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Answer given by Ms Albuquerque
on behalf of the European Commission
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Existing European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS)¹, as well as the draft revised ESRS that the Commission published on 6 May 2026 for a Have-Your-Say consultation², both stipulate that reported greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets must be gross targets, excluding GHG removals, carbon credits, or avoided emissions. This approach ensures alignment with the EU's overarching 2030 climate policy framework, which prioritises companies' direct emission reductions before relying on external measures such as carbon removals³.

The Commission also recognises the importance of carbon removals in the climate transition⁴. Existing ESRS and the draft revised ESRS therefore also mandate companies to report on their GHG removal and storage projects and the use of carbon credits. This ensures transparency and recognition of such initiatives, even if they are not counted towards GHG emission reduction targets. It helps to avoid penalising carbon removal frontrunners while upholding the primacy of direct emission cuts.

In the course of 2026, the Commission aims to adopt policy proposals for the post-2030 climate policy framework, which may provide an opportunity to reassess the role of carbon removals – including in the forestry, land, and agriculture sector – in GHG reduction targets. In case this would be the direction of travel, there could be a possibility to further revise the ESRS to take account of possible changes in the climate policy framework.

¹ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2023/2772 of 31 July 2023 supplementing Directive 2013/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards sustainability reporting standards.

² https://finance.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-seeks-feedback-revised-sustainability-reporting-standards-2026-05-06_en.

³ https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/climate-strategies-targets/2030-climate-targets_en.

⁴ The role of carbon removals is acknowledged in, for instance, the European Climate Law, Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ('European Climate Law').