

EU forest habitat improvement

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5th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Old-growth forests: policy and practice

October 16 - 17, 2025, Jaunkalsnava, Latvia

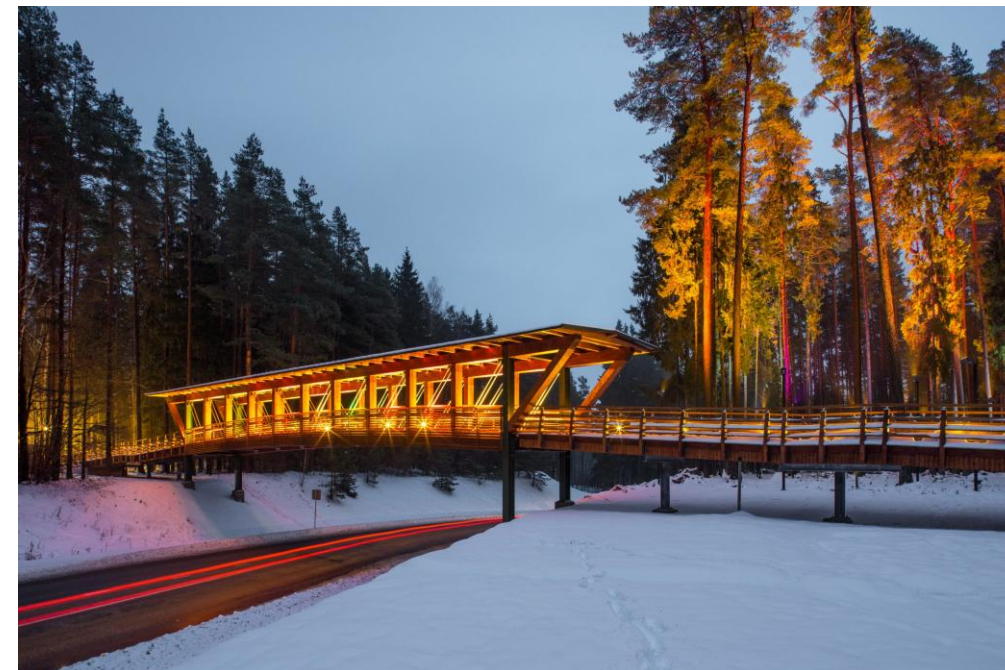
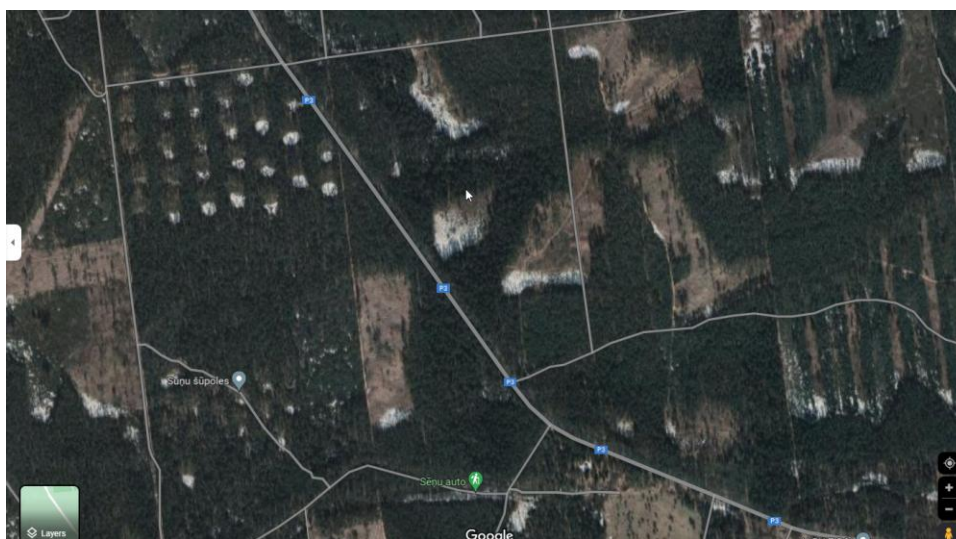
Meža pētīšanas stacija, Pārupes iela 5, Jaunkalsnava



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Latvia's forest sector strategy: keywords

- Adaptation (of forests and forestry to climatic and anthropogenic changes)
- Forest regeneration
- Increased competitiveness (bioeconomy)
- Dynamic nature protection





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Latvia's forest sector strategy

Bioeconomy

Mitigation
Adaptation
Biodiversity

Industry has figured out principle of specialization to maximize output centuries ago, yet somehow its hard to implement in forestry.

