

Green Gold Label Program

Introduction & scope

GGLS5 is derived from the SDE+ sustainability requirements as described in the Staatscourant nr. 10750 26 February 2016 (Regeling van de Minister van Economische Zaken van 26 februari, nr. WJZ / 10750 26) and the sustainability criteria from the Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC). GGLS5 has not been developed to replace existing standards forest management standards. GGLS5 also contains additional criteria as described by the SDE+ specific for biomass on top of the existing wood programs as well as forest management criteria and an area risk base approach for small operation < 500 ha as described in the SDE+ sustainability requirements. Compliance to principle 7, principle 8 and principle 9 can be part of an area risk base approach.

Glossary

See GGL Glossary

Principles

Criteria for sustainable forest management

Principle 1. Relevant international, national, and regional/local legislation and regulations shall be observed.

Criteria: 1.1. The forest manager holds the legal right to use the forest.
1.2. The forest manager complies with all obligations to pay taxes and royalties.
1.3 All applicable anti-corruption legislation is observed. If no anti-corruption legislation exists, the forest manager shall take alternative anti-corruption measures proportionate to the scale and intensity of the management activities and the risk of corruption.

Principle 2. Biodiversity shall be maintained and where possible enhanced.

Criteria: 2.1. Sites with a high conservation value – (HCV) or equivalent – and representative areas of forest types that are found in the forest management unit have been identified and are protected, and where possible enhanced.
2.2 Measures have been taken to protect endangered plant and animal species and, if applicable, to increase the populations and enhance the habitat of these species.
2.3 The conversion of forests within the forest management unit to other forms of land use, including wood plantations, is not permitted unless:- it concerns a small area (the total converted area over the years is no greater than 5% of the area of the forest management unit on benchmark date 1 January 2008); and
- it clearly leads to long-term advantages for nature conservation; and
- there is no damage or threat of damage to areas with a high conservation value.
2.4 In case of plantations, there is a preference for native species, and a relevant percentage (>=5%) of the plantation shall be able to revert to natural forest.
2.5. The exploitation of non-timber forest products, including products from hunting and fishing, is regulated, monitored and controlled among others to safeguard the maintenance of the biodiversity in the forests.

Principle 3. The regulatory effect and the quality, health and vitality of the forest, shall be maintained and, where possible, enhanced.

Criteria 3.1. The quality of the soil in the forest management unit shall be maintained and if necessary improved, with special attention to coasts, river banks, erosion sensitive areas and sloping landscapes.

3.2. The water balance and quality of both groundwater and surface water in the forest management unit and downstream (outside the forest management unit) shall be at least maintained and where necessary improved.

3.3 Important ecological cycles present in the forest management unit are preserved, including carbon and nutrient cycles.

3.4. Unnecessary damage to the ecosystem is prevented by applying the most suitable logging (Reduced Impact Logging) and road construction methods and techniques for the local conditions.

3.5. If fires are used to achieve the forest management objectives (such as regeneration of specific tree species), then adequate control measures have been taken. 3.6.

Forest management measures are designed to prevent and control diseases and plagues, where these form a threat to natural capital.

3.7 The use of chemicals is only permitted if the ecological processes and the optimal deployment of sustainable alternatives prove insufficient. Pesticides classified as type 1A and 1B by the World Health Organisation and chlorinated hydrocarbons are not permitted.

3.8 The accumulation of inorganic waste and litter is prevented and such waste and litter is collected, stored in the approved areas and disposed of responsibly.

Principle 4. The production capacity of wood products and other relevant non-timber forest products shall be maintained in order to safeguard the future of the forests.

Criteria:

4.1. The production capacity of all forest types represented in the forest management unit is maintained.

4.2. The forest management unit is sufficiently protected against all forms of illegal exploitation (timber and non-timber forest products including hunting and fishing), illegal establishment of settlements, illegal land use, illegally initiated fires, and other illegal activities.

Principle 5. The management of the forest shall contribute to the local economy and create employment opportunities.

Criteria

5.1. The management of the forest and local processing of wood and non-timber forest products creates a reasonable amount of employment opportunities for the local population, including indigenous peoples.

5.2. The forest manager shall implement additional activities, helping to develop the local physical infrastructure, social services, and programmes for the local population, including indigenous peoples. All such contributions are made in consultation with the local population.

Principle 6. Sustainable forest management shall be achieved through a management system.

