

# 2022/23

## SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

Sustainability Report 2022/23

**BLASER GROUP**

**Blaser**

**J.P. SAUER & SOHN**  
ESTABLISHED 1781



**LIEMKE**

**MINOX**  
Great Price. Great Performance.



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In the interest of readability, we have generally used the masculine form when referring to persons. Of course, women, men and diverse people are always meant.



# Foreword

Dear Reader,  
Dear Nature lovers,

Sustainability is not a luxury, but a necessity. As a company that has always been closely connected with nature, if only because of its products, we know how important it is to treat our natural resources with care. We therefore very much welcome the long overdue change in thinking triggered by climate change. We are already voluntarily tackling the associated tasks, as formulated by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), today. Since the first sustainability report in 2021, we have pushed ahead with our corporate processes and will continue to do so in the future.

One visible sign of this is the purpose of the Blaser Group. "Responsible for nature" is intended to serve as a meaningful guiding principle for all employees, ensuring that all our actions are aligned with the same goal. In this way, ecological and social concerns flow into the corporate strategy side by side with economic factors. For us, economic success and responsibility go hand in hand.

## **Protecting nature**

I would like to emphasize that this responsibility is part of the overall corporate transformation process, similar to digitalization, and is not limited to a specific niche. That is why we have also made a conscious decision not to continue offsetting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions with certificates, as we have done so far. All too often, these measures give the appearance of greenwashing, whether justified or not. As a company close

to nature, we would like to take a more targeted approach and support projects that we can directly influence and that are close to our hearts. These include, for example, the elaborate rhino protection program in Namibia. In addition, we are making many other efforts to continuously reduce or avoid our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. We will report on this regularly, as part of the sustainability report and continuously on the Blaser Group website.

From an economic point of view, the past two years have been very challenging, with rising interest rates, inflation and the escalating armed conflicts. However, we are now in a much better position than in the past and have created the basis for better cushioning future crises. Together with the structural changes already initiated in 2022, we have now become significantly more efficient and thus also more productive.

### Utilizing synergies

The ongoing digitalization of many business processes is also contributing to this, ensuring a significant increase in efficiency. The creation of the business units Hunting Rifle, Optics and Accessories & Outfits lays the foundation for synergies in the value chain and optimally coordinated sales and marketing activities. Optimized product development processes ensure a full portfolio of potential new products. We are currently working on more than 40 development projects.

In addition to these structural innovations, we have intensified our partnership with our specialist dealers and together held more than

100 Blaser Days for our customers in 2023. By strengthening our sales activities, we were able to cushion the very low consumer climate index to a large extent. I would like to emphasize that at the same time, we are expanding our product portfolio continuously. In the optics segment, for example, we recently introduced significant innovations and the apparel segment continues to develop very positively.

### Strengthening our headquarters

Overall, I am pleased to note that we are well positioned and can continue to invest in our long-term goals. Just recently, for example, we purchased potential expansion space next to our logistics center and consolidated our six external locations by renting storage space in Isny. There can be no better commitment to our location. In addition, we save considerable transport distances, additional logistical effort and the associated CO<sub>2</sub> emissions which underlines our sustainability efforts.

All this is possible thanks to our employees, who, with their commitment and ideas, bring the Blaser Group's goals to life and develop and produce products that inspire. In the same way, our employees support responsible business practices with their commitment to continuously making the Blaser Group's activities more sustainable. Of course, this applies to all company divisions and locations, because sustainable results can only be achieved through constructive cooperation. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks for this commitment.

However, our concern for our employees does not stop at the factory gate. Based on our values, it is a fundamental requirement for us that human rights are respected and observed in all group companies, by partners and suppliers. The Blaser Group's Human Rights Officer is responsible for this topic and acts as a point of contact.

This Sustainability Report provides information on all of the progress, challenges and future plans. I hope you find it an interesting read.

Yours,



Dr. Jens Uwe Drowatzky  
CEO Blaser Group

1  
COMPANY

approx. **185** m EUR in sales worldwide,  
at 17 sites

**17** sites

Isny | DE  
Wetzlar | DE  
San Antonio | USA  
Höfen | AT  
Güssing | AT  
Verona | IT  
Alcalá de Henares | ESP  
Benfeld | FR  
Budapest | HU  
London | UK

Guildford | UK  
Haslev | DNK  
Trelleborg | SWE  
Oslo | NOR  
Gabrovo | BRG  
Namibia | NAM  
Pretoria | ZAF

ca. **0,02** kg CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per  
1 EUR sales



ca. **1.000** employees worldwide  
in 2021: approx. 110



approx. 25 percent women  
approx. 75 percent men

**35** apprentices in Germany alone  
in 10 skilled occupations

The Blaser Group stands for extremely durable and reliable equipment for hunters and outdoor enthusiasts, high-quality workmanship and forward-looking product ideas. With the brands Blaser, LIEMKE, MAUSER, MINOX, Rigby, J.P. SAUER & SOHN, as well as the companies Blaser Group Wetzlar and Blaser Safaris, the Blaser Group is one of the world's leading manufacturers in the hunting and outdoor industry.

In the centers of excellence in Isny and Wetzlar, each brand develops its own unique product portfolio – with passion and the aspiration to fulfill customer wishes with the highest quality every day. Together,

the Blaser Group is a system provider that develops solutions that are unrivaled in the market thanks to the realization of synergy effects and thinking beyond individual divisions.

A prerequisite for this success is also a continuous improvement process, not only in production but also in the human resources area. This involves promoting the existing qualifications of employees and investing in new ones. This philosophy is to be implemented even more strongly in the foreign subsidiaries in the future.





# Our Brands

The Blaser Group is one of the world's leading manufacturers in the hunting and outdoor industry with the brands Blaser, MAUSER, J.P. SAUER & SOHN, Rigby, LIEMKE, MINOX and the optics specialist Blaser Group Wetzlar GmbH. Each company stands for the claim and the competence to fulfill customer wishes every day with genuine passion and the highest quality.

From the very beginning, the Blaser Group has been characterized by a family-owned structure. This ensures reliable continuity in the company's development, combined with a strong sense of responsibility for employees, partners, customers and the environment. The Blaser Group's history begins with the founding of Blaser in Isny, where the group's headquarters are still located today. In 1985, Horst Blaser sold his company, which had grown to 60 employees, to the Allgäu entrepreneur Gerhard Blenk. Over the next few years, the passionate hunter greatly expanded the company's international market position. In 2000, the two entrepreneurs and passionate hunters Michael Lüke and Thomas Ortmeier took over the hunting

rifle manufacturer. At the same time, they acquired the traditional brands MAUSER and J.P. SAUER & SOHN from the Swiss group SIG. This marked the beginning of a further phase of expansion and the company premises in Isny has since developed into a center of excellence for hunting and outdoor equipment.

In 2013, the purchase of the British manufacturer John Rigby & Co revived a cooperation between Rigby and MAUSER that had already existed once at the beginning of the 20th century. Since then, the brand, which is synonymous with the myth of hunting in Africa, has developed extremely successfully. This is ensured not only by new hunting rifle models and very high-quality accessories or the collaboration with renowned artists as part of Rigby Art, but also by extremely dedicated sales partners and a passionate team in London.

In the same year, the Blaser Group expands its expertise to include optical precision products with the acquisition of MINOX. By combining expertise and fostering intensive exchange between optics

specialists and hunting firearms experts at a single location, Blaser Group is creating new synergies that benefit all customers. This approach allows new products to be developed faster and with even greater precision. The Blaser Optik manufacturing arm, Blaser Group Wetzlar, remains in Wetzlar.

The consistent pursuit of this expansion strategy continued in 2020 with the acquisition of LIEMKE. The German specialist for thermal imaging optics was founded in 2008 and has been developing its own optics since 2014. This acquisition underlines the Blaser Group's claim to be a system provider for hunters and outdoor enthusiasts, offering innovative products with a real customer advantage. At the same time, customers can expect the quality and service that comes with the "Made in Germany" seal of quality.

1957



Horst Blaser founds his company which bears his name in Isny.

1985



The passionate hunter Gerhard Blenk buys the company. Consequently, the crafts enterprise becomes an industrial concern. He pushes the internationalization.

1993



Presentation of the R93. The linear bolt action rifle becomes an international success and will be sold more than 250,000 times

2000



Michael Lüke and Thomas Ortmeier acquire in addition to Blaser, MAUSER and J.P. SAUER & SOHN, too..



2003



The apparel line Blaser Outfits is introduced.

2004



In 2004 the experts for hunting trips, Blaser Safaris, hit the ground running.

2013



The portfolio for hunting rifles is completed with the acquisition of John Rigby & Co.. The optical know-how is expanded with the specialist for optical top products, MINOX.

2020



Acquisition of LIEMKE. The German company for thermal optics products operates in the market since 2008.







# One With Nature

In 2022, the process of formulating a common purpose statement for all Blaser Group employees began. This should serve as orientation, motivation and inspiration and in this way be a unifying element and basis for working successfully together. At the same time, the Blaser Group would also like to communicate to other interest groups what priorities it sets in its activities. It is aware that customers, associations, banks, suppliers and other stakeholders expect more than mere profit maximization and is aware of its responsibility. Topics such as sustainability, climate and social responsibility are increasingly coming to the fore and, according to social consensus, are also becoming more important for companies if their activities are to continue successfully in the long run..

The Blaser Group sees this paradigm shift as an opportunity, because an authentic purpose, one that is supported and, above all, lived by employees, goes hand in hand with sustainable corporate development and thus has an additional, lasting positive influence on the company's success. It is the unifying goal that brackets the actions of the employees. A special opportunity, too, because the responsible use of natural resources has always been part of hunting. By commu-

nicating this with all stakeholders, the Blaser Group aims to increase the acceptance and status of hunting in society..

The development of the purpose started in 2022 and was aligned with key stakeholders in the quarter of 2023. Since then, the Blaser Group's mission statement has been

**„One with nature“.**

This formulation arises from the self-image of the Blaser Group and its special connection to nature. It develops and produces high-quality equipment for unique experiences in nature and contributes to the preservation of biodiversity and the protection of nature. The "Blaser Fawn Saver" wildlife project should also be seen in this context. For three years, drones with thermal imaging cameras were loaned to hunters and hunting associations to help them protect small game effectively during mowing season in early summer. Hundreds of fawns, as well as other wild animals such as duck clutches and young hares, were saved. Support is also given to the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC).

The Blaser Group has set itself the goal of increasing understanding of the responsibility for nature and the animals living in it among all interest groups. The Blaser Group emphasizes its commitment to responsible hunting by communicating with various nature users and stakeholders, while also seeking to increase knowledge and understanding of nature and hunting. The mission statement will be rolled out widely across the group in 2024 using appropriate channels.



# Strategy & Business Model

The business activities of the Blaser Group include the development, production and distribution of high-quality hunting and sporting rifles, ammunition and optical products for day and night hunting. In addition, the company designs and distributes functional hunting clothing. The portfolio is complemented by high-quality casual clothing and hunting equipment of all kinds. The services focus on the organization and distribution of professional hunting trips. This makes the Blaser Group one of the leading international providers of products and services for hunting and outdoor activities.

The aim is to maintain and expand this position in the long term, taking into account economic, ecological and social requirements, as outlined in the 17 global goals of the United Nations, among other things. This is another reason why the business model is geared towards sustainable value creation. In addition to developing and producing high-quality equipment, the company's stated goal is to contribute to the preservation of biodiversity and the protection of nature. This claim is supported by the Blaser Group's products, which are used primarily for hunting. Hunting was decisive in the development of humankind and today makes an important contribution to the future, for example, by promoting biodiversity. It is therefore an active form of nature conservation, imparting necessary

knowledge for a better understanding of nature while also providing natural food.

As a company whose customers and employees spend almost every day in nature, the Blaser Group and its employees have had a special relationship with the environment and the wildlife that lives in it. From the very beginning: they are committed to the sustainable use of natural resources and walk the talk. That is why the Blaser Group,

for example, launched the wildlife protection project "Blaser Fawn Rescuers" in the past. Since 2021, this has helped hunters and farmers to effectively protect small game. During mowing of grassland in early summer, Blaser provided drones with thermal imaging cameras on loan to district hunting associations and individual hunters. The project was expanded internationally from 2022 and continued in 2023, so that this conservation measure also became better known in other European countries. However, the Blaser Group's nature





conservation activities are not exclusively dedicated to huntable game species, as the support of the dormouse project of the German Wildlife Foundation by MINOX shows..

### Companies

The Blaser Group consists of the brands Blaser, MAUSER, Sauer, MINOX, LIEMKE and Rigby, as well as the hunting travel company Blaser Safaris. Blaser GmbH is not only the largest subsidiary of the group, but also the one that gave it its name. As a leading innovator and manufacturer of premium hunting and sporting rifles, accessories and clothing, Blaser is one of the most successful lifestyle brands in the hunting industry. The product portfolio also includes two lines of ammunition.