In forestry, we can **rarely** maximize all ecosystem services in the same stand – **landscape** level approach is crucial.

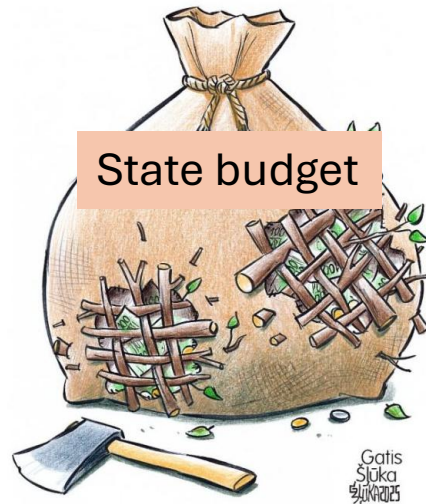


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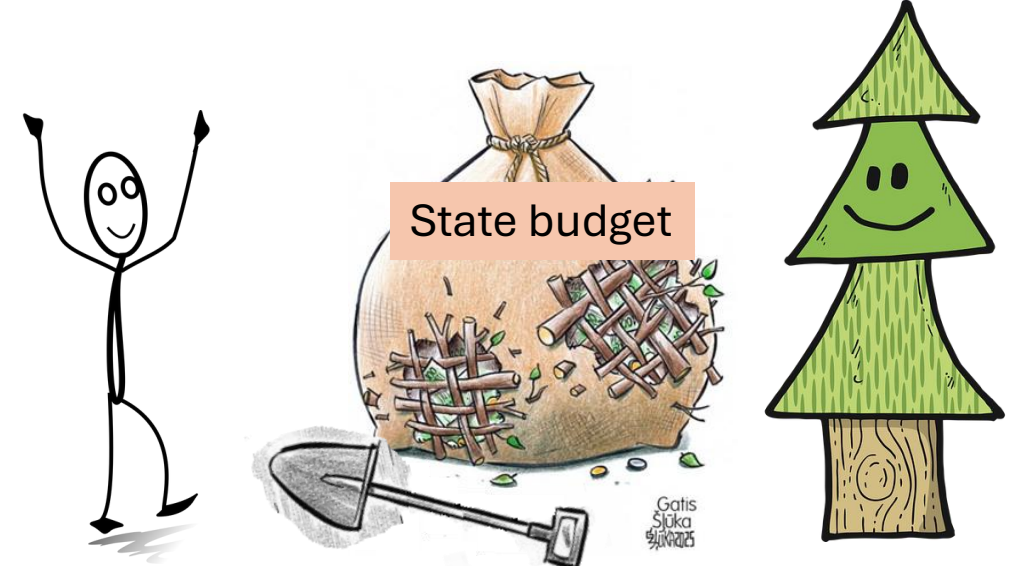
Bioeconomy

Mitigation
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Latvia's forest sector strategy

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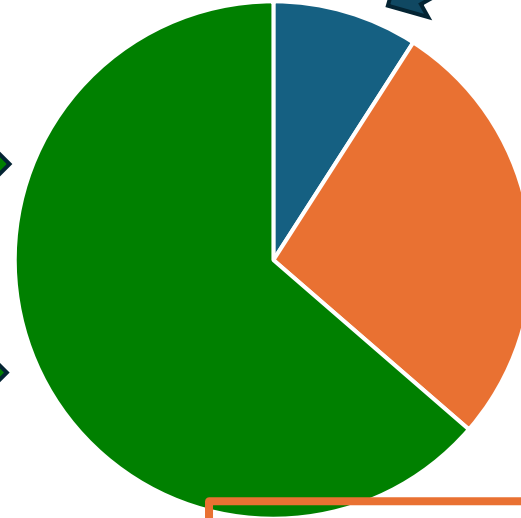