Criteria:

6.1. Forest management system is designed to achieve the objectives of a forest management plan and includes a cycle of inventory and analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and adjustment.

6.2. A forest management plan is drawn up that at least includes:

- a description of the current condition of the forest management unit;
- long-term goals, including economic, social and ecological functions;
- the average annual allowable cut per forest type and, if applicable, the annual allowable harvest of non-timber forest products based on reliable and current data;
- the budget for the implementation of the forest management plan.

6.3. Essential elements for the management of the forest are indicated on maps.

6.4. The implementation of the forest management plan and the ecological and economic effects thereof are periodically monitored on the basis of reliable data.

6.5. The forest management plan is implemented by professional office and field staff. The staffs' expertise and knowledge is maintained by means of an adequate and regular training programme.

Principle 7 Production of raw biomass shall not lead to the destruction of carbon sinks.

Criteria: 7.1 Biomass is not sourced from permanently drained land that was classified as peat land after January 1, 2008, unless it can be demonstrated that the production and harvesting of the biomass does not result in water depletion of a previously undrained soil.
7.2 Biomass is not sourced from land that was converted an alternative, dryer ecosystem after 1 January 2008.
7.3 Biomass is not sourced from production forests(including wood plantations) that were created by means of conversion of natural or semi-natural forest after 31 December 1997.

Principle 8 The Use of biomass may not result in a long-term carbon debt.

Criteria 8.1 The Forest Management unit where the wood is sourced shall be managed with the aim of retaining or increasing carbon stocks in the medium or long term.
8.2 Biomass is not sourced from stumps unless these stumps had to be removed from the site for other reasons than wood or biomass production.
8.3 On average less than half of the volume of annual round wood harvest from forests, other than those originating from thinning, is processed as biomass for energy generation.

Principle 9. Biomass production may not result in Indirect Land Use Change (ILUC)

Note: Principle 9 is only applicable for biomass sourced from FMU>500 ha (category 1 biomass)

Criteria 9.1 Biomass sourced from new bioenergy plantation systems that were planted after January 1, 2008 shall have a demonstrably low ILUC risk.
Note: Small forest management units of ≤ 500 ha are exempt from this requirement.

In the GLOBIOM study¹ (2015) commissioned by the European Commission, it is demonstrated that in case of new biomass energy production systems (with a short rotation time):

- *Land conversion due to new energy plantations does not lead to displacement of food production (because in particular it takes place on abandoned land and other natural land)*
- *Overall no CO₂ emissions take place, but CO₂ sequestration (i.e. negative ILUC emissions due to large carbon storage in biomass)*