Mauser GmbH markets the, up to today, legendary 98 bolt action system. Since its introduction in 1898, more than 100 million 98 systems have been manufactured. This makes it one of the most produced bolt action systems in the world and still forms the basis for how MAUSER designs, builds and continuously develops its rifles. On this basis, real tools are created without frills and loops, which are unrivalled in function, reliability and practicality.

Since 1751, J.P. SAUER & SOHN has stood for timeless elegance and uncompromising quality. From the very beginning, the oldest German hunting rifle manufacturer has set itself the goal of using the most modern materials and technologies of the respective era to create rifles that clearly stand out. These are complemented by corresponding accessories.

John Rigby & Co not only looks back on almost 250 years of history, but is also one of the last London-based companies to manufacture and sell hunting rifles there. With a keen sense of the company's illustrious history, the product and service portfolio is being carefully expanded.

MINOX markets an extensive portfolio consisting of riflescopes, binoculars, spotting scopes, red dot sights and other optical and optomechanical products such as wildlife cameras. In addition to hunters, customers from the birding and nautical sectors will also find suitable products at MINOX. All products have in common their robustness and excellent price-performance ratio.

The Blaser Group's product portfolio is rounded off by the thermal imaging specialist LIEMKE, which has been developing its own optics since 2014, with the highest standards of technical innovation, quality and practical hunting benefits. These are designed and manufactured by the subsidiary Blaser Group Wetzlar GmbH & Co KG in Wetzlar. The Blaser Group also offers exclusive hunting trips through Blaser Safaris GmbH and operates its own lodge in Namibia through Blaser Safaris (Pty.) Ltd., based in Windhoek

### Strategy

The Blaser Group combines the individual product groups into three business units. The brands Blaser, MAUSER and Sauer are brought together under the umbrella of the hunting firearms business unit, while the optics products from Blaser, LIEMKE and MINOX are combined in the optics business unit. This enables a stronger focus on customer needs and the special market conditions of the individual product groups. The third business unit is Gear & Outfits. The textile market is subject to its own seasonal trends, making this distinction useful. In addition, accessories will also have two seasonal collections in the future, analogous to clothing. The strategy envisages, on the one hand, a clear brand positioning with strong products and, on the other hand, cross-brand coordinated solutions. These synergy opportunities alone clearly distinguish the Blaser Group from most other market players.

It is the company's stated aim to permanently position itself as a market leader in the hunting and outdoor sector with high-quality equipment. This claim is underlined by extensive investments in the



Isny site. In the individual brand worlds, all customers should be able to find exactly the products they are looking for. They choose Blaser, MAUSER, Sauer, Rigby, MINOX or LIEMKE because they know that they can rely on the equipment and fulfil their personal potential when they are out and about in nature.

The claim to be a technological innovation leader is also based on the practical hunting experience and technical know-how of the employees. In addition to the original hunting rifle technology, the aim is also to develop integrative system solutions across brands. Research and development activities usually provide the ideas for innovative products and processes. In 2022 alone, more than 40 development projects were pursued. An interdisciplinary development team ensures that the product pipeline is continuously filled in order to ensure competitiveness and profitability in the long term. The latter is also crucial to fulfilling our responsibility to our employees and offering secure jobs in the long term. The Blaser Group works with suppliers and partners worldwide to implement this, so that we can jointly commit to sustainable business practices. The depth of production in Germany depends on the product group. Wherever possible and economically viable, the Blaser Group aims to have its products carry the 'Made in Germany' seal of quality. For example, 90 per cent of the product range of thermal imaging specialist LIEMKE already carries this label.

## Sales

In order to ensure long-term business success, internationalisation is constantly being driven forward. The expansion of the product portfolio in recent years has been accompanied by the expansion of the company's own distribution network. After South Africa, Hungary and the USA, the United Kingdom (2013), Italy (2018), Denmark (2017), Sweden (2019), Norway (2020), France (2021) and Spain (2022) have been added in recent years. The international sales companies – some of which are still young – have contributed significantly to the Blaser Group's growth in recent years. The common goal is

to increase customer proximity. This not only enables Blaser to offer a better service, but also to take the country-specific needs of hunters directly into account when developing new products. The further expansion of its own sales companies is regularly reviewed. Where there is no subsidiary, the Blaser Group works in partnership with importers in the respective countries. Overall, Blaser exported to more than 68 countries in 2023.

As a rule, Blaser Group products are sold exclusively through specialist retailers. These are either brick-and-mortar retailers or digital marketplaces. The Optics and Gear & Outfits business units also have their own web shops through which their product groups are also sold.

In 2022, trade fair activities were resumed and this opportunity was used in particular in the new countries to be developed in order to strengthen the presence of the brands in the respective markets. In 2023, a successful sales impulse was also provided by the 100 Blaser Days events. Nevertheless, investments in digitalisation and communication via social media are still being made deliberately, as these channels are also becoming increasingly important in the hunting industry. This applies equally to communication with sales partners and to end customers. Under the project title 'Customer Experience @ Blaser Group', central building blocks of digitalisation have been implemented over the past two years:

1. The new B2B portal allows dealers to order the majority of goods online and to access further product information.
2. With the new Sales & Service Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, the sales department can offer an even faster and better service.

It is now apparent that the projects initiated to automate order processing (EDI) and the electronic exchange of product data were started at just the right time. The digitalisation we are striving for will



increase efficiency and flexibility while conserving resources. The establishment of the 'Digitisation' department is also having a noticeable effect here. This is where digital projects and services are bundled and implemented from the initial idea to commercial operation in the Blaser Group and its associated brands.

### Market

The development of the number of hunters varies in the individual markets. In Germany, the number of hunters has been rising continuously for years and reached a new record last year with almost 436,000 hunting licence holders (Deutscher Jagdverband). In other European countries, the numbers are on the decline. Nonetheless, the trend of the past few years shows that the potential for quality products in the hunting and outdoor sector is far from exhausted. That is why Blaser Group has invested in modern production capacities, utilised synergies and realised margin effects through ongoing internationalisation in recent years.

## Our VISION: One with Nature.

Hunters and outdoor enthusiasts around the world choose our high-quality equipment because they know they can rely on it and fulfil their personal potential when out and about in nature. Our practical hunting experience and technical expertise provide the ideas for innovative products and processes that make us a long-term market leader. We are committed to sustainability and pass on a passion for hunting and nature.



# The search of clues with the MINOX DTC 550

The garden dormouse is an adaptable omnivore that can survive in many different habitats. Nevertheless, the Animal of the Year 2023 is highly endangered for reasons that are still unclear. MINOX is supporting the German Wildlife Foundation in its search for these secretive little animals. The garden dormouse's original habitat is coniferous and mixed forests in mountainous regions with lots of rocks, dense shrubbery and berry-bearing shrubs. However, as a cultural follower, the dormouse can now also be found in gardens and even in the city. Nevertheless, the range of the rodent with the distinctive black mask in Europe has shrunk by about 50 percent in the past 30 years. It has completely disappeared from many regions.

The German Wildlife Foundation wanted to get to the bottom of this development and, with the research project 'Garden Dormice - the Search in Saxony-Anhalt', find out whether and where the little dormouse occurs in the Harz Nature Park. For this purpose, MINOX provided the foundation with a selection of its wildlife cameras,

which were set up in promising locations. Just a few weeks after the start of the project, success was already recorded – the first garden dormouse had been caught on a camera trap! More followed shortly after. A great success for the research team and a glimmer of hope for the little dormice. The survey will serve as a basis for further measures, such as the networking between the areas. This can be achieved, for example, by planting connecting woody structures. This is an important project for our native wildlife, which MINOX will be happy to support with its equipment in the future.





# Material Analysis & Stakeholder Dialogue

In the long term, a company can only operate successfully if it knows the expectations of its stakeholders. That is why a continuous dialogue with the various interest groups is one of the key prerequisites for a sustainable economic activity. The Blaser Group communicates regularly with individual stakeholder groups, either on an ad hoc basis or within predetermined periods. The content includes company-specific topics as well as larger social trends that have priority for the stakeholders and thus form the framework for the Blaser Group's activities. At the same time, the Blaser Group uses the systematic alignment of its own goals with stakeholder expectations to prioritise its areas of activity. This in turn has an impact on the effective use of resources.

Stakeholders generally responded very positively to the first sustainability report in 2021. It showed that topics such as sustainable corporate governance are very important to employees and potential employees. For many customers, on the other hand, a sustainable approach to the environment tends to be a matter of course, since, as hunters, they have always cared for nature and the wild animals that live in it. The Blaser Group also lives this closeness to nature, which is why a second sustainability report has been produced voluntarily.

The EU Directive on Sustainability Reporting (CSRD) has been in force since January 2023. It requires companies that meet certain size criteria to provide non-financial information on environmental, social and corporate governance issues. For the Blaser Group, this non-financial report is only mandatory from 2026 on, for the previous year. However, as early as 2021, the Blaser Group decided to voluntarily take on this task and thus fulfil its responsibility for sustainable corporate governance earlier.

A key innovation of the EU directive is the concept of double materiality. It provides the basis for deciding which topics should be reported on. The basic principle is that companies provide relevant information for their stakeholders. This also applies to aspects of sustainability. However, a distinction is made between material and financial impact when determining which topics are relevant. This involves an inside-out perspective and an outside-in perspective.

## **Impact materiality / inside-out perspective:**

Hierbei wird ermittelt, welche tatsächlichen oder potenziellen Auswirkungen die Geschäftstätigkeit auf Nachhaltigkeitsthemen hat. Diese können negativ oder positiv sein.

## **Financial materiality /outside-in perspective:**

Dabei geht es um die Frage, wie sich Nachhaltigkeitsthemen auf die finanzielle Lage und die Zukunftsfähigkeit des Geschäftsmodells auswirken.

This means that topics are only relevant for reporting if they are either materially or financially significant – or both. In view of these new CSRD reporting requirements, the Blaser Group started a materiality analysis in 2024. In a first step, it created a list of relevant sustainability topics that arise from the business model, industry-specific conditions, strategic direction and regular communication with stakeholders. Where possible, not only the company's own activities were taken into account, but also activities along the value chain. In addition, external sources such as the CSRD, the so-called longlist of European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) and the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN were considered and a benchmarking with other market participants was carried out. The following material topics were identified:

Ecological

- Climate change (GHG, Energy, (waste) water) ESRS E1
- Circular economy ESRS E5
- Biodiversity ESRS E4
- Process innovation ESRS E1
- Product innovation ESRS S4

Social

- Own employees ESRS S1 (Training and formation, work-life-balance, secure employment)
- Human rights (qwn employees, value-added chain)

Governance

- Data protection ESRS S4
- Compliance ESRS G1
- Product safety ESRS S4
- Process innovation ESRS S4
- Reputation ESRS G1
- Responsible supplier management ESRS G1
- Lokal communities ESRS S3

These material topics will be successively discussed with various stakeholders in 2024. To do this, contact persons will be identified from the various stakeholder groups, such as employees, customers, suppliers, banks or journalists, and interviews will be conducted with them. In this way, the Blaser Group also aims to underpin the prioritisation of individual topics. By the time the Sustainability Report 2022/23 was prepared, six interviews (external and internal) had already been conducted.