Way more accurate characterization

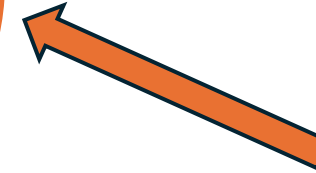
➤ Percentage in accordance with EU Biodiversity strategy 2030

In managed forests:

- targeted regeneration, thinning, optimal soil enrichment and groundwater level
- reduced exposure to disturbances (cumulative risks)



➤ No management (10%)



- Adaptation to climate change and the use of opportunities created by it, increasing the resistance of trees and stands to the effects of adverse factors and their ability to recover after impacts

➤ Integrated at the landscape level

- Closer-to-nature management solutions suitable for specific forest types and tree species and promoting the long-term preservation of stands even with a higher proportion of deadwood (20%)
- *Partly including habitat management*



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Total area of EU forest habitats in Latvia ~335k ha

Forest restoration law - target

In terrestrial habitats whose condition is not favorable, restoration measures must be implemented on at least 30% of the total area of habitats in poor condition by 2030, while by 2040 measures must be implemented on 60% of the area and by 2050 - 90% of the area.

To assess the conservation status, we consider:

- natural range
- total area occupied
- specific structures and functions (including characteristic species)
- future prospects of the above criteria





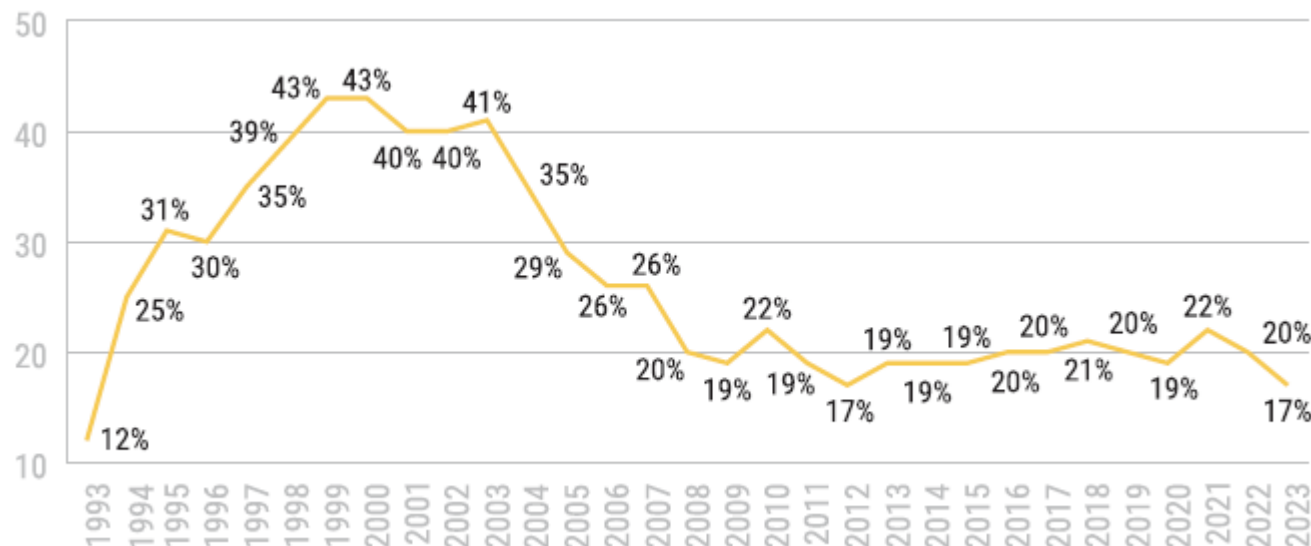
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Considerations