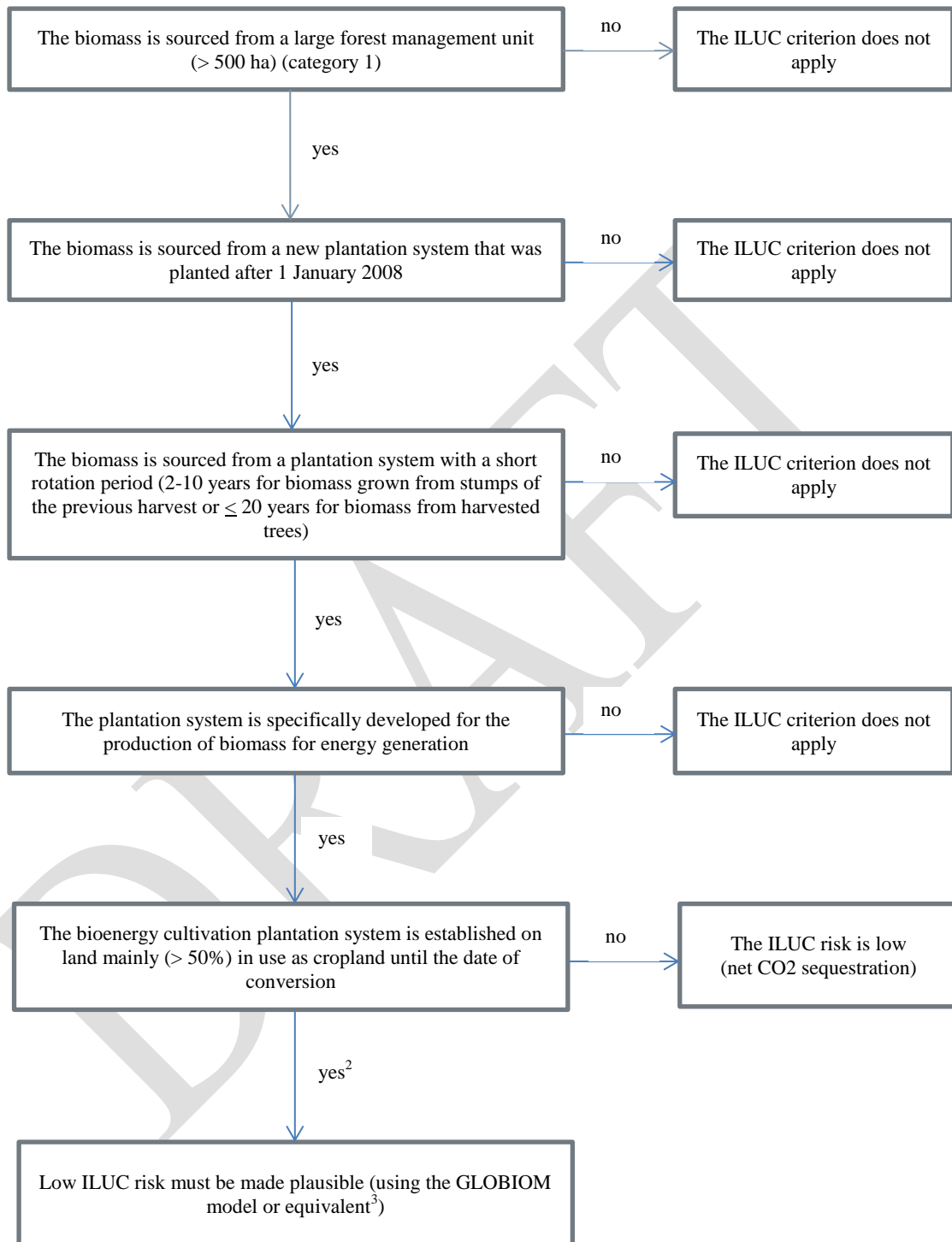
Even in case new biomass energy production systems are (partly) established on land used as cropland until the date of conversion, overall no CO₂ emissions take place (comparable with the scenario of perennial crops in the GLOBIOM study). The ILUC impact because of the use of (partly) agricultural land, leads to a displacement effect of food / feed production. However, this (emission) effect is more than offset by sequestration carbon in biomass and soil through the energy wood production.

The GLOBIOM study is taken as a basis for assessing ILUC risk of biomass as elaborated in the decision tree below.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/Final%20Report_GLOBIOM_publication.pdf



Decision tree ILUC criterion



Principle 10. Forest managed by a group or regional association shall be sufficiently safeguarded for sustainable forest management.

- Criteria
- 10.1 A group or regional association is managed and supervised by an independent legal entity (the group manager).
 - 10.2. A group or regional association shall comply with the requirements for sustainable forest management. In addition, every member of a group or regional association shall comply with these requirements, insofar as they are applicable to the activities of the member in question.
 - 10.3 The group manager shall carry out internal audits annually at each group member.
 - 10.4 The internal audit reports shall cover all applicable requirements from the GGL standards.
 - 10.5 The group manager shall have a documented quality management system ensuring that requirements are met.
 - 10.6 The group manager shall have a contract or consent form in which the group member acknowledges the GGL requirements and agrees to the general obligations and responsibilities for participation in the group, including solving all identified non-conformities by both the certifying body and the group manager.
 - 10.7 The group manager shall suspend the group member and inform the certifying body if not all requirements are met within the given timeframe.
 - 10.8 The group manager shall provide to the group member all necessary documents in meeting the GGL requirements.

Principle 11. Basic labour rights of forest workers are safeguarded.

- Criteria
- 11.1 Freedom of Association and the right to collective bargaining are respected for the forest workers.
 - 11.2 The biomass is not produced using any compulsory labour.
 - 11.3 The biomass is not produced using any child labour.
 - 11.4 The biomass is not produced using labour which is discriminated against in respect of employment or occupation.

Principle 12. Health and safety of the forest workers shall be protected

- Criteria
- 12.1 The health and safety of forest workers shall be protected through risk identification, safety programs mitigating risks, training and personal protection equipment.

Principle 13. Wood originating from forests and plantations in which genetically modified trees are utilised shall not be used.

- Criteria
- 13.1 Genetically modified trees are not used.

Principle 14: Soil quality shall be maintained and where possible improved.

