, and shall assess whether the project application is adequate in order to achieve the overarching objective and objectives of the programme in accordance with the thematic area of the project and the envisaged timeframe for implementation.*  *4 Assess the overall potential of the project to develop the knowledge base in the social sciences and humanities to develop national research and innovation systems that address societal challenges.* | |
| **1.2** | Consideration: scientific quality of the chosen research strategy and methodological approaches, and relevance to the objectives |
| **1.3** | Consideration: contribution of the project to the overarching objective and purpose of the programme and ability to generate new knowledge or technological insights |
| **1.4** | Consideration: contribution of the collaborating partners (if any), their scientific capacity, planned quality of the collaboration |
| **2** | **Criterion: Impact of project results** | | Maximum 5 points |
| **2.1** | expected transfer of acquired knowledge and skills to further activities and scientific capacity development | *The expert justifies the score given by taking into account fulfilment of the criterion as a whole and of its sub-criteria. Criteria-specific information is given in Chapter 2 "Impact" of the project application, but the assessment of the criterion must take into account the project application as a whole.*  *The results and their expected impact, including the planned transfer of results into further activities and scientific capacity development, the possibilities for further development of research shall be assessed according to the specificities of the scientific field or fields concerned and of the project, as well as the specificities of the institution of the applicant and the specificities of the institutions of the project partners (if any).*  *The expert shall assess how effectively the project engages students and young scientists in relation to the overall workload of the scientific group, including a plan for engaging students and building the capacity of the scientific group within the framework of the project. Information on the workload of the project scientific group, including students, can be found in Chapter 3 "Project Budget" of Part A "General Information" of the project application.*  *Sustainability of the project results is assessed in relation to the expected scientific publications and the dissemination of the project results in scientific conferences. Information on the dissemination of the project results can be found in the project application description, subsection 2.5 "Scientific results of the project and making them accessible". Particular attention should be paid to ensuring the sustainability of results, following the principles of Open Access, Open Data, FAIR - findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable - as well as to the choice of the project applicant for data deposition.*  *The potential of the project to raise public awareness of the project results and to increase the socio-economic impact of the project results should be taken into account (sub-sections 2.2-2.5 of description of the project application). Assess whether the plans described in the project application for applying and transferring the results of the research to end-users are adequate and feasible. Assess the collaboration of the project applicant with other scientific institutions, as well as with public institutions, NGOs and businessmen.*  *The expert also assesses the feasibility of the project's specific result according to Clause 10 of the By-laws, the result is: results of the research carried out under the project and the recommendations made to policy makers have contributed to sustainable and rational use of natural resources, increasing their added value in a changing environment, including:*   1. *increased knowledge base on technologies for sustainable use of agricultural resources in the production, processing quality food raw materials, as well as control of raw materials and products in Latvia to provide consumers with healthy and safe food products of local origin, promote the growth and competitiveness of the agriculture and food sectors;* 2. *promoting the sustainability of forestry and the rational use of Latvia's forest resources to produce globally competitive products, while preserving biodiversity and the social importance of forests for future generations.* | |
| **2.2** | opportunities for research development, including contributions to the preparation of new projects for submission to competitions under the European Union's Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation and other research and innovation support programmes and technology initiatives |
| **2.3** | the research will lead to knowledge important to the relevant sector, and development of the national economy and society |
| **2.4** | sustainability of the knowledge generated and a qualitative dissemination plan, including scientific publications and public outreach |
| **2.5** | implementation of the research contributes to strengthening the scientific capacities of the research staff, including students |
| **3** | **Criterion: Project feasibility and support** | | Maximum 5 points |
| **3.1** | quality of the research activity plan and its relevance to the objective. The resources provided are adequate and sufficient to achieve the objective. The research aims to ensure efficient use of resources. The planned work steps and tasks are clearly defined, relevant and reliable | *The expert justifies the score given by taking into account fulfilment of the criterion as a whole and of its sub-criteria. Specific information for the criterion is given in Chapter 3 'Implementation' of the project application and in Part C 'Curriculum Vitae' of the project application, but the assessment of the criterion must take into account the project application as a whole.*  *Feasibility of the project, including the research work plan prepared, the envisaged management and quality control of the research, information provided on the data management plan, the resources envisaged, available infrastructure, shall be assessed according to the specificities of the sector or sectors of the science concerned and of the project, as well as the specificities of the applicant and the collaborating partners (if any).*  *The expert shall assess the relevance of the scientific qualifications and experience of the project manager and the principal investigators to the achievement of the project objectives and the performance of the tasks envisaged on the basis of the curriculum vitae submitted in Part C 'Curriculum Vitae' of the project application.*  *The planned implementation of the project is assessed in relation to the completed project application in Part A "General information", Section 3 "Project budget", which foresees the costs of the project team's salary, material and technical support, travel and publication costs.* | |
| **3.2** | scientific qualifications of the Project Manager and of the key project implementers, based on the curriculum vitae submitted |
| **3.3** | appropriate research management, including quality management is provided for. The management organisation allows to follow the progress of the research. Potential risks have been assessed and a plan developed to avoid or mitigate them |
| **3.4** | the research infrastructure required for the research, including access to collaborating partners' equipment (if applicable) |
| **3.5** | the institution carrying out the research and the collaborating partners (if applicable) have the necessary knowledge and expertise |

