



Better Biomass annual report 2024

Introduction

This is the **9th report** of the Better Biomass (NTA 8080) certification system based on information that is available at the level of the scheme owner.

In accordance with Article 30(5) of Revised Directive (EU) 2018/2001, voluntary schemes that are EU RED-approved are required to submit annual activity reports to the Commission. The minimum requirements for the structure and content of the annual activity report are set out in Annex III to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/996.

This report refers on several occasions to the Better Biomass certification scheme, published as NCS 8080-1:2024+A1:2025, and available at the Better Biomass website. The European Commission has adopted a Commission Implementing Decision on the recognition of the ‘Better Biomass’ voluntary scheme for demonstrating compliance with the requirements set in Directive (EU) 2018/2001 on April 8, 2022.

List of certification bodies

The following certification bodies are associated to the Better Biomass certification system by means of a license agreement with NEN and are also listed on the Better Biomass website¹:

Certification body	Recognising authority	Monitoring authority
DEKRA Certification B.V. The Netherlands	— NEN for license agreement — RvA ^a for accreditation [registration C001]	RvA ^a
Normec QS B.V. The Netherlands	— NEN for license agreement — RvA ^a for accreditation [registration C602]	RvA ^a
^a RvA is the Dutch accreditation body, which is also member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and European co-operation for Accreditation (EA)		

Organisation of audits

Reporting requirement (a): Rules on the independence, method and frequency of audits as approved by the Commission upon accreditation of the voluntary scheme and any changes to them over time to reflect Commission guidance, the modified regulatory framework, findings from internal monitoring on the auditing process of certification bodies and evolving industry best practice.

The regular audit frequency is defined in the Better Biomass certification scheme (see 7.9.1 in NCS 8080-1:2024+A1:2025). The associated certification bodies are required to report every year about the number of certification projects executed in the framework of Better Biomass certification, the experiences gained during these process that are relevant for maintaining and where needed improving the certification scheme, and the nature and extent of complaints received and the way they are dealt with. This is also part of the license agreement between the certification body and the scheme owner.

Dealing with non-compliances

Reporting requirement (b): rules and procedures for identifying and dealing with non-compliance by economic operators and members of the scheme.

Non-compliance will result in a critical, major or minor non-conformity during regular audits. The consequences of these non-conformities and the required follow-up by the certificate holder are described in the certification scheme (see 7.5 in NCS 8080-1:2024+A1:2025). The central register of certificates on the Better Biomass website indicates if a certificate has been suspended or withdrawn, noting that an economic operator can also withdraw its certificate voluntarily without being in non-conformance. In case of notification of 'wrongdoing' in between audits, the Better Biomass certification system foresees in procedures how to respond, also depending on the way the notification has been received. A justification or evidence should be provided to consider a notification eligible. The procedures related to complaints, objections and appeals are described in the Better Biomass certification scheme (see 11 in NCS 8080-2:2024+A1:2025) and reference is made to the NEN Scheme management manual² and additional specifications regarding the complaints procedure are available on the Better Biomass website.

No reports of or allegations of serious wrongdoing by certificate holders have been received by the certification bodies and/or the scheme owner.

Transparency

Reporting requirement (c): evidence of fulfilling the legal requirements on transparency and publication of information in line with Article 6 of Revised Directive (EU) 2018/2001.

All documents related to the Better Biomass certification system are available at the Better Biomass website. The Better Biomass website also includes a central register of certificates containing information about the certified economic operators, including scope(s) of certification, produced product(s), certification body that issued the certificate and validity of certificate, as well as a summary of the audit report that contains additional information about the nature of raw materials, the production processes and location details. Information is available in both the English and Dutch language.

In addition to publishing all relevant documentation and maintaining the central certificate register on the Better Biomass website, the scheme owner made extra efforts in 2024 to enhance accessibility and transparency towards stakeholders.

In 2024, five digital newsletters were distributed to approximately the certificate holders. These newsletters contained updates on changes to the certification scheme and interpretation guidance for auditors and participants.

In addition, more than 10 inquiries from stakeholders were received and answered via the e-mail. These ranged from requests for clarification of criteria to questions about the certification procedure. Feedback from these interactions is used as input for improving the explanatory information provided on the website.

Stakeholders involvement

Reporting requirement (d): stakeholder involvement, in particular on the consultation of indigenous and local communities prior to decision- making during the drafting and review of the scheme as well as during audits and the response to their contributions.

The standards have been developed through a multi-stakeholder process including non-governmental organisations. The list of members of the Committee of Experts that have participated in this process is available on the Better Biomass website. In accordance with the NEN governance – following ISO/IEC and CEN/CENELEC governance as formal Dutch member to these standardisation organisations – participation in the standard development process was open for all interested parties ('all parties concerned'). Also, the Better Biomass Committee of Experts represents different stakeholders categories. The Better Biomass website describes the organisation of the Better Biomass certification system.