The identified material topics were also validated with the management of the Blaser Group, which in turn coordinated the materiality analysis with the shareholders. The complete materiality analysis will then be published as part of the 2024 sustainability report. In the

course of 2024, the materiality analysis will be further advanced and the individual topics will be systematically prioritised. To do this, the degree of material impact will be determined using the criteria of

- extent,
- scope und
- irreversibility of the impact

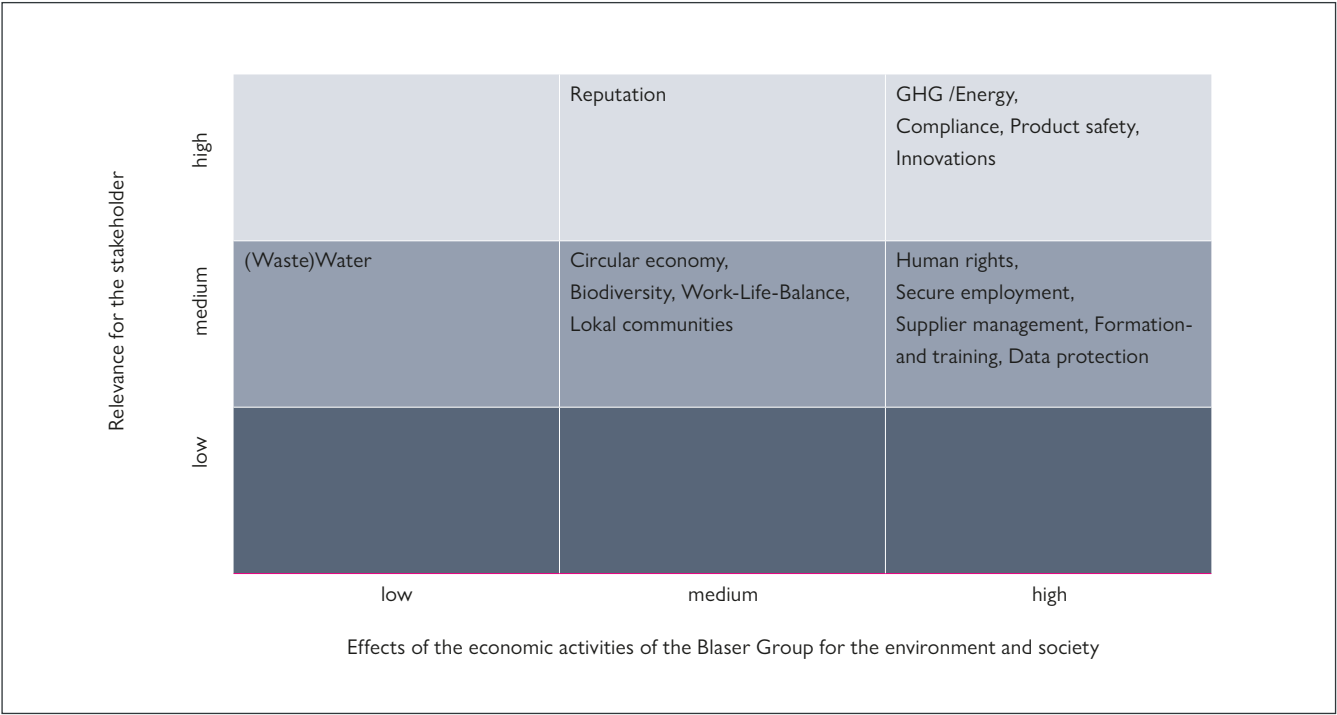
The probability of an impact occurring will also be included in this assessment. In a similar process, the materiality of financial impacts will also be systematically evaluated, wherever possible, according to the extent and probability of occurrence. In the case of financial impacts, the time horizon (short, medium or long term) is also taken into account. This approach is intended to verify the material topics

identified up to the time of preparation and, if necessary, to adjust or supplement them. In addition, it is planned to list individual measures and targets for relevant sustainability topics.

Dialogue with the stakeholder of the Blaser Group

The Blaser Group uses a variety of channels to ensure continuous communication with its various stakeholders. The regularity of the exchange depends on the circumstances of the company and the needs of the stakeholders. To make it easier for all stakeholders to get in touch, the Blaser Group set up a special email address at the beginning of 2024: [verantwortung@blaser-group.com](mailto:verantwortung@blaser-group.com).

Communication with both internal and external industry associations and public bodies is important to the Blaser Group. This results in a professional dialogue in which the Blaser Group not only contributes





its practical know-how, but also ensures that the respective company divisions are familiar with current developments, the regulations or rules that affect them.

### Memberships of the Blaser Group

- BME e.V. Bundesverband Materialwirtschaft, Einkauf und Logistik e.V.
- Büchsenmacher Innung Süddeutschland
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Qualität
- DEVA e.V. – Deutsche Versuchs- und Prüfanstalt für Jagd- und Sportwaffen
- DSAG e.V. – Deutschsprachige SAP-Anwendergruppe e.V.
- Bundesverband zivile Legalwaffen (BZL)
- GermanFashion Modeverband Deutschland e.V.
- Handwerkskammer Ulm
- IHK Industrie- und Handelskammer
- IHK Schwarzwald-Baar-Heuberg
- Industrie- und Handelskammer Schwaben
- iVEST Fachverband Industrie verschiedener Eisen- und Stahlwaren e.V.
- Photoindustrie-Verband e.V.
- PSVaG – Pensionssicherungsverein
- VEA Bundesverband der Energie-Abnehmer e.V.
- Verband Deutscher Büchsenmacher und Waffen-fachhändler e.V.

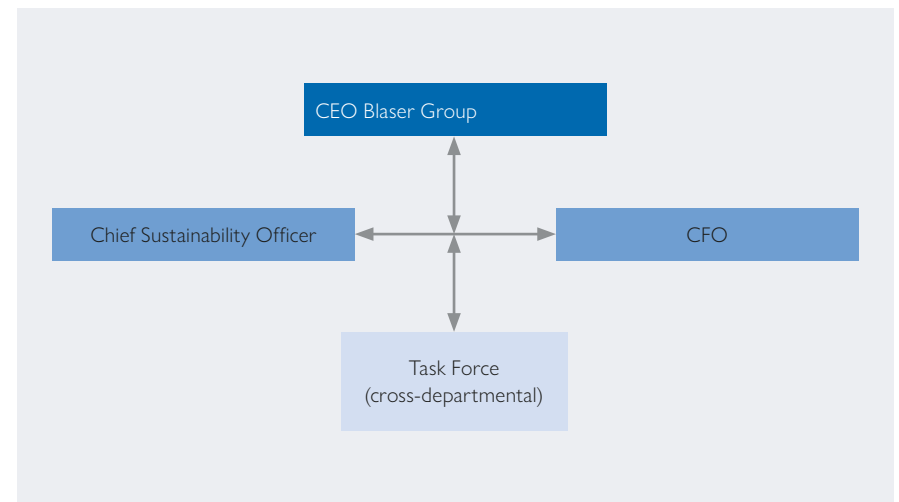


Stakeholder	Concerned Stakeholder (B) / user of the sustainability report (N)	Channels of communication
Employees	B/N	Personal contact, e-mail, notice, events, yearly appraisal, interviews, employees magazine, surveys.
Enduser	B/N	Personal contact, social media, website, newsletter, external events such as fairs or partner events.
Sales partner	B/N	Newsletter, B-t-B-portal, events such as product presentations/ trainings or fairs, yearly order interviews.
Supplier	B/N	Personal contact, newsletter, visits in Isny, website, social media.
Local authorities/communes	B/N	Personal contact, nonfinancial reporting.
State authorities	B/N	Personal contact, electronic exchange, nonfinancial reporting.
Bank	B/N	Personal contact, financial and nonfinancial reporting, press releases.
Media partners	N	Press releases, social media, website, events such as fairs or product presentations, personal contact.
Research facilities	N	Personal contact, nonfinancial reporting, cooperations, Bachelor- or Master theses.
Federation/Industry organizations	N	Personal contact, nonfinancial reporting, fairs, press releases.
General public	N	Website, fairs, E-mail.



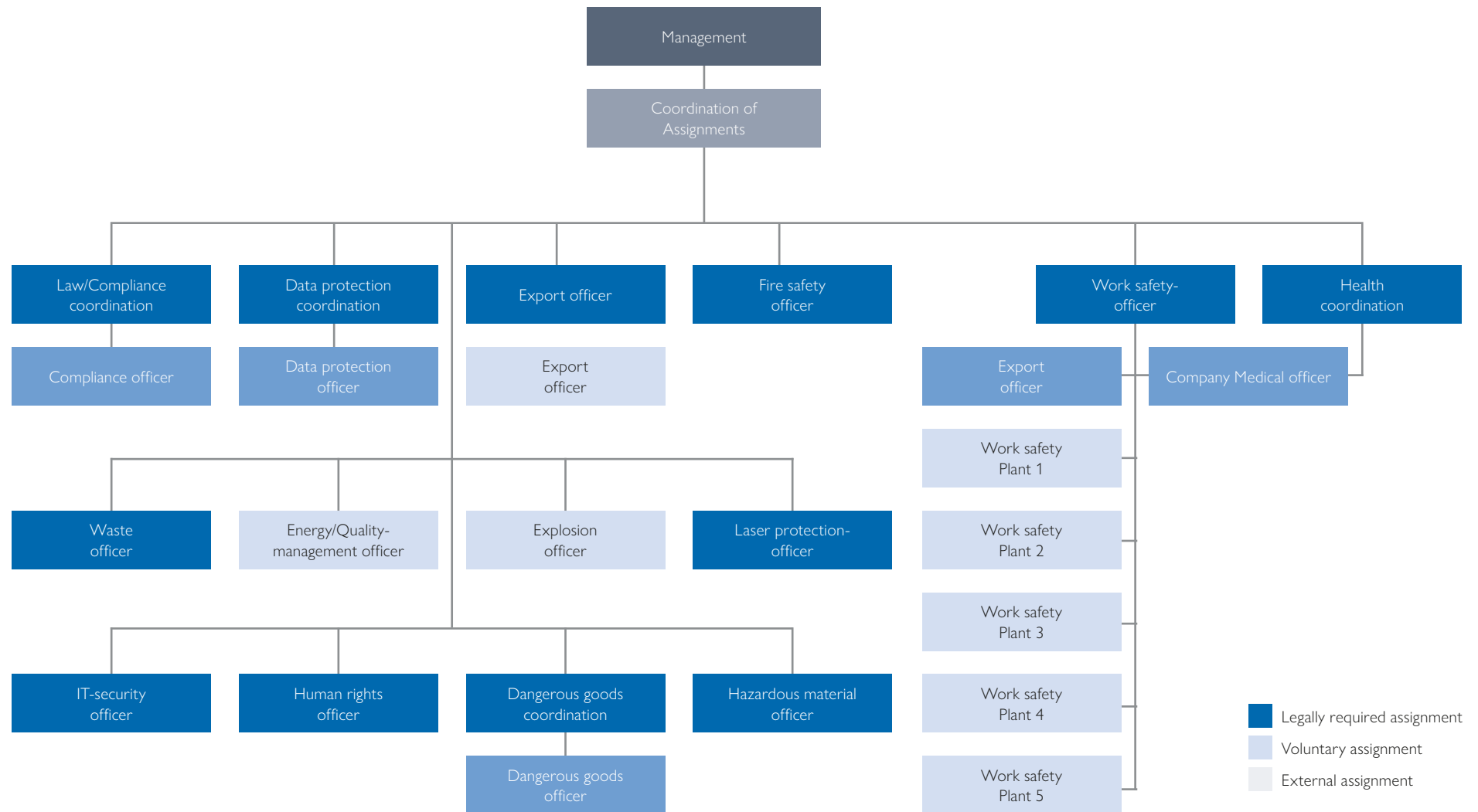
Since 2022, the Blaser Group has also anchored the topic of sustainability more firmly in the company organisation. The Chief Sustainability Officer acts as an interface between the specialist departments and the management. A task force, which is made up of various specialist departments, deals with the specific sustainability aspects in each case. Their work is supported by various officers who are available as points of contact for their respective areas.

Due to the priority of sustainability topics for the Blaser Group, there is regular coordination with the CFO, too – also in order to increasingly merge financial and sustainability reporting.



The task force consists of employees from the Human Resources, Production, Purchasing, R&D, Controlling and Quality departments, among others.





## Research & Development

A passion for hunting and a love of technology have a long tradition at the brands of the Blaser Group. However, the aim has never been to develop innovations for the sake of innovation, but to translate customer needs into new products. This is the only way to achieve innovations that offer hunters or outdoor enthusiasts a real advantage. This approach is also a crucial prerequisite for becoming – and remaining – a technological market leader.

### Center of Excellence

The Isny site has developed into a centre of excellence for hunting rifle technology and equipment in recent years. This expertise is complemented by the



optics-specific know-how in Wetzlar. This high level of innovation is also reflected in the number of registered patents. The Blaser Group has a total of 345 patents. These can be for individual components, such as a completely redeveloped lock, or for a complete hunting rifle. The Blaser Group has the advantage of being able to coordinate different products, such as scopes and thermal imaging optics, during the development phase so that they can be tested and perfected together. This is what happened during the development of the new Blaser B2 line of riflescopes and the LUCHS attachment devices from LIEMKE. This approach results in perfect combinations for customers, rather than individual stand-alone solutions.

The development team works closely with experts from production and sales right from the start of the development process in order to develop customer-relevant solutions. Since 2024, the development guidelines have explicitly taken into account the criterion of sustainability when developing new products. In the past, in addition to the commercial duty of care, the 'Design and Development Guideline for Preferred Materials' systematically ensured the careful use of resources: by defining preferred materials or surfaces, tried and tested pro-

cesses are also favoured. This reduces the consumption of resources during a testing phase and the associated potential for rejects.

### Environmentally friendly production processes

At the same time, the company is constantly reviewing the extent to which materials can be replaced by more environmentally friendly ones. As early as 2022, the company's own plasma nitriding plant was put into operation. Plasma nitriding provides significantly better surface protection against wear and corrosion – a quality feature of Blaser Group premium rifles. This process is also the most environmentally friendly type of nitriding compared to salt bath nitriding and gas nitriding. Plasma nitriding is not only energy efficient, but also helps to conserve resources by increasing the longevity of barrels.