## 2.2 Consolidated evaluation of the project application

14 Once the experts have completed and validated their individual assessment in the information system, the Council shall give each expert access to the individual assessment completed by the other expert and disclose the identity of the other experts to each expert.

15 One of the experts shall complete the consolidated evaluation in accordance with Annex 8 to the By-laws, “Individual/consolidated evaluation form for the examination of the project application”, in the information system, under the conditions set out in Clauses 6 to 13 of the Methodology. All the experts, except in the case of an additional expert as referred to in Clause 44, shall validate the consolidated evaluation in the information system within two weeks of the validation of the last individual evaluation in the information system.

16 The consolidated evaluation is the agreement between all the experts, except in the case of involvement of an additional expert as referred to in Clause 44 of the By-laws, on the final evaluation of the project application, so that the expert preparing the consolidated evaluation consults other experts on:

16.1 Score of each criterion;

16.2 Justification for the scores of each criterion, compiled from the justifications provided by all the experts in their individual evaluations.

17 The Council shall examine the consolidated assessment referred to in Clause 15 of the Methodology once it has been confirmed in the information system. If the Council finds that any inconsistencies with the methodology or the by-laws of the competition, it has the right to return the consolidated evaluation to the experts for revision and confirmation.

18 In the event of a return of the consolidated assessment, the experts shall be obliged to revise and agree on the consolidated assessment within three calendar days, validating it in the information system in accordance with Clauses 15 to 16 of this Methodology.

# 3 Scientific mid-term and final expert assessment of scientific report of the project

19 Before accessing a mid-term or final scientific report in the information system, the expert shall declare that he/she has no conflict of interest and undertake to respect the confidentiality requirements by signing and sending to the Council the expert declaration and by concluding a contract with the Council.

20 The Council shall, upon receipt of the expert's declaration, give the expert access to the mid-term or final scientific report of the project and to all the information necessary for its evaluation.

21 The Council shall provide each expert with access to the mid-term or final scientific report and to the application for the same project. Where a final report of the project is being assessed, the Council shall additionally provide the expert with access to the mid-term report of the same project.

22 The expert evaluates the mid-term or final scientific report of the project using his/her knowledge of the relevant scientific field and arguing his/her opinion with scientific reasons.

## 3.1 Individual evaluation of the mid-term and final scientific report

23 Within two weeks from the date of conclusion of the contract with the Council, the expert shall carry out an individual evaluation of the mid-term or the final scientific report by completing Annex 10 to the By-laws, “Individual/consolidated evaluation form for the mid-term/final scientific report" in the information system and confirming it therein.