Concerning economic operators that wish to become certified, the Better Biomass certification system requires that the economic operator consults stakeholders for at least certain sustainability aspects. This consultation might be covered in laws and regulations or through a sound permit procedure. In addition, certification bodies are allowed to execute a stakeholders consultation themselves as part of their audit.

Robustness of scheme

Reporting requirement (e): overview of the activities carried out by the voluntary scheme in cooperation with the certification bodies in order to improve the overall certification process and the qualification and independence of auditors and relevant scheme bodies.

The Better Biomass certification scheme is accepted by RvA, the Dutch accreditation body, a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA). The associated certification bodies are accredited to ISO 17065 for the scope of NCS 8080-1:2024+A1:2025.

To maintain accreditation, the accreditation body visits the certification bodies annually to evaluate their compliance with the certification scheme. This includes evaluation of the competence and independence of auditors and witnessing an audit.

Periodically – at least annually – a meeting with auditors involved in the auditing process of Better Biomass certification is organised, in which best practices are shared and potential interpretation issues related to the requirements to be assessed or to the certification scheme are discussed. Representation of each certification body involved in these meetings is mandatory by signed license agreement. Whenever needed, the auditors have the possibility to exchange information by other means and additional meetings can be organised. In case interpretations (or other decisions) are required, these will be brought forward to the Better Biomass scheme management committee.

During the Better Biomass auditors meeting on 6 September 2024, several interpretation issues were discussed for mutual harmonisation, as well as the recent updates of the scheme documents.

Better Biomass market

Reporting requirement (f): market updates of the scheme, the amount of feedstock, biofuels, bioliquids, biomass fuels, recycled carbon fuels and renewable fuels of non-biological origin all certified, by country of origin and type, and the number of participants.

The current numbers of certificate holders can be found in the central register of certificates on the Better Biomass website that also contains information about the nature of raw materials and produced products. In 2024, within the scope of the RED, 3 certificates have been withdrawn.

The volumes of certified products (within the framework of Revised Directive 2009/28/EC) are available, as annex to this annual report

Traceability

Reporting requirement (g): overview of the effectiveness of the implementing system put in place by the governance body of the voluntary scheme in order to track proof of conformity with the sustainability criteria that the scheme gives to its member(s). This shall cover, in particular, how the system effectively prevents fraudulent activities by ensuring timely detection, treatment and follow-up of suspected fraud and other irregularities and where appropriate, the number of cases of fraud or irregularities detected.

Conformance to the sustainability criteria can be traced through the status of the certificate in the central register of certificates on the Better Biomass website. In the first place, fraud means violation of law and regulatory authorities should undertake the necessary actions to deal with the economic operator concerned in case of (suspicion of) fraudulent activities. Fraud also implies non-conformance with the Better Biomass certification scheme, resulting in suspending or withdrawal of the certificate. This kind of non-conformance can be identified during a regular audit or based on external signals that will result in further investigation (see also Dealing with non-compliances). Better Biomass also requires the declaration of non-modification of production processes in the framework of residual flow (waste and residues) in which economic operators are assessed if they have not deliberately modified their production process to produce more residual flows.

Recognition and monitoring of certification bodies

Reporting requirement (h): criteria for the recognition of certification bodies.

The associated certification bodies are accredited for the Better Biomass certification scheme specifically by an IAF member. To maintain accreditation, the accreditation body will witness annually an audit to assess whether the certification body carries out the audit in accordance with the Better Biomass certification scheme (see also Robustness of scheme).

The associated certification bodies need to be accredited for the Better Biomass certification scheme by an IAF member. The certification body therefore needs to conform to the requirements in ISO/IEC 17065 supplemented with the requirements in the certification scheme including competences of the audit team (see also Robustness of scheme). The certification bodies have been ISO/IEC 17065 accredited for the scope of Better Biomass for over 10 years

Reporting requirement (i): rules on how the internal monitoring system is conducted and the results of its periodic review, specifically on oversight of the work of certification bodies and their auditors as well as on the system of handling complaints against economic operators and certification bodies;

Monitoring of the associated certification bodies is conducted by the accreditation body that has accredited the certification body concerned. This implies that the accreditation body will witness annually an audit carried out by the certification body concerned. If there are comments from the accreditation body regarding the scheme, then these are communicated by the certification body to the scheme owner. In 2024 no issues have been reported.

Reporting requirement (j): Possibilities to facilitate or improve promotion of best practice.

Periodically – at least annually – a meeting with auditors involved in the auditing process of Better Biomass certification is organised, in which best practices are shared and potential interpretation issues related to the requirements to be assessed or to the certification scheme are discussed. Representation of each certification body involved in these meetings is mandatory by signed license agreement. Whenever needed, the auditors have the possibility to exchange information by other means and additional meetings can be organised. In case interpretations (or other decisions) are required, these will be brought forward to the Better Biomass scheme management committee.

During the Better Biomass auditors meeting on 6 September 2024, several interpretation issues and audit practicalities were discussed, and experiences and best-practices were exchanged between auditors.