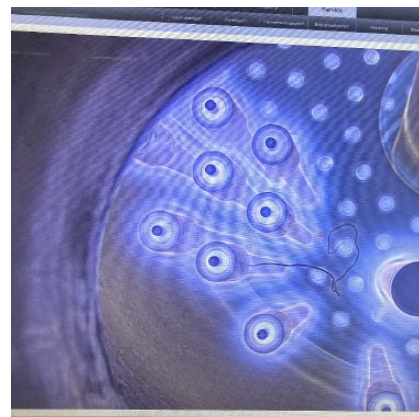
The pilot study conducted in 2021 on the use of recycled plastics, known as regranulates, was well received when presented at the World Hunting Exhibition. However, the industrialisation of the prototype has been desisted from so far. The main reason for this is the physical properties of the re-granulate. Due to the strong mechanical forces that act on many components in the hunting firearm sector, the highest quality requirements are placed on plastics. This also includes a certain length of the glass fibres used in fibre-reinforced plastics. However, the process shortens the length with each opera-

tion in which the plastic is regranulated, thus offering a comparatively lower stability. Nevertheless, the Blaser Group will continue to monitor how the possibilities for regranulate material develop. The Blaser Group remains convinced of the importance of so-called 'green plastics', i.e. sustainably produced plastics. This is another reason why the company has further expanded its expertise in 2022 by setting up its own plastic injection moulding production with a total of five injection moulding machines, in order to be able to further develop its own solutions in this area as well.

### Efficient prototype development

Sustainability is also a priority in the development of prototypes and their subsequent testing. By using additively manufactured components (3D-printed components/prototypes), the feasibility, dimensions and function of the planned new products can be checked in advance. This helps to avoid unnecessarily elaborate prototype developments. Subsequently, concrete optimisation and modification proposals are used to optimise the use of resources. In the past year, the Blaser Group has invested heavily in simulation hardware and software to make the testing phase more sustainable. For example, employees who in the past performed several thousand shots manually during the test phase are now relieved by devices that fire automatically. With the support of the appropriate software, material and time can also be saved in prototype construction.

Sustainability, in line with the UN's global goals for a better future and more sustainable use of available resources, is permanently embedded in the business strategy and will continue to be pursued in the research and development area in 2024. To this end, the Blaser Group has invested in a new DLC plant (DLC, short for Diamond-Like Carbon). This makes it possible to dispense with chromium-6, which must be replaced in the medium term. This material is particularly important for the coating of shot barrels. The new plant will also enable the Blaser Group to further advance substitution research with regard to chromium-6 on its own initiative in the future.



## Finite Element Method (FEM)

The main purpose of the simulations is to provide a fundamental strength analysis of components and assemblies. The safety of the marksman is the top priority.

The finite element method (FEM) is used during the design process. The complex geometry of components or assemblies is broken down into many small elements, known as finite elements, in the software. The physical behaviour of these elements is calculated iteratively using known functions for applied forces/loads. The stresses can then be derived from the displacements.



# Consumer & Communication

As a manufacturer of hunting and sporting weapons and equipment for an authentic experience of nature, the Blaser Group considers flawless functionality to be just as important as proper use. Through distribution via specialist retailers, consumers and end users receive competent and sound advice regarding handling and use. In addition, the Blaser Group generally provides operating instructions in several languages on the websites of its Blaser, Sauer, MAUSER, MINOX, LIEMKE and Rigby brands so that customers can familiarise themselves with their equipment if necessary. This applies in particular when the sale is made directly via the corresponding Blaser Group websites. The operating instructions are regularly updated or supplemented as needed. Hunting and sporting rifles, as well as ammunition, are sold exclusively through specialist retailers. There are also additional 'how-to' videos, which visually demonstrate the handling and functions of individual products and explain them step by step in order to ensure an easy and correct use of the products.

## **Data protection and access to information**

Data protection is of the utmost priority for the Blaser Group and applies to all stakeholders. The provisions of the relevant data protection laws and regulations, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union and other national or regional data protection laws, are implemented and adhered to. Within the Blaser Group, the data protection coordinators ensure this in close cooperation with the external data protection officer. Their work is supported by the management at all times, as necessary.

Blaser also observes the following principles with regard to consumer and customer data:

1. Purpose limitation: the data may only be used for specified, explicit and legitimate purpose.
2. Data minimisation: the data collected and processed is limited to the necessary minimum.
3. Storage minimisation: data that is no longer needed or for which the legal retention periods have expired is deleted. This applies to both physical and digital data.

Since the first sustainability report (2021), there has been a single data protection incident (2022) involving individual Blaser Group employees, in which there was a brief risk of unauthorised disclosure of information to third parties. After detection, appropriate measures were taken immediately with a mandatory password change to reduce the possible risk to zero. At no point in time, in the opinion of the Blaser Group, were the freedom and rights of the potential data subjects significantly affected..

### Reputation

Consumers and end customers associate certain performance features with the products of the Blaser Group brands, which are accompanied by a corresponding reputation: innovative, functional, reliable, to name just a few examples. These expectations, built up and maintained over the long term, are part of the Blaser Group's economic success and the basis for a successful future development.

That is why our employees work together every day to fully meet our customers' expectations. This includes, among other things, modern research and development initiatives as well as sustainable production and partnership-based supplier management. Only then can lasting business success be achieved. That is why the Blaser Group's reputation as an innovation leader in the hunting and outdoor industry is of the utmost importance.

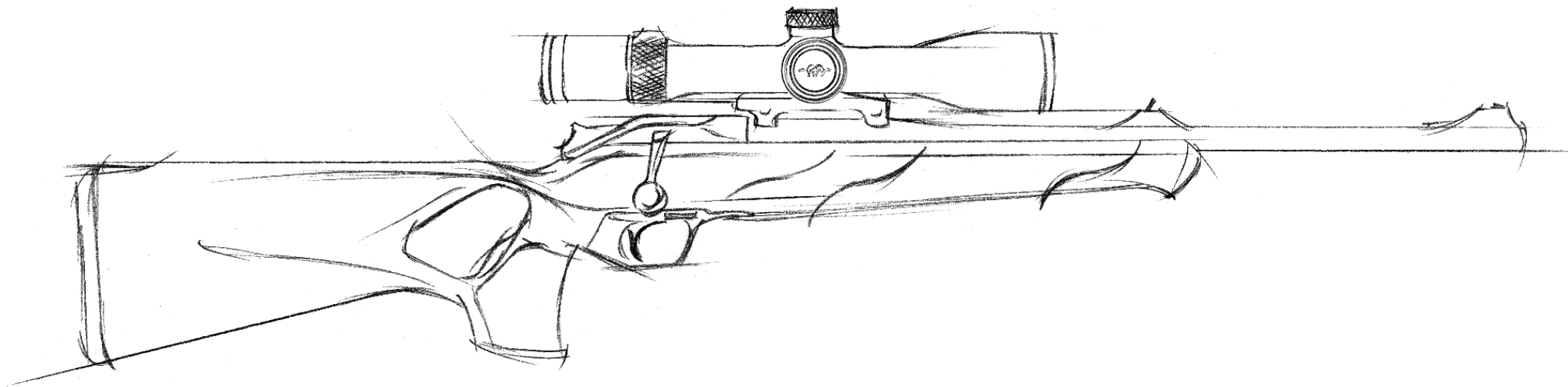
The Blaser Group not only values its impeccable reputation with regard to its products, but also understands this in a broader social context. This is especially important when hunting is viewed in a negative light. That is why it is important to the Blaser Group to educate people about the important work that hunters do for nature and the wild animals that live in it. In the past, the company has done this, for example, with the Blaser Fawn Rescuer project or by supporting relevant film projects.

### Responsible communication

This commitment goes hand in hand with a clearly defined communication strategy. This means that the Blaser Group brands pay attention to appealing images and an appropriate choice of words in their communication, whether online or offline, so that the content is also accepted by non-hunters. This requirement also applies to the Blaser Group's cooperation partners, who are equally committed to observing the rules of the hunt and treating game with respect..







# Product Safety

Product safety is of fundamental importance to the Blaser Group in the development of new products, in manufacturing and in the subsequent proper use of those products. This responsibility is an integral part of the self-image of every manager and employee. The most important regulations in this regard are the Product Liability Act (ProdHaftG); the Product Safety Act (ProdSG); the Electrical and Electronic Equipment Act (ElektroG); Regulation (EC) No. 1907/2006 (REACH) and EU Directive 2011/65/EU (RoHS).

Internally, a defined product development process (PDP) describes the steps in product development and their documentation. In addition to a procedural process, the so-called design and development guidelines must also be adhered to when designing and implementing new product ideas. Among other things, these guidelines govern the selection of materials, the necessary contents of a drawing, risk assessment and the use of documentation requirements, material descriptions and technical requirements for a product in accordance

with precisely defined standards. By applying the design and development guidelines and adhering to the PDP, the research and development department ensures that products meet the legal requirements with respect to product liability. If components of a product are changed, whether in the development phase or at a later point in series production, there is also a precisely defined process with corresponding documentation requirements for this. With the help of the change history as part of the design and development guideline, it is ensured that changes are appropriately evaluated and fully traceable.

Both hunting rifles and their accessories are always produced and placed on the market in compliance with the relevant product safety regulations. This is done in accordance with the Blaser Group guideline: 'Product Safety/Product Liability'. This guideline also contains a description of the topic of electrical appliances and the special regulations applicable in this area, such as registration and reporting re-

quirements. In cases of product liability, the guideline also regulates the measures to be taken, which in extreme cases may lead to the obligation to recall products already on the market. It is important to the Blaser Group to fully clarify possible causes of a damage event – usually with the support of external experts such as the German Testing and Research Institute for Hunting and Sporting Weapons (DEVA). Whether the damage has already occurred or not is not the deciding factor here. Rather, the Blaser Group always understands its responsibility in a preventive way.

## ESSENTIAL FIREARM PARTS (WWT)

The WWT committee is a group of experts for reviewing, optimising, controlling and processing all legal issues related to firearms, essential firearm parts or objects equivalent to firearms.

The committee has overall process responsibility for all topics and processes related to firearms, essential firearms parts or objects equivalent to firearms in the company. The committee is responsible in particular for the following tasks:

- Central point of contact for all questions from the departments in connection with WWT,
- Monitoring and control of the delegation of tasks in job descriptions in connection with WWT,
- BProcessing and checking loss claims of WWT,
- Review, optimisation and control of compliance with the company's security policy,
- Support for the management in all matters or decisions regarding national and international firearms law,
- Review and optimisation of processes, work instructions and procedural instructions relating to firearm legislation. Development of recommendations for action with regard to firearm legislation for the persons responsible for the processes.

As a general rule, only employees with the appropriate authorisations are allowed to handle firearms, essential firearm parts (WWT) and ammunition.





# Blaser Outfits

As a supplier of innovative clothing lines and accessories, the Blaser Group is aware of its responsibility towards people, animals and the environment. The aim is to use materials that provide tangible benefits in the outdoor sector, for example through their breathability combined with protection against moisture. To achieve this, the Blaser Group combines practical hunting experience with industry-specific know-how in the 'Gear & Outfits' business unit. Both are necessary to develop innovative products that are also sustainably produced using the latest technology in the textile industry.

As part of the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act, the voluntary commitment also applies to suppliers in the 'Gear & Outfits' area, which, among other things, includes respect for human rights, particularly with regard to occupational health and safety, child labour, forced labour and fair behaviour. The Blaser Group expressly requests that the associated standards for decent work are also communicated to the employees and carried into the upstream supply chains, and that compliance with them is monitored.

In addition, the Blaser Group reserves the right to monitor compliance with the quality requirements during production by its own personnel in the supplier's production plants and/or by using external service providers. In doing so, the goods must at least comply with the regulations applicable in the Federal Republic of Germany and the standards customary in the industry. The produced goods must comply with the current prohibition and restriction of toxic substances as set out in Annex XVII to Regulation (EC) 1907/2006. These can be downloaded from the following website: <https://echa.europa.eu/substances-restricted-under-reach>. They form an integral part of this agreement. In the case of a composite product, this applies to each individual component. In addition, only textile auxiliaries/dyes that comply with the limits of the Manufacturing Restricted Substances List (MRSL) and the Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals Programme (ZDHC) in the version valid at the time of delivery may be used to manufacture the delivered goods. Further information can be found at [https://www.roadmaptozero.com/mrsl\\_online/](https://www.roadmaptozero.com/mrsl_online/).



As a manufacturer of clothing for hunters, animal welfare is particularly important to Blaser Outfits, which is why it does not use down feathers from geese or ducks that have been force-fed or obtained from live animals. The origin of the down must be confirmed by appropriate certificates and fully comply with the Responsible Down Standard (RDS, see also <http://responsibledown.org/>). Furs can only be supplied with internationally recognised sustainability certificates. Blaser Outfits also requires proof of origin for leather. These measures for the protection of humans, animals and the environment are constantly being developed.