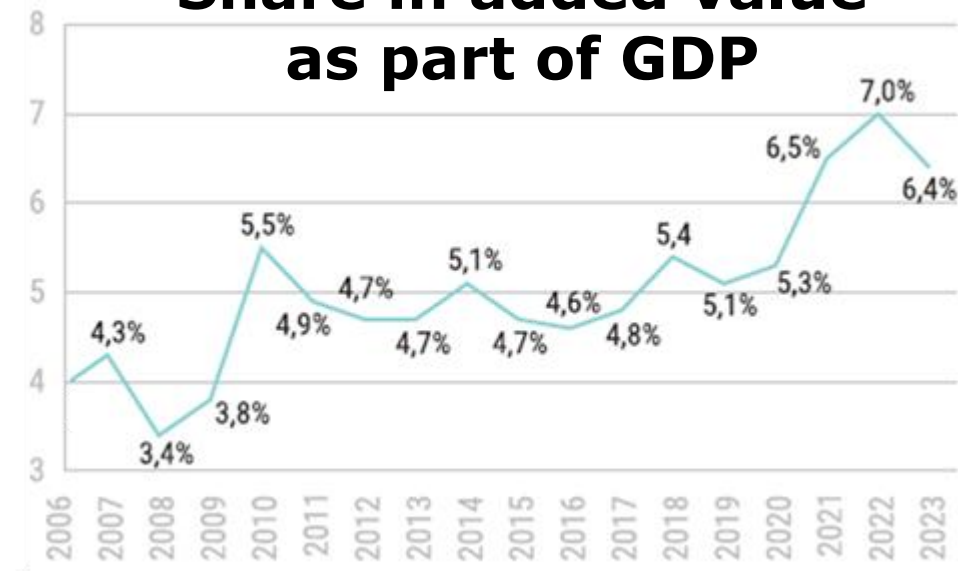
Bioeconomy and total national economy

- Forest sector is essential for economic resilience of the country and export
- Added value: Wood processing 3.6%, Forestry and logging 2.2%, Furniture manufacturing 0.6% Total 6.4%.