24 The expert gives one of two evaluations to the project's mid-term scientific report:

24.1 proceed with the project;

24.2 do not proceed with the project.

25 The expert gives the final scientific report one of two scores:

25.1 the project has achieved its objective;

25.2 the project has not achieved its objective.

26 The expert assesses the project's final scientific report against the following criteria:

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| **Project mid-term/individual/consolidated evaluation of the final scientific report** | | |
| Project title:  Expert(s): | | |
| **1** | **Criterion: Scientific quality of the project** | |
| *The expert assesses how the project's scientific group has achieved the objectives of the project application by the moment of delivery of the mid-term/final report. Basically, Chapter 1 "Scientific excellence” of the mid-term/final scientific report is taken into account, while linking it to the mid-term/final scientific report as a whole and to the project application. Here, the expert provides comments and suggestions to fully achieve the project's objective and perform the tasks to the highest scientific quality, or on research opportunities after the end of the project in order to achieve scientific excellence. The comments shall take into account the programme's specific tasks and results, as well as assess whether the project is progressing towards the achievement of the programme's overarching objective and the objectives.*  *The expert assesses whether the performance of the project’s scientific team over the relevant period of time demonstrates its high research capacity and whether the results described are appropriate for the supplementing of the knowledge base of the sector(s) of the science* | |
| **2** | **Criterion: Impact of project results** | |
| *The expert assesses how the project's scientific group has achieved the objectives of the project application by the moment of delivery of the mid-term/final report. Basically, Chapter 2 "Impact” of the mid-term/final scientific report is taken into account, while linking it to the mid-term/final scientific report as a whole and to the project application. In this box, the expert provides comments and suggestions to better achieve the intended impact and ensure dissemination of the knowledge gained to the scientific community and communication to the general public, or for post-project activities.*  *The expert assesses whether the project has resulted in a more internationally competitive field of natural sciences, engineering and technology, and agriculture, forestry and veterinary sciences sector and the scientific community, and whether its capacity has been improved.*  *The expert assesses how the project implementer has selected the project's target groups, whether their opinions have been sought in a quality way and whether the activities have been effective for information of the public. The expert also assesses cooperation with policy-makers, public authorities, NGOs and entrepreneurs (e.g., making recommendations, participating in policy planning, etc.).*  *The expert assesses and comments on the implementation of the plan to make the project results and scientific knowledge available both in Latvia and internationally (including by publishing results in open access journals and depositing newly generated research data in research data repositories according to the principles of "as open as possible" and FAIR - findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable.*  *The expert also assesses the project implementer's capacity building activities for students and the scientific group, as well as the progress of the student involvement plan.*  *The expert assesses progress towards the programme's specific results: the results of the project's research and recommendations to policy makers have contributed to the sustainable and rational use of natural resources, increasing their added value in a changing environment, including:*  *1) Knowledge base on technologies for sustainable use of agricultural resources in the production, processing and control of quality food raw materials and products in Latvia is improved to provide consumers with healthy and safe food products of local origin, to promote the growth and competitiveness of the agricultural and food sectors;*  *2) Promotion of sustainability of forestry and the rational use of Latvia's forest resources to produce products that are competitive in the global market, while preserving biodiversity and the social importance of forests for future generations.* | |
| **3** | **Criterion: Project feasibility and support** | |
| *The expert assesses how the project's scientific team has achieved the objectives of the project application by the time of delivery of the project mid-term/final report. Basically, Chapter 3 "Implementation” of the mid-term/final report is taken into account, while linking it to the mid-term/final scientific report as a whole and to the project application as a whole. In this box, the expert provides comments and suggestions for adjustments to the work plan or research opportunities after the end of the relevant project.*  *The expert assesses whether the management of the project has been effective, including taking into account the overall progress of the project. The expert assesses the information provided by the project implementer on the development and maintenance of data management plans. Whether the risk plan stated in the Project Description, sub-chapter 3.3 "Project Management and Risk Plan", has been implemented in cases where the risks materialised, and whether the solutions are credible.*  *In addition, the expert shall assess and indicate whether the project has sufficiently involved students and PhD candidates by the specified stage. Students must be involved with a total workload of at least 3,0 PLE* *on average during the implementation of the project.* | |
| **Mid-project evaluation** | | |
| **Proceed with the project/**  **Do not proceed with the project** | | *If the expert's assessment of the project's mid-term scientific report is "Proceed with the project", the expert may skip any final conclusions.*  *If the expert's assessment of the project's mid-term scientific report is "Do not proceed with the project",* *the expert shall provide final conclusions with an explanation and additional reasons on the progress of the project and the risks identified to the achievement of the project objective.* |
| **Project evaluation at the end** | | |
| **Project objective has been achieved.**  *Project objective has been achieved – overall score as a percentage is 85% – 100% and more/*  **Project objective has not been achieved,**  **objective rating as a percentage.**  *Project objective has not been achieved, it does not correspond partially - overall rating as a percentage is 25%-84%*  *Project objective has not been achieved, it does not correspond at all - overall rating as a percentage is 0%-24%* | | *The expert shall provide a target rating as a percentage in the overall rating of the final scientific report of the project according to the rating scale set out in Clause 30 of the Methodology.* |