# Fragile Balance

Andreas Binder, Director at Blaser Outfits, talks about the challenge of producing sustainable outdoor textiles or equipment.

## How sustainable are the Blaser outfits?

That depends on what you understand by sustainability. If you consider the lifespan and modular functionality of a jacket like the Venture 3-layer jacket, then we are already acting extremely sustainably.

## Why?

Because we develop our designs in Isny and place great value on our products having a long lifespan and being suitable for a wide range of uses. Ideally, our customers need only one jacket that will last a very long time. For us, a fundamentally careful use of our natural resources



*„It is important to think in cycles if you want to act sustainably in the long term.“*

Andreas Binder

is more important than limiting ourselves to individual recycling quotas. That is why we also work with suppliers who produce our clothing using the best and most resource-efficient technology available.

## What does that mean exactly?

We follow best practice with regard to a more considerate approach to our environment. Take water, for example. Textile manufacturers need a lot of water and chemicals for dyeing, which is why we are keeping a close eye on what new options are available in industry to systematically reduce this consumption. We have already tested the use of digital printing, for example for Merino Base Layer Shirts, as this does not require water. Unfortunately, this technology is still very expensive, but despite this hurdle, we have already used digital printing in the Blaser Outfits collection.

## So you focus on developing sustainable solution together with your suppliers?

This is clear from our responsibility in the context of supply chains alone. But that is not the only determining factor. The selection of suppliers is also extremely important for us with regard to transport routes. We want to reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and already produce parts of the collection in Europe. Unfortunately, this is currently not possible for the entire production process,

or our entire collection because it is equally important to us that a country offers the possibility of vertical production and that all steps up to completion can be carried out there, in one place. Otherwise, intermediate products would have to be sent back and forth again,

with negative consequences for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## How much do you hold your suppliers accountable?

Of course, we oblige our suppliers to comply with legal requirements such as the REACH regulation and the respective conventions of the International Labour Organization. In addition, we visit them on site. Furthermore, we work with companies such as Allied Down. With the down used, the customer can trace where the down comes from by scanning the QR code on the jacket.

## What's coming next?

We are constantly thinking about how we can improve, and of course this also applies to how we treat our environment. However, we take a more global view of the issue of resource conservation, because the goal of turning a plastic bottle into a T-shirt falls short in my opinion. It is more important to think in terms of cycles, and it would be better to turn an old T-shirt into a new one. For us, a sensitive balance between customer needs and the impact on the environment is very important.





# Valuable Wood



Hunters have a special connection to wood. They are outdoors almost every day, seeing the trees and their change through the seasons. They enjoy the cooling canopy of leaves in summer and the scent of freshly cut wood in winter. Or they simply delight in the sight of it as a quiet, patient neighbour while sitting in a hide. For many hunters, a wooden stock is therefore the perfect complement to a hunting rifle. It is always unique, because no two trees are alike.

The wood is always selected with the utmost care. When purchasing, every single piece of scantling is inspected on site at the supplier's premises. Care is then taken to use the wood sustainably, i.e. the scantlings are cut in such a way that as little waste as possible is produced. Before drying, each scantling is given a coded sticker which stores all specifications. This way, the history of a piece of wood can be traced from its place of origin to delivery to the customer.

## **Proof of origin required**

The Blaser Group also requires each supplier to provide a declara-

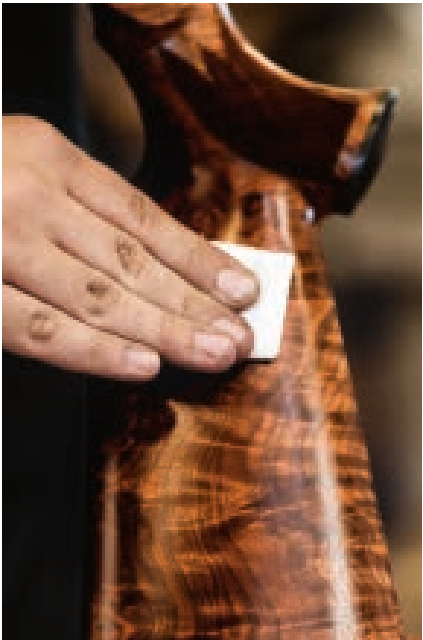
tion specifying the origin and type of wood. In the event of deviations, suppliers must provide separate information immediately. The importer is responsible for providing proof of origin and for presenting a so-called phytosanitary certificate to customs for each delivery. This documents which wood is being delivered and that the requirements for export and placing on the market are met. The import of wood from forests inhabited by species classified as threatened or endangered under the Washington Convention (CITES) is prohibited.

Depending on the type of wood used, up to 40 stocks can be obtained from one cubic metre of wood. However, not all of them are of the same quality and are therefore used for different models or purposes. Not fully utilising the valuable material wood is not an option. Incidentally, the Blaser Group also differentiates between up to eleven different wood classes for the stocks. In contrast, only five different quality levels are common on the market. The higher the

quality, the lower the yield. Only around 0.2 per cent of a cubic metre of root wood corresponds to quality class 11.

**Careful selection**

To perfectly complete the hunting rifle, the appropriate fore-end has to be found for the butt stock. No easy undertaking. On average, 50 fore-ends have to be looked at, held and compared with the butt stock before the suitable counterpart is found. In the end, the combination of the stock with precision-made barrels and matt black action frames, engraved or coated with rare materials, creates an individual work of art that often accompanies the hunter throughout his or her entire life..



Proof of Origin

The Blaser Group requires every supplier to provide a declaration specifying the origin and type of wood. During the purchasing process, each individual block of wood is inspected on site at the supplier's premises and again at the Blaser Group's location in Bulgaria. The importer is responsible for proving the origin and must submit a phytosanitary certificate to customs for each delivery. This documents the type of wood and confirms that the requirements for export and marketing have been met. Wood from forests inhabited by species classified as endangered or threatened according to CITES is prohibited.





# For Generations

The Blaser Group generates most of its sales in the firearms business unit. A hunting rifle is the result of the most innovative materials and sophisticated technology, which are created through the interplay of the art of gunmaking and state-of-the-art production processes. In this way, the Blaser Group creates companions for generations, which prove to be extremely resource-efficient simply due to their long service life. This pronounced longevity of the products is in line with the goal of the circular economy to conserve resources and keep materials in use for as long as possible.

**Materials.** The choice of materials used for hunting firearms is carefully considered on the basis of the forces at work and the fact that they are used in all weather conditions. For example, plastic stocks are therefore reinforced with glass fibres, making them virtually wear-free when used normally. Wooden stocks tend to show signs of wear more quickly, but are hardly inferior to modern materials in terms of durability. Rifle barrels are also designed to withstand the highest stresses and can withstand pressure loads of up to 4,400 bar or temperatures of more than 2,000 degrees Celsius, as they can occur briefly. The steel used for this was manufactured according to Blaser Group specifications.

**Technology.** During production, strict attention is paid to ensuring that the hunting rifles are prepared optimally for their future practical use by proven manufacturing processes and selected surface technologies. Specifically, the Blaser Group would like to extend the service

life of a hunting rifle even further, for example, by using appropriate corrosion protection. Of course, the profile in a rifle barrel (the so-called rifling), which stabilises the bullet and thus ensures the accuracy of the hunting rifle, is subject to natural wear and tear as a result of firing. Furthermore, there are significant differences in the way that professional hunters, competition shooters and hunters or marksmen who use rifles or shotguns in their free time use their firearms. However, experience shows that hunting rifles are good for much more than just one generation of hunters.

**Utilisation behaviour.** It is statistically very difficult to document or record usage behaviour. For this reason, the Blaser Group has determined a usage rate of around 100 shots per rifle per year for a hunting rifle. This is to be regarded as a compromise between professional and non-professional use. Internal tests have shown that rifle barrels with around 4,000 shots (depending on the calibre) still offer sufficient accuracy to be able to fire a safe shot at a hunting distance at game. In this example, the calculated service life is around 40 years. This example is underlined by the industry-standard use and transfer of used hunting rifles over several decades. In addition, the Blaser Group carried out several additional extensive endurance tests between 2021 and 2023. The tests were terminated at a total of 10,000 shots, as the precision was still sufficient and the barrels showed no safety-related abnormalities. Based on these results, a calculated lifespan of around 100 years is achieved when used by hunters or shooters, or at least two long hunting lives.

The longevity of hunting and sporting rifles cannot be readily transferred to the Optics and Gear & Outfits business units, though. Although the equipment in these business units is also of high quality and designed for long-term use, this is a result of the specifications and the nature of the products. This is another reason why the Blaser Group pursues a strategy of conserving resources overall. This is done, for example, by using more energy-efficient machines or production processes that conserve resources. However, the reuse of materials in the production of hunting and sporting rifles is very limited due to the quality required of the raw materials, which is a prerequisite for the necessary product safety. Further ideas for extending the useful life of clothing, such as offering a repair service, are currently being evaluated.



# Supply Chain Management

In 2023, the Blaser Group voluntarily began addressing the requirements of the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act and aligning them with its existing supplier management system. As a global company, the Blaser Group works with an extensive network of suppliers, which means that its supply chains are correspondingly complex.

First, a project team consisting of the team leaders from purchasing, project managers and supplier developers was formed. The aim was to identify the requirements of the law for the individual departments and implement them. A workshop with an external expert supported the team in the initial phase. The future action required was determined, both within the Blaser Group and in relation to suppliers, and a sequence of measures was defined. The analysis of the current situation and process design was also supported by a bachelor's thesis written in the purchasing department.

On 1 June 2023, the Blaser Group (applicable to all affiliated companies in accordance with Section 15 of the German Stock Corporation Act (AktG)) published its voluntary policy statement on the respect and promotion of human rights and environmental protection, in line with the requirements of the Supply Chain Due

In order to achieve legally compliant supply chains in accordance with the LkSG, the purchasing team defined the following steps:

Publication of a policy statement on compliance with and recognition of human rights



Risk analysis of supply chains (regularly for our own business area and direct suppliers, on an ad hoc basis for indirect suppliers)



Evaluation and, if necessary, initiation of measures, if necessary



Monitoring



Introduction of complaint management



Preparation of accountability report

Diligence Act. It is freely available on the Blaser Group website\*. In it, the Blaser Group commits itself to ecologically and socially responsible corporate governance. Through its connection to nature, the forest and the environment, sustainability means creating lasting value for the Blaser Group. Respect for human rights is a fundamental part of responsible corporate governance. Based on its values, the Blaser Group is fundamentally committed to ensuring that human rights are respected and upheld in all Group companies, by partners and suppliers (whether directly or indirectly). It therefore voluntarily commits to complying with the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act and aligns its business activities accordingly.

## Risk analysis in our own business

In 2023, the Blaser Group voluntarily began addressing the requirements of the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act and aligning them with its existing supplier management system. As a global company, the Blaser Group works with an extensive network of suppliers, which means that its supply chains are correspondingly complex.

The Blaser Group is fully committed to fair and humane working conditions for all its employees at all its locations. Discrimination,

\*"Ist-Analyse und Konzeption des Prozesses zur Einhaltung des Lieferkettensorgfaltspflichtengesetzes in der Blaser Group GmbH", 2023, M. Fäßler, Hochschule Kempten

\*\*<https://www.blaser-group.com/wp-content/uploads/Grundsatzserklaerung-der-Blaser-Group-GmbH.pdf>

harassment and bullying are not tolerated under any circumstances and will be punished accordingly. The Blaser Group fosters and promotes an open corporate culture in its daily dealings with one another. Both nationally and internationally, the Blaser Group always acts respectfully towards its employees and business partners. The Blaser Group respects different cultural views and supports their development as best as possible.

With its Code of Conduct, the Blaser Group developed guidelines for itself and its employees at an early stage, which contain the values that apply in our daily interactions and in the course of our business activities. First and foremost, this includes compliance with relevant national and international laws and standards. It is also clearly stated that unlawful and unethical behaviour will not be tolerated. This applies to all actions of the management and executives as well as all

employees of Blaser Group GmbH and its subsidiaries. It is therefore assumed that violations of the LkSG can be ruled out.

In addition, further legal requirements, for example in the context of occupational health and safety, are of course taken into account. An internal occupational safety specialist has been appointed, who is supported in their work by safety officers. This raises awareness among employees so that any necessary preventive measures can be taken at an early stage (further information can be found in the Employee chapter).