Note: Principle 14 is only applicable for category 3 and 4 biomass

- Criteria
- 14.1 Best practices are applied for the maintenance or improvement of the soil and soil quality in relation to production or the management objectives as these have been included in a management plan.
 - 14.2 The production and conversion of biomass based on agricultural residual products and residual products from areas of natural habitat are founded on best practices for the conservation or improvement of the soil and soil quality. The use of residual products should not conflict with other local functions related to soil conservation.

Appendix A. Area risk based approach

This Annex describes the risk-based approach to sustainable forest management (SFM) at a regional level.

As noted in GGLS1 the sustainability of woody biomass from areas smaller than 500 hectares may until 2022 be temporarily determined by a risk assessment on a regional level. With this procedure the risks of non-compliance with the SFM criteria of GGLS5 is determined at a regional level, and shall be mitigated to 'low risk' for all forest management criteria of GGLS 5.

This appendix describes the risk-based approach methodology: how risk assessment on area level shall be assessed and mitigating measures shall be evaluated.

The assessment is performed by the biomass producer using the following procedure:

A1 The biomass producer determines the area or areas where the small holders with an forest area size of ≤ 500 ha are located. The borders shall be clearly mapped.

A2. The biomass producer performs a risk analysis on each of the areas where the woody raw material comes from. The risk is assessed on all criteria outlined in the GGLS 5 standard. The risk is determined for each individual criteria in 'specified risk', 'unspecified risk' or 'low risk'.

A3 With the risk assessment a risk is rated as:

- 'specified risk' if there is an indication that this is larger than 'low risk';
- Unspecified risk' when it is unknown whether there is a risk and;
- 'low risk' if there is a negligible risk of non-compliance with the criterion.

A4 When an indicator is rated as 'specified risk' or 'unspecified risk' mitigation measures must be carried out to reduce the risk to a level of 'low risk'.

A5 Where mitigating measures are not effective in managing risks, and one or more indicators cannot be assessed as 'low risk', further measures shall be implemented for the raw material to reduce the risk.

A6 When one or more criteria cannot be assessed as "low risk" the raw materials from this area shall not be used as sustainable biomass from small holders as described in this Annex.

A7 The biomass producer will sufficiently document all steps of the risk assessment and the results so it can be assessed by the certification body auditor.

A8 the biomass producer must keep registration with which the biomass is traceable to the area from which they originate (e.g. GPS coordinates) and the exact size of the forest unit(s) in hectares and check if the unit is completely within the borders of the area risk assessment.

A9 Assessing the risks, the following guidelines shall be followed:

A9a) The risk assessment generally takes place in three steps: information gathering, risk assessment and management of risks.

A9b) The assessment of the risks starts with an evaluation at the regional level rather than on forest area or unit level. Credible and verifiable information of all low risks is required. This can be reference to regulations and in that case there must be evidence of compliance with these legal requirements

A9c) In some cases, when determining the level of risk it is possible to refer to independent sources like published information, or

A9d) When determining the level of risk consult with experts and / or stakeholders with the use of stakeholder consultation as described under A12).

A9e) In determining the risk classification the likely negative effect of non-compliance should be included as well as the risk of non-compliance.

A9f) The risk rating increases with the likely negative impact of a non-compliance together with the probability of that non-compliance arising.

A10) The risk analysis must be made or approved by a person with relevant forestry knowledge and / or experience.

A11) The raw materials may only be counted as GGL certified raw materials under this exemption rule until 2022 and only after the risk assessment, on the area where the material a small (≤ 500 ha) forest is where the raw material is sourced, was approved off during a GGL audit.

A12) Stakeholder consultation shall follow the guideline below:

Relevant stakeholders in the area or area's shall be identified and included in the "Area risk base approach" process by the way of stakeholder consultation:

- The stakeholders will be informed at least a month prior to finalising the Area risk base approach evaluation and invited to give input to the process by a stakeholder letter explaining the process.
- A list will be kept with the approached stakeholders
- Reactions and possible follow-up correspondence shall be documented and made available for the certification body auditor.
- Reasons why the company did not act towards a concern of a stakeholder shall be documented.

The stakeholders shall be part of each of the individual stakeholders groups and be relevant to the area: forest government or official agencies, NGO's with interests in the forest (use), representatives of local (indigenous) people with interests in the forest (use), representatives of forest workers, representatives of forest owners, forest management standard developers, forest research and education.