## 3.2 Consolidated rating of the project mid-term and final scientific report

27 Once the experts have completed and validated their Individual Rating mid-term or final scientific report in the information system, the Council shall provide experts with access to the Individual Rating to be completed by the other experts, as well as disclose the identity of the other experts to each expert.

28 One of the experts shall complete the consolidated evaluation in accordance with Annex 10 to the By-laws "Individual/consolidated rating form for the mid-term/final scientific report", under the conditions set out in Clauses 24 to 26 of the Methodology, in the information system and all the experts shall confirm it in the information system within one week.

29 In the consolidated rating, the experts agree on a single score for the mid-term or final scientific report and summarise the comments made in the individual evaluations.

**3.3** **Project objective rating of the project mid-term and final scientific report**

30 In the consolidated valuation in the Final Report, the two experts agree on a consolidated percentage valuation, which has the following meaning:

Project objective has been achieved – overall score as a percentage is 85% – 100% and more. The award is given if the project has been carried out with good or excellent scientific quality and has met or exceeded the expected objectives and scientific results. Where there is non-performance or other minor shortcomings, but the existing scientific results are of good scientific quality, e.g. the scientific articles are published in high quality journals, so that these shortcomings have not affected the achievement of the objective. If the mid-term scientific quality assessment of the project makes recommendations for further implementation, these are taken into account or a reasoned justification is given for disregarding them.

Project objective has not been achieved, does not correspond partially - overall score as a percentage is 25% - 84%. The mark is awarded if the project has been carried out with sufficient scientific merit, the planned results of the project have been partially achieved, which has affected the overall achievement of the project objectives. Where the mid-term scientific quality assessment of the project makes recommendations for the further implementation of the project, these have been taken into account partially or not at all, and the reasons for not taking them into account are not sufficiently substantiated.

Project objective has not been achieved, does not correspond fully - overall percentage score 0% - 24%. A score is awarded if the project has been carried out with insufficient scientific quality, the planned results have been entirely or almost entirely not achieved, and the overall objective of the project has therefore not been achieved, or has been achieved to an insufficient extent. If the mid-term scientific quality assessment makes recommendations for further implementation of the project, these are not taken into account, and no reasoned justification is given.

31 Taking into account Clause 21 of the Methodology, the Council shall calculate the refundable part of the funding as follows:

31.1 if the percentage of the Experts' objective rating referred to in Sub-clause 2.20 of the Contract is 60% to 65%, a flat rate of 5% shall apply;

31.2 if the percentage of the Experts' objective rating referred to in Sub-clause 2.20 of the Contract is between 50% and 59%, a flat rate of 10% shall apply;

31.3 if the percentage of the Experts' objective rating referred to in Sub-clause 2.20 of the Contract is below 50%, a flat rate of 25% shall apply.