**Risk analysis of the supply chains**

The Fragile States Index was used as the initial basis for a risk-oriented assessment of suppliers. This index classifies all 179 UN countries every year and evaluates them according to twelve different factors



Country code	Number of suppliers
FR	1
Kein Land – da CPD – Lieferant	1
AT	16
BE	2
BG	1
CA	4
CH	8
CN	27
CZ	1
DE	700
ES	6
FI	2
GB	6
HK	11
IN	1
IT	13
JP	3
KR	3
LU	1
NL	2
NO	4
PK	1
PL	1
SE	5
SG	1
SI	1
SK	1
TR	1
TW	4
US	8
VN	1
ZA	2
Total	839



that can be sorted into the indication groups economy, politics, social affairs, cohesion and cross-border issues. Of course, the assessment of a country cannot make any concrete statements about a specific supplier, but it does make it possible to form country-specific risk clusters that can serve as a starting point for further risk analysis. Accordingly, all direct suppliers were grouped by country – also to obtain an initial assessment of the potential risks.

Further criteria for a risk-based supplier evaluation were the turnover of the past twelve months and the planned turnover for the coming twelve months, the material field concerned, subcontractors and whether a signed self-disclosure form had been provided by the supplier. On this basis, an assessment was carried out by the strategic purchasers, which was then used to classify the suppliers into different risk levels. The categories are non-critical, critical, very critical and extremely critical.

These risk levels form the basis for deriving measures and are also addressed as part of supplier development activities. Suppliers in the three critical categories are regularly audited and inspected on site. Ad hoc audits are also carried out in individual cases if reports are received via the whistleblower system about individual suppliers and their subcontractors.

### Monitoring

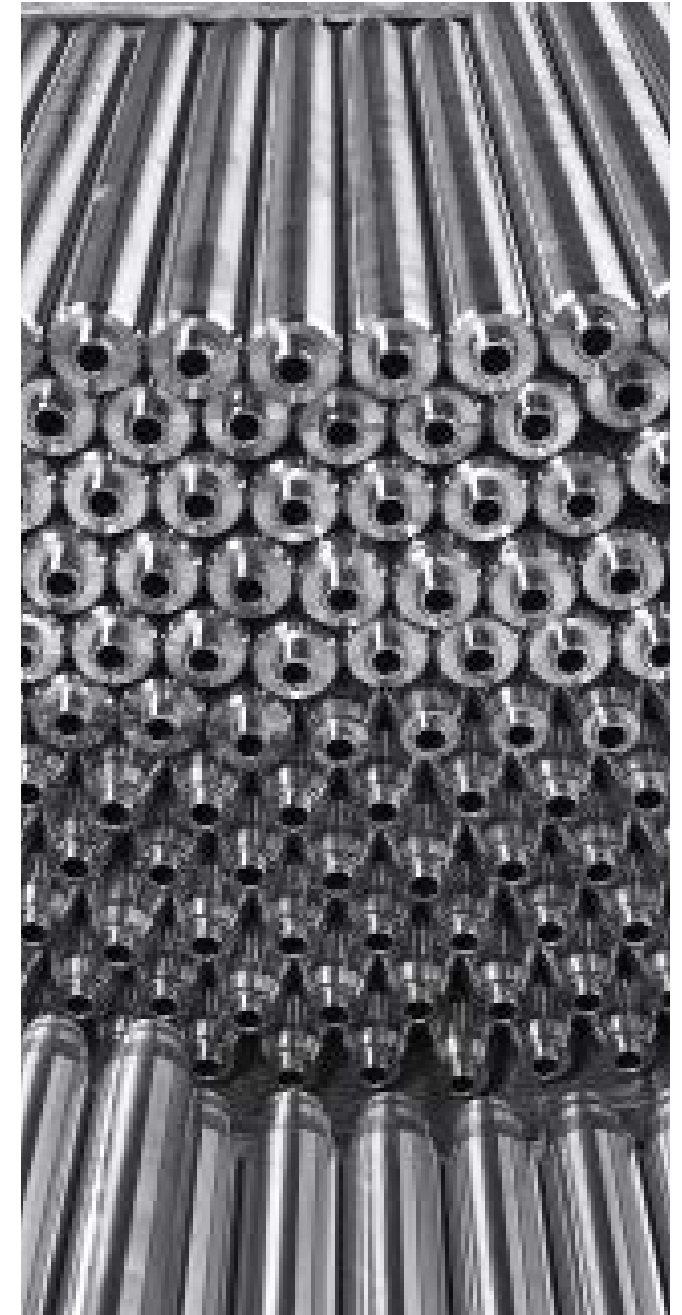
In order to enable consistent monitoring, the provisions of the LkSG were incorporated into the supplier audits in 2023, thereby supplementing the existing set of questions on the topics of system, process, complaint and product audits. New suppliers are also assessed and selected with regard to sustainability issues, human rights and labour standards. The Blaser Group prefers suppliers who support these requirements and not only live by them in their own companies, but also actively demand them from all their suppliers.

In order to further raise awareness of the issues covered by the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act among suppliers, the Blaser Group has developed a voluntary commitment\*. At the same time, this is intended to achieve a uniform understanding of social and sustainable behaviour and to comply with the basic principles of the UN Global Impact initiative. By signing the voluntary commitment, suppliers confirm their compliance with human rights, particularly with regard to occupational health and safety, child labour, forced labour, freedom of association, equal opportunities and fair behaviour, fair working conditions and protection against forced eviction and land grabbing. The Blaser Group expressly calls on its suppliers to communicate the associated standards for decent work to their employees, to implement them in their upstream supply chains and to monitor compliance. Suppliers also undertake to use resources prudently, to comply with all national and international environmental standards and laws applicable to their place of business and to strive for a circular economy.

The voluntary commitment was sent to all suppliers in the second half of 2023. Suppliers in the second half of 2023. By the end of the year, 51 per cent of suppliers had signed the voluntary commitment. Just under nine per cent refused to sign. This represents 14 per cent of the purchasing volume. Further discussions are ongoing with regard to the outstanding voluntary commitments, with the aim of obtaining them in 2024. If no signature is obtained, suppliers will be classified according to strategic importance and then replaced in the short to medium term. Strategically important suppliers will then be reviewed as part of the annual audit planning process through dedicated LKSG audits. These audits are planned regularly (at least quarterly) as part of strategic supplier development in purchasing.

### Complaints management

Last year, the Blaser Group expanded its existing whistleblower system to make it easier for business partners, their employees and its own employees to report violations or misconduct relating to



\*<https://fragilestatesindex.org/>



compliance with laws, human rights and environmental and social standards. These reports are treated as strictly confidential and can be submitted anonymously via <https://blaser.integrityline.com/setup>. The Blaser Group will not take any measures to identify the identity of a whistleblower and guarantees the greatest possible protection for those involved. Incoming reports are investigated immediately and systematically. If a violation is found during the investigation, it will be dealt with in an appropriate manner. In general, the principle of presumption of innocence applies until a violation has been proven. Termination of the business relationship is only a last resort if no mutual agreement can be found. Priority will be given to finding a joint solution to remedy any grievances. The Blaser Group whistleblowing system is based on the requirements of the EU Directive on whistleblower protection. Since the beginning of 2024, Blaser Group employees have also been able to contact the Human Rights Officer.

A violation of the provisions of the supplier's voluntary commitment constitutes a breach of contract with the Blaser Group and a significant impairment of the business relationship between the Blaser Group and the supplier. The supplier must inform the Blaser Group within a reasonable period of time of the internal measures it has taken to prevent future violations. If the supplier fails to comply with these obligations within a reasonable period of time, if the business partner does not initiate appropriate improvement measures within a reasonable period of time, or if the violation is so serious that continuation of the business relationship is unreasonable for the Blaser Group, the Blaser Group reserves the right, without prejudice to any further rights, to terminate the contractual relationship without notice or to withdraw from the contract in question.

Since the reporting system was put into operation, there have been no violations of human rights or environmental risks in accordance



with Section 2 LkSG, either in our own business area or among our direct suppliers.

The Blaser Group is closely monitoring the development of the LkSG and, in particular, European efforts to introduce an 'EU Supply Chain Act' – the so-called CSDD Directive – as further requirements for supply chain management are expected to result from this.

### Documentation

The Blaser Group regularly reports on the management of its supply chains in its sustainability report, as required by the LkSG. The information can also be accessed on the Blaser Group website. The website also contains the checklist for suppliers with the requirements in accordance with the LkSG..



The Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG) aims to better protect human rights and the environment in the global economy. Passed in 2021, it requires companies with at least 1,000 employees to systematically analyse their entire supply chain for human rights and environmental risks and report on their findings from 1 January 2024 onwards. This applies to their own business activities and direct suppliers. Complaint mechanisms must be put in place and, where necessary, preventive and remedial measures must be taken..

# The Sustainability of Hunting: A European Perspective

By Dr. David Scallan

Hunting plays a crucial role for maintaining the ecological balance in the countryside. More specifically, hunters actively manage wildlife by protecting and maintaining native populations, controlling over-abundant and invasive species, limiting crop and property damage, and addressing diseased outbreaks.

In a world grappling with climate change, biodiversity loss, and ideological agendas, the role of sustainable hunting often goes unnoticed. This is all the more regrettable as hunters themselves work very hard to maintain and restore biodiversity. Whether they realise it or not, hunters support a wide range of national and European nature policy goals. In some countries, there have been surveys on how many hours of volunteering work and how much money - namely 16 billion euros annually - hunters are pouring into their outdoor passion.

The conservation efforts of hunters are showcased in FACE's "Biodi-

versity Manifesto", which includes an ever-growing collection of over 550 hunting-related conservation projects that preserve and enhance biodiversity across Europe. Although there's a wide range of actions undertaken, most projects involve improving habitats on farmlands and wetlands to help small game populations. The focus on these habitats is not surprising given the declines in small wild game populations around Europe.

Although there are 7 million hunters in Europe, part of the problem with many of the issues affecting hunting is that wider society has little knowledge about what we do. This is evident from recent national polling in several countries around Europe undertaken by FACE. The more positive news, however, is that the vast majority of people accept hunting in Europe.

Unfortunately, what the public more often sees is information campaigns from anti-hunting groups successful in gaining attention, on- or



Dr. David Scallan, Secretary General of the European Federation for Hunting and Conservation (FACE)

off-line. This has concrete and severe consequences for hunting, some of which is reflected in policy-making. For example, there's been a tendency to rely on "protection" as a conservation tool in Europe over recent decades, namely through protected areas and strict species protection regimes. At the same time, biodiversity has not been improving. This has often led to hunters being left out. However, we think that biodiversity conservation should be much better incorporated into land use policy in a manner that properly incentivises farmers, landowners, and hunters to restore nature and its balance.

## Benefits of combatting climate change

Looking back at the summer of 2023 with its extreme weather, it is increasingly clear that our climate is changing. So, it is ever more important that the public understands that sustainable hunting can act as a safeguard against climate change to benefit the future of the planet. Hunters contribute to climate change mitigation by preserving forests through game management via the active management of Europe's increasing ungulate populations.

Healthy forests are very important as they act as carbon sinks, absorbing CO2 emissions and helping to combat climate change. Excessive wildlife populations can negatively impact carbon sequestration and hinder the reforestation efforts. Any pressure above an ecosystem's carrying capacity can harm a forest's health, and thus is limiting carbon sequestration.

**500+**

Projects with a reference  
to hunting

**33%**

of all projects focus on the  
restoration of  
biotopes

**25%**

of all projects are taking  
place in „Natura 2000“  
areas

**8**

categories show the diversity  
of the annually submitted  
projects



Wetlands are also key to coping with climate change, and hunters are active in wetland creation and management around Europe. In Vendée, France, the Departmental Hunters' Federation is working with a range of stakeholders in several areas to create wetlands for biodiversity and to improve water quality. Italian hunters at the Po Delta have been actively conserving wetland habitats for migratory waterbirds for over 20 years. In Finland, the SOTKA-project aims to restore 40 wetland sites covering 400 hectares of prime habitat to help declining waterbird populations.

Going forward, every hunter can be an ambassador to promote the sustainability of hunting. This can be achieved by talking openly about hunting in your workplace, with your friends, and by sharing the fruits of the experience – healthy game meat!



Finnish hunters support the restoration of the Eider duck habitat.



Female Eider duck



FACE is the voice of Europe's 7 million hunters, representing the interests of national hunting associations in 37 countries in front of the European institutions. Their core mission is to defend and promote sustainable hunting at both the national and European levels. Its vision is for a Europe rich in biodiversity and sustainable hunting opportunities. FACE focuses on a broad range of policy areas, including European nature and land use policy, firearms and ammunition regulations, bird hunting and conservation, large carnivore management, as well as traditional hunting methods.