Share in export value

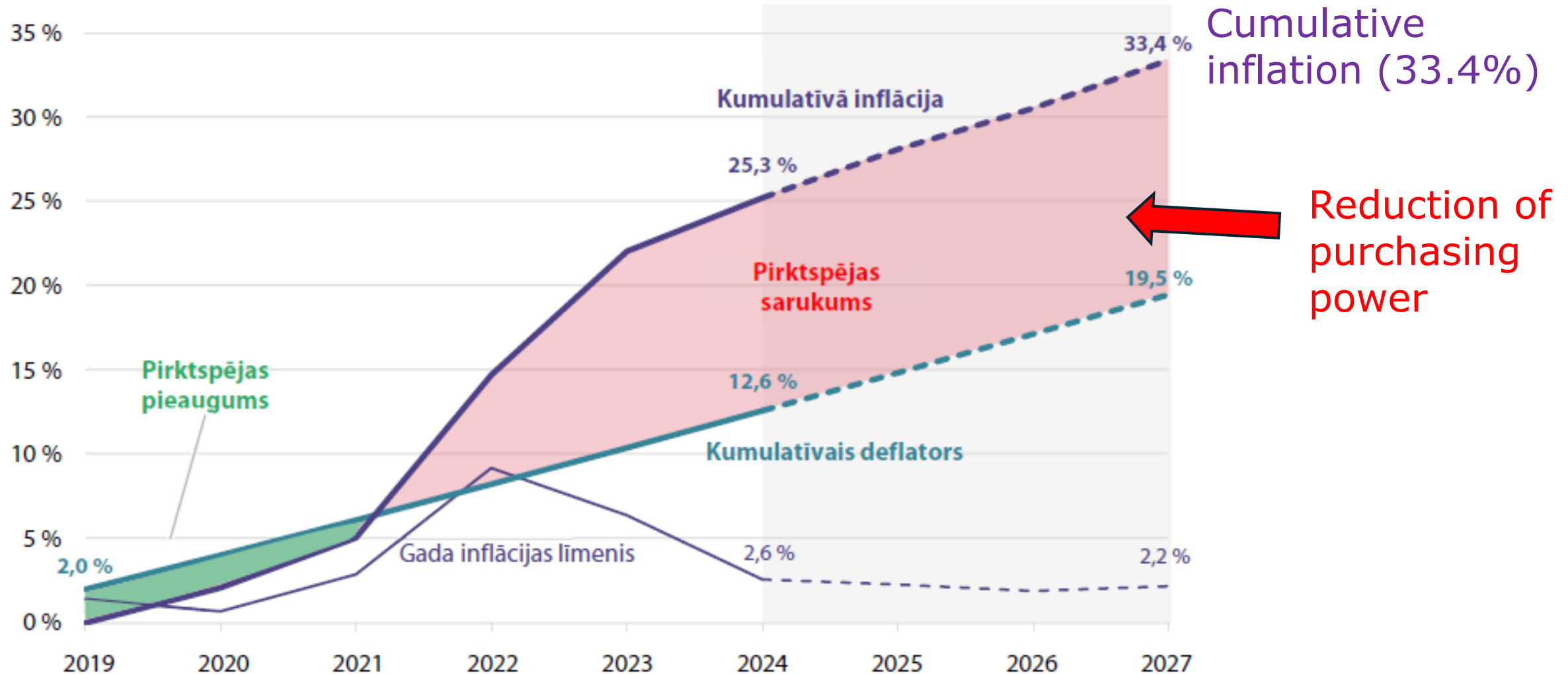


Share in added value as part of GDP

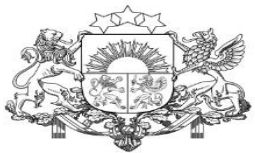


Considerations

Potential availability of resources and priorities to use them



Changes of purchasing power of EU budget (2019-2027)



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Total area of EU forest habitats in Latvia ~335k ha



Prerequisites to ensure habitat quality improvement:

- total area stays constant
- operations are efficient*
 - 1) scalable
 - 2) sufficiently simple
 - 3) mechanized
 - 4) profitable (*most likely requiring forest certification*)

Why profitable?

- There is no sufficient external funding source
- The funding can be used much more efficiently – monitorings, new studies (e.g. pollinators, species distribution and protection status)



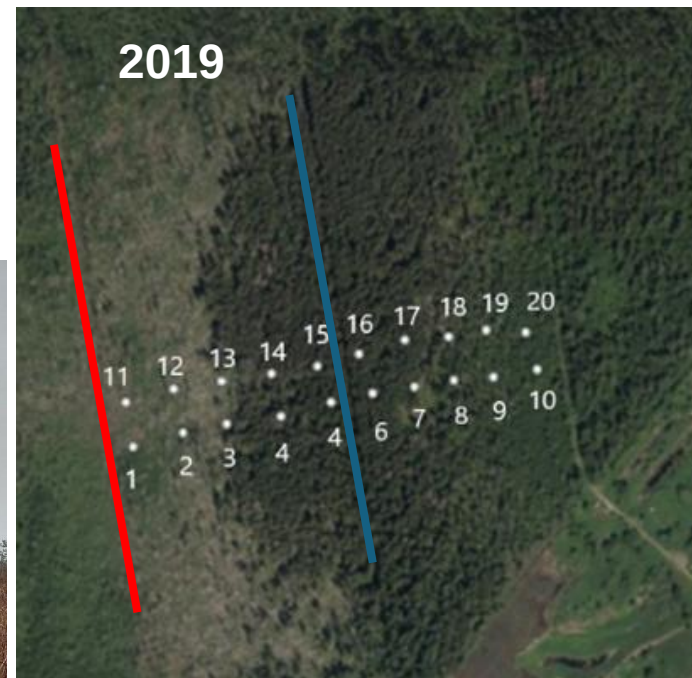
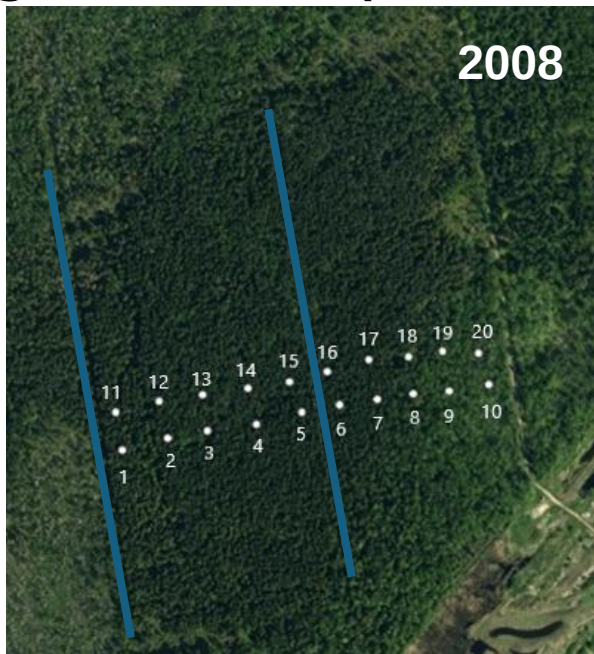
*exception – very specific habitats with very small total area