[BiodiversityManifesto.com](https://BiodiversityManifesto.com)



# 3

ENVIRONMENT

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# Climate Protection

In July 2023, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated in its Sixth Assessment Report that “human activities have clearly caused global warming, mainly through the emission of greenhouse gases. As a result, the global surface temperature in the period 2011–2020 was 1.1 °C higher than the 1850–1900 level, and states that that ‘continued greenhouse gas emissions will lead to increasing global warming, with 1.5 °C likely to be reached in the near future according to the best estimates in the scenarios and model pathways considered. Any increase in global warming will exacerbate multiple and simultaneous hazards.’”\*

The Blaser Group is aware of this development. As a responsible company, it analysed consumption and potential savings as part of the energy audit carried out in 2020 (for further information see also the Blaser Group Sustainability Report 2021). It wants to contribute to the goal agreed at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in 2015 – to limit global warming to 1.5 °C compared to the pre-industrial era.

Against this backdrop, the Blaser Group calculated its carbon footprint for the first time in 2020. Background: CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are to be continuously reduced and avoided so that the Blaser Group will be climate neutral by 2050 at the latest. The year 2023 was chosen as the base year for calculating the savings achieved. The Blaser Group has deliberately opted for a long-term approach in order to align factors identified in the materiality analysis with its strategy.

The initial focus is on Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, as these can be directly and immediately influenced. In the past, these unavoidable CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were offset through the voluntary purchase of climate certificates. Since 2023, the Blaser Group has deliberately refrained from doing so in order to instead effectively support projects that also have a positive effect on key sustainability issues of the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), but are carried out by the Blaser Group itself or allow it to directly monitor the effectiveness of the measures due to their geographical proximity or the selected partners. This approach is made possible by the Blaser Group’s proximity to nature and the wildlife that lives there. The Blaser Group sees this privilege as a special responsibility. The importance of reducing and avoiding greenhouse gas emissions in the long term remains high for the Blaser Group.

The Blaser Group’s business activities generate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that can have actual and potential negative effects on the environment. In order to better understand these actual or potential impacts, the Blaser Group has again prepared a CO<sub>2</sub> balance sheet for 2022 and 2023. The aim is to identify possible areas for action and climate protection measures and make them measurable. These were prepared in accordance with the guidelines of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol Corporate Standard (GHG Protocol). In 2022, the Blaser Group worked with an external service provider for this purpose. The greenhouse gas balance sheet for 2023 was prepared by the Blaser Group itself and audited by the auditing firm Rödl.

\*[https://www.de-ipcc.de/media/content/Hauptaussagen\\_AR6-SYR.pdf](https://www.de-ipcc.de/media/content/Hauptaussagen_AR6-SYR.pdf)

## CO<sub>2</sub> Balance 2022/2023

	Emissions per category	2022 CO <sub>2</sub> /t	2023 CO <sub>2</sub> /t
<b>Scope 1</b>	Heat consumption	114,83	223,69
	Fuel consumption	319,68	448,01
	Gas leaks (refrigerant)	7,84	0
	Direct emissions	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>442,36</b>	<b>671,71</b>
<b>Scope 2</b>	Electricity consumption	<b>1.114,49</b>	<b>2.419,57</b>
<b>Scope 1 + 2</b>		<b>1.556,85</b>	<b>3.091,28</b>
Partial result: Scope 1 und 2 (Tonnen CO <sub>2</sub> )			3.091,28
Per Ts. Euro sales 157.389 (Tonnen CO <sub>2</sub> )		0,01	0,02
Per Euro production volume (Tonnen CO <sub>2</sub> )		0,003	0,05

Compared to other companies of similar size in the industry, the emissions per employee in 2022 were in the low to medium range, according to the auditors' report on the CO<sub>2</sub> balance.

Since 2022, sustainability has also been taken into account in operational decisions, and the expected increase in energy efficiency is included as a decision-making criterion in all investment proposals. Similarly, aspects of sustainability were already included in target agreements in 2022. As the CO<sub>2</sub> strategy has been underpinned by quantitative targets since 2024, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have not yet been taken into account in the performance assessment of management or supervisory bodies..

The interviews conducted with various stakeholders as part of the materiality analysis confirm the importance of climate change for the Blaser Group. The focus is on criteria such as

- efficient energy consumption,
- reduced energy consumption through a zero-defect quota,
- changes in the cost structure due to changes in energy prices,
- maintaining competitiveness,
- stakeholder acceptance
- consideration of energy costs throughout the entire supply chain.

When developing the energy strategy, the initial focus is on overall reduction and more efficient energy use. Depending on the location, in-house production in the form of photovoltaic systems will also play a role in the future.

## Reduction

Modern lighting and more energy-efficient machines will continue to be used as levers for decarbonisation. The inventory carried out in recent years led to a series of immediate measures. The replacement of defective lighting systems with appropriate LED luminaires, which began in 2021, will be continued consistently. The planned complete

replacement in 2022 has been replaced by a continuous replacement programme. This measure in Plant 1 alone has already reduced energy consumption by 58%. That is 7.70 (8.61\*) tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> less. The savings go hand in hand with improved light output, which improves working conditions and ultimately product quality, as it enables better product quality assessment. In addition, a daylight sensor has been installed in the hall of Plant 1, which dims the lighting when necessary. The savings achieved as a result cannot be measured at this stage.

## Efficiency

As a leader in innovation, the Blaser Group regularly invests in new technologies and machinery. This involves purchasing state-of-the-art machines, which generally offer higher energy efficiency than their predecessors. In Isny, for example, a granulate dryer was replaced by a newer model in March 2023. While the previous model operated at full capacity, the new system only requires up to a maximum of seven hours for the same workload. It also has three separate drying areas, which can be controlled individually. This targeted drying process saves additional energy. It is particularly for the overall picture is that the new granulate dryer is a used machine, meaning that no new resources were consumed for its production. The energy savings for this production step alone amount to 2.03 (2.27\*) tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> or 79 per cent of the energy previously required.

All sites are reviewed for potential savings. For example, an old milling machine was replaced with a new one at the Gabrovo site. The more efficient operation saves 9.66 (10.21\*) tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> or just under 20 per cent of the electricity previously required. In total, new machines and LED lighting saved 55.58 (61.58\*) tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2023.

## Team success

It is important to the Blaser Group that there is an awareness of the need to use natural resources in an environmentally friendly manner

throughout the entire organisation. Employees are encouraged to take responsibility for sustainable business practices and to implement their suggestions whenever possible, such as switching to drinking water dispensers. In 2023, the paid mineral water vending machine was replaced by a free water dispenser. This measure reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 42 per cent, or 1.79 (2.00\*) tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. Background: Compared to a drinks vending machine, table water dispensers have to cool less volume. In addition, the water flows directly from the mains and is therefore already pre-cooled. Until then, water bottles had been transported to the site by a beverage service at great expense, only to be cooled down again in the vending machine. Another suggestion was to switch from automatically provided plastic cups to personal cups at the coffee machine. This measure will save around 45,000 plastic cups per year at the Isny site alone.

## Outlook

Over the next ten years, the Blaser Group aims to reduce its annual Scope 1 + 2 CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by a total of 20 percent. In addition to reducing its own consumption, the company also plans to increase and utilise its own energy production. From 2024, the energy manager responsible will have a six-figure investment budget at his disposal for an initial period of three years. Progress will be reported in the next sustainability report.

\*The values of the local electricity provider and the Germany mix (in brackets) are used for the calculations.

## Conservation on Site

Responsible wildlife management at the Sney Rivier Lodge in Namibia has many facets. These include the laborious restoration of the original habitat and feeding the wild animals during periods of drought. However, by far the greatest efforts have been made over many years to protect the white rhinos that have been living there since 2008. 'We want to contribute to the conservation of this rhino species,' explains professional hunter and lodge manager Conway Volek. This decision not only involves a huge financial outlay, but also entails dangerous missions for the gamekeepers. Although they are extremely cautious during their night patrols, some rangers have already paid with their lives in the fight against poachers and for the protection of rhinos. 'This is another reason why the best method of protecting rhinos is undoubtedly dehorning,' says Conway Volek. In this procedure, the rhinos are anaesthetised by a vet, the horn is cut off and then smoothed. "This is not painful for the rhino and is similar to cutting human nails," explains the professional hunter, 'afterwards, the horn slowly grows back.' This very costly undertaking, which involves locating the rhinos by helicopter, has paid off in the past, and white rhinos have already been transferred to other nature reserves. However, poaching activities have increased again since 2023, and Sney Rivier Lodge has already lost some of its seemingly pristine giants. 'When we find rhinos that have been killed and their horns cut off, it's always heartbreaking,' says Conway Volek. Despite these setbacks, Blaser Safaris intends to continue its rhino conservation programme in the future.





# Committed Nature Activists

The European Sustainability Reporting Standard on biodiversity puts it very clearly. Companies must provide information that enables users of the sustainability report to understand 'how the company impacts biodiversity and ecosystems, in terms of significant positive and negative, actual and potential impacts.' The Blaser Group has a very clear answer to this, as its business activities in themselves make an important positive contribution to the preservation of biological diversity. Thanks to reliable hunting weapons and top-quality optics, including thermal imaging optics, hunters as conservationists can actively support the necessary ambitious targets set out in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. There are probably very few companies whose products create the conditions for active nature conservation. The Blaser Group is aware that not everyone shares this view and is open to constructive dialogue.

FACE\* already recognised in 2015 that hunters play an important role in the European biodiversity strategy. The previous 'Biodiversity Strategy to 2020' formulated a so-called mitigation hierarchy. It comprises four stages (avoidance, minimisation, rehabilitation, restoration) for the protection of nature. Hunters add value to each of these stages.

**Prevention/ minimisation of environmental damage:** Hunters protect forests, for example, by sustainably managing wild animal populations.



**Rehabilitation/ restoration:** Through wildlife conservation projects, hunters ensure the establishment/ maintenance of necessary wild animal populations and preserve or promote biodiversity. They also maintain habitats so that wildlife can find a suitable place to live in the long run.

These findings are backed up by the FACE Biodiversity Manifesto ([www.biodiversitymanifesto.com](http://www.biodiversitymanifesto.com)), which lists more than 550 projects and is constantly being expanded. The database impressively documents the diverse commitment of hunters to flora and fauna in Europe. This ranges from landscape conservation, providing wild animals (both huntable and non-huntable species) with water and food during the dry summer months in southern Europe, monitoring, to installing wildlife reflectors in Estonia to prevent traffic accidents involving wild animals – to name just a few examples. Remarkably, 25 percent of the projects take place in NATURA 2000 areas. When hunters cooperate with other interest groups, these usually benefit from the hunters' local know-how. After all, hunters are often out in nature every day and know their territory. As advocates for wildlife, hunters also campaign for individual species. A current example is the red deer in Germany. Background: Increasing urban sprawl not only hinders genetic exchange between herds, but also seriously jeopardises the size of herds required for a healthy population. For this rea-

son, the German Hunting Association (DJV) has drawn up a position paper\*\* for 2024, which calls for, among other things, the promotion of networking between different red deer habitats and the development of a new management strategy to secure the red deer population in the long term. Scientific studies prove that this is urgently needed. Genetic malformations such as shortened lower jaws, which can be caused by genetic impoverishment, have already been detected in three federal states.

With its current 'Biodiversity Strategy for 2030', the EU Commission is once again building on the commitment of hunters. In addition to changes in land and sea use, excessive resource use, climate change and environmental pollution, invasive alien species are listed as the main causes of biodiversity loss. European hunters are already actively involved in controlling invasive species such as raccoons and grey squirrels. They reduce their populations and thus protect native species.

The European Environment Agency (EEA) has determined that pollution exerts the greatest pressure on flora and fauna, followed by agriculture\*\*\*. Ongoing urbanisation and leisure activities account for 13 per cent of the pressure on nature. Hunters often take countermeasures in this area and regularly appeal to forest users to re-

spect quiet zones for wildlife, especially during breeding and nesting seasons. There are generally no other advocates who are on site every day.

The pressure from urbanisation and leisure activities is just as high as the pressure on bird populations from illegal killing and hunting. Unfortunately, there is no single statement on hunting as a factor or on the extent to which conservation, i.e. measures to preserve and maintain wild animal populations, and habitat management by hunters have been taken into account. What is certain, however, is that this commitment on the part of hunters also benefits non-huntable species – either directly, for example by setting up nesting aids for owls, or indirectly by planting bushes and trees. According to a recent survey by the DJV, hunters spend 137 million euros a year on species protection and biotope maintenance. Their voluntary commitment thus has a positive impact on biodiversity as a whole..

\*nnl.pdf (face.eu)

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/topics/at-a-glance/nature/state-of-nature-in-europe-a-health-check/habitats-and-species-main-priorities-and-threats>

\*\*<https://www.jagdverband.de/djv-position-zur-zukunft-vom-rotwild>

# Conservation and Hunt – Compatible or Conflicting?

By Niall Rowantree



Time and again, we read that hunting, especially trophy hunting, is archaic and has no place in modern society. Social media has undoubtedly played its part in this, as hunters are all too easily portrayed as cruel barbarians who are only interested in killing the biggest animals. How could it have come to this, that modern hunters, who are actively and passionately committed to the environment and contribute to its sustainable future, are viewed as so outdated?