Habita quality improvement I

Measures that are too expensive at scale:

- Rewetting of forests (alternative: rewetting of swamps)



In Latvia 21% of forest area already is on wet soils



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Habita quality improvement II

Measures that are too expensive at scale:

- Rewetting of forests (alternative: rewetting of swamps)
- Controlled burning (alternatives: burning logging residues during winter, mechanized soil mineralization in patches)
- **Elimination of invasive species** (alternative: bio-based pesticides??)
- **Removing second layer and undergrowth spruces** - working against natural succession and will need constant repetition



<https://latvianature.daba.gov.lv/invazivo-sugu-ierobezosanas-teritorijas/varpaines-korintes-ierobezosanas-pilotteritorija/>

Potential to cover costs and ensure additional biodiversity enhancement measures



How to build
a well-functioning
Nature
Credits Market in
the EU
- Copy the Finnish
model?

Marko Mäki-Hakola
MTK Forest Director



In the Nature Credits Market, the **landowner** is the decider and the source of supply → the development of the market must be landowner-oriented

Clear roles and simple structures of the Nature Credits Market: Two parts: 1) NCs verified by authorities and 2) “unofficial” NCs



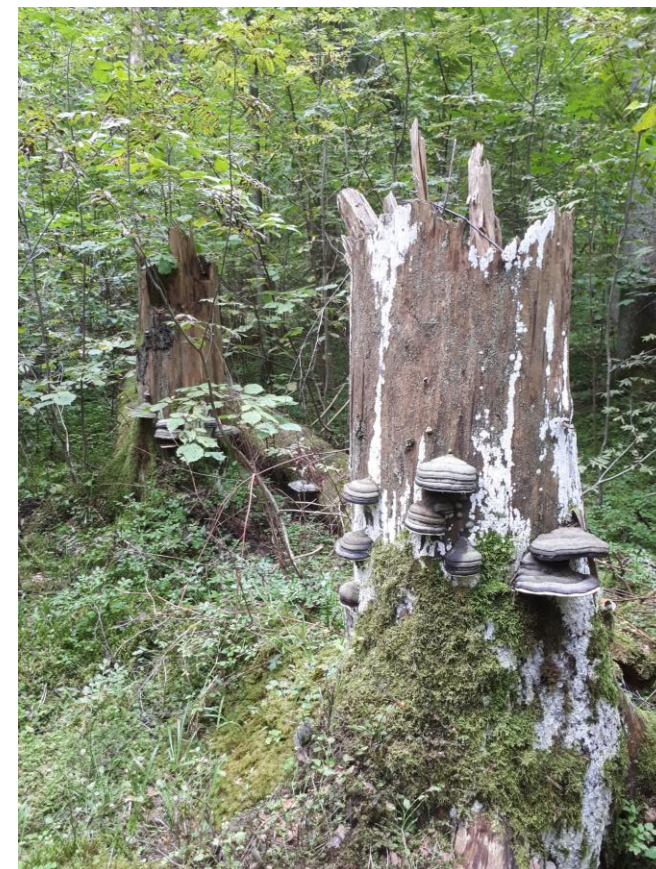
Requires adjustments in legislation to ensure competitiveness for Latvia's forest owners



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Habita quality improvement III

- Creation of structural diversity (openings), additional standing and lying deadwood
- Reduction of basal area while maintaining tree species diversity
- Maintenance of favorable condition for and around the veteran trees and/or their remains





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Habita quality improvement IV

Lessons form old stands / old-growth forests can help to set target values for the habitats after improvement measures – e.g. the amount of deadwood or structural heterogeneity





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Questions?