## About the history of hunting ...

Even before the word 'forest' developed as a habitat for wild animals, the Normans brought with them their ancestors' principles for game management. It is believed that in Scandinavian culture, the right to hunt game was strictly regulated. There is little doubt that for the Scandinavians, in their harsh weather conditions, game was not only an important source of food, but also honoured in stories and music. In Celtic culture, the management of shared resources was integrated into daily life. In many ways, the Celts lived far more sustainably than we probably do today.

In Great Britain, however, hunting is embedded in a different social context and is primarily associated with privilege and wealth. This is still true today, especially in Scotland, where, after the collapse of the clan culture, most Highlanders were dispossessed against their will, first by sheep farming and later by the arrival of hunting landowners. The indigenous population of Scotland was essentially deprived of its heritage..

In the 20th century, hunting estates in the Highlands played a major role in the land use debate. This led to the establishment of the concept of 'sporting estates' as places where, in social and economic terms, private pleasure continues to take precedence over the social and economic development of remote areas. This idea persists and has led not only to a negative attitude towards hunting, but also to repeated interventions in legislation – to the detriment of deer, salmon and moorland birds. And although there is already comprehensive legislation for efficient game management throughout Scotland, the

law seeks to further reduce populations and dismantle the current game management system. At the same time, there is a failure to address the problems caused by invasive species such as Japanese sika deer and increasing roe deer populations in urban Scotland.

## ... the symbolic value of Scotland ...

The so-called rewilders would have us believe that Scotland is a country whose inhabitants have carelessly disregarded nature and imposed their will on the land. They are firmly convinced that over the millennia, the Scottish forest has been cleared by ironworks hungry for wood, grazed by sheep and finally destroyed by red deer. Red deer that only existed to be hunted. For the rewilders, Scottish hunting culture, with its red deer hunting and grouse moors, has grazed, burned, drained and destroyed the landscape. For them, it is a moral imperative to plant trees in this once-flourishing landscape and restore the lost paradise.

Are they right? It is true that Scotland's landscapes are unique. Its moorlands store 600 gigatonnes of carbon – that is up to 44 per cent of all soil carbon and exceeds the carbon stored in all other types of vegetation, including the world's forests. This landscape has a special appeal to the public and is symbolic of Scotland: open landscapes, heather-covered hills, rocky mountains, red deer and eagles. Rich in culture, history, clans, kilts and castles. A wild place where you can leave modern civilisation behind.

Sure, Scotland's landscapes have been heavily influenced by humans, but have we cut them down? Some of the trees were used for boat building and houses, but the major changes in the forest cover were triggered by a climate change. About 11,000 years ago, the climate warmed and the subsequent expansion of the forests reached its peak around 6,000 years ago. Then, around 3,000 years ago, a period of cold and wet weather caused the spread of peat bogs. In some parts of the Highlands, particularly in the north and west, this had a significant impact on tree growth. Tree lines in the wet west became lower and more fragmented and deciduous trees replaced the pines.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, forest cover was minimal, and large-scale sheep farming had taken its toll, mainly through the practice of burning and intensive grazing, until its own economic viability was called into question and the emergence of large hunting estates became possible. With the increase in hunting activities, game stocks also rose and some populations were relocated to maintain a viable population. The speed of expansion demonstrates the popularity of hunting. According to Napier, there were 73 forests with red deer populations in the Highlands in 1870. According to the 1891 parliamentary report, the total number had almost doubled in just 20 years to 130 red deer forests covering an area of 2,472,000 acres..

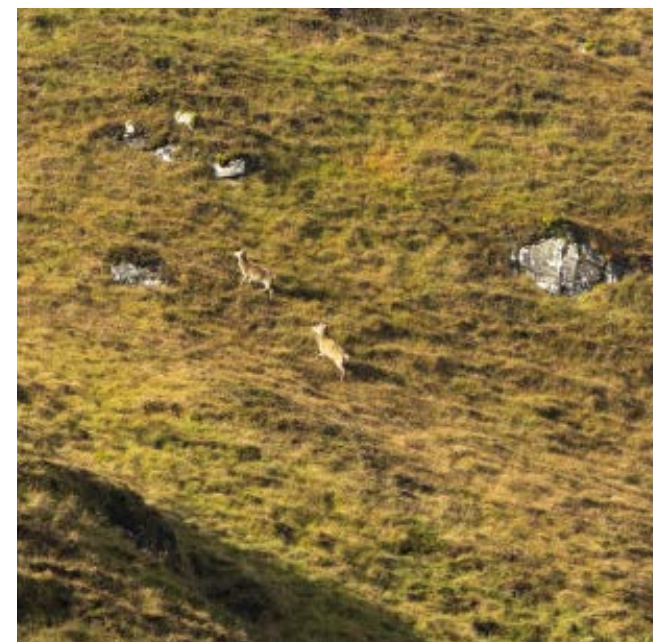
### ... and the necessity to take the initiative!

Since its forest cover reached its peak, the Scottish Highlands have been subject to significant climatic and political changes. Although land ownership may be an easy political target, changes to habitat and biodiversity are influenced by much more than just hunting. That is why we must come together to protect and restore what remains. Some of our habitats and species have benefited from hunting. Classic examples are wading birds and hares on grouse moors, and the preserved state of mountain and moorland habitats that would otherwise have been abandoned to intensive farming or reforestation if it were not for red deer hunting. Of course, the hunting community must adapt to a world of increasing change and use natural resources wisely. At the same time, however, it is precisely us hunters who have the opportunity to preserve the nature around us, as we are out there every day. .

In Scotland, as in many other parts of the world, Theodore Roosevelt's words ring true: "In a civilised and cultivated country, wild animals can only survive if they are preserved by hunters." We urgently need to take the initiative and share success stories, encourage young people to get involved and celebrate the culture and traditions that make us part of nature, because hunting and conservation go hand in hand.



Conservationist and professional hunter Niall Rowantree is committed to hunting and red deer for more than 25 years..



# 4

EMPLOYEES

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# Challenge & Encourage

A company grows with the commitment and skills of its employees. This is especially true when the declared goal is to be the technological market leader. That is why it is crucial for the Blaser Group to find motivated employees who are committed to their work and want to achieve common goals. This challenge is considerable in view of the demographic development and high employment rate in south-western Germany.

In addition, the Blaser Group wants to offer its employees long-term prospects and secure jobs. This applies to all areas of work, whether in technical and commercial fields or in other business areas such as subsidiaries, internal sales and central functions.

The HR staff at the Blaser Group see themselves as service providers for their colleagues and as sparring partners for managers. They are always on hand to offer advice and support and take a keen interest in the concerns of employees, both in day-to-day business and when it comes to questions of long-term work-life balance. As a cross-departmental link within the company, it is important to them that all employees feel valued and are happy to seek contact with them. Because only those who speak can be heard, and only those who are

heard can be supported. The HR department also has a special email address for quick contact, which is used extensively.

The Blaser Group also employs temporary workers to help with peak workloads. It offers them fair pay and secure working conditions that are comparable to those of permanent employees. For the Blaser Group, temporary workers are not a general means of recruiting new employees. This remains the exception, as permanent employment is the declared goal as a rule. In principle, remuneration for all employees is based on agreements in the metal industry.

As part of the materiality analysis, the topics of training and further education and work-life balance were identified as key areas that are crucial for attracting new employees and ensuring a low turnover rate, and thus form the basis for the Blaser Group's sustainable positive development.

## Education and training

Thanks to its strong roots in the region, the Blaser Group has been training its own young talent for decades. Students have the opportunity to complete an internship in various departments to get to

know the company. Afterwards, the Blaser Group offers traditional apprenticeships in industrial mechanics, machining, technical product design and industrial business management, as well as dual study programmes in business administration, industrial engineering and mechanical engineering.

Technical professions are taught in the company's own training workshop so that this knowledge can be applied in production in the second year of training. This gives trainees a comprehensive insight into all relevant company processes. Commercial training is carried out through a company tour of the various departments. The dual study programme also includes a tour of the various departments. After successfully completing their training or dual study programme, the Blaser Group offers graduates a wide range of development opportunities within the company. This also includes the possibility of employment at a foreign subsidiary.

Seminars and training courses are held regularly for employees. There is also compulsory training in occupational safety, health and fire protection, as well as in handling essential weapon parts. In addition, specialist training courses and seminars are held, for example on

\*Mittelwert 12 Monate



lean management, Microsoft Office applications, REFA and sales training. The Human Resources department is happy to take employees' requests into account. To improve key skills, there are also training courses on team development, leadership, foreign languages and communication. Further training opportunities are available through exchanges between the individual production sites. For example, employees from Gabrovo regularly come to Isny for further training. .

Communication

Challenging and encouraging employees is very important to the Blaser Group. That is why we maintain open communication, both on an ad hoc basis and in structured annual reviews. These reviews include a discussion of professional and personal issues, employee sat-

isfaction, structured mutual feedback, joint goal setting, a differentiated performance assessment and individual development measures. In addition, quarterly meetings are held between the responsible HR manager and the respective division managers. Early succession planning can also be discussed here. This gives employees planning security and provides the opportunity for careful training and knowledge transfer to their successor. In general, the Blaser Group fosters a culture of appreciative feedback and exchange, as well as transparent corporate communication, both online and offline.

The Blaser Group offers its employees various measures to promote a positive work-life balance, such as parental leave and coaching seminars to strengthen resilience. The HR team is available for an initial

discussion to answer any questions. In addition, flexible home office arrangements allow greater consideration to be given to individual life situations and thus greater job satisfaction. The measures taken for effective climate protection have no impact on employees, neither negative nor positive.

#BlaserCare

The Blaser Group has a well-established occupational health management programme, #BlaserCare, to promote the physical and mental well-being of its employees. In addition to a wide range of courses such as running training, Nordic walking and smoking cessation courses, this programme offers subsidised fitness training at the 'Gesundheitswelt Überrauch' health centre. In addition, a physiotherapist visits the company every month, coming directly to the workplace to provide support with any health issues caused by workplace ergonomics.

Employees can also take advantage of extended health care services: for example, all female employees receive an invitation to attend an ultrasound breast cancer screening at an affiliated doctor's office in October. This offer is supplemented by skin and colon cancer screening for all employees. Vaccinations are also available, including flu shots, FMSE and COVID-19 vaccinations. During the cold season, the Blaser Group also provides baskets of free apples for its employees – in keeping with the motto 'An apple a day keeps the doctor away'.

The Blaser Group introduced e-bikes and bicycles as part of its bike leasing scheme back in 2019, sending out a clear signal and achieving many positive effects for both the company and its employees. Switching to bikes is not only good for the environment, it also has a positive impact on the health and performance of employees, as physical activity reduces stress. This promotes mental and emotional well-being, thereby ensuring greater motivation and increased performance among the company's employees. Bike leasing thus makes a direct contribution to occupational health management. In 2023, a



	2022*	2023*
Anzahl Azubis	28	35
BA Studenten	3	5
Schülerpraktikanten	41	64
Pflichtpraktikanten Studium	13	12

\*Stichtag 31.12.

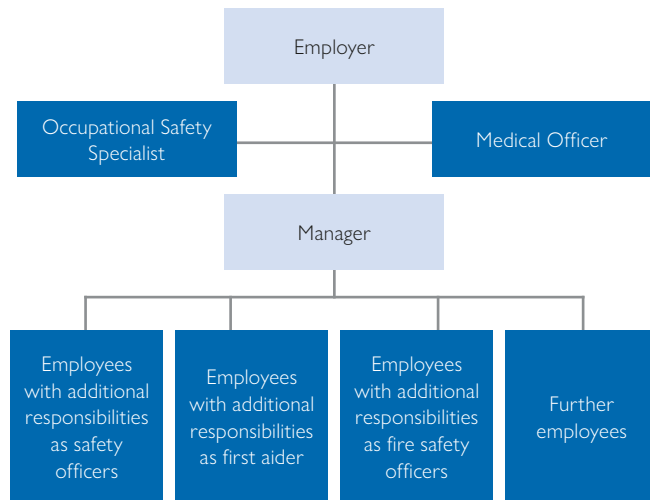
total of 135 employees (27 percent) had signed a corresponding leasing contract.

### Occupational health and safety

In order to fulfil its responsibility for safety in the workplace, the Blaser Group has established an occupational health and safety organisation that not only implements legal requirements but also develops more sustainable solutions. To ensure the safety and health of employees in the workplace, the respective occupational safety specialist at the site advises and supports the employer and managers in all matters relating to occupational safety and accident prevention, for example in identifying and assessing hazards in the workplace, defining protective measures and monitoring compliance with occupational safety regulations.

Cooperation with other occupational safety and health stakeholders, such as the company doctor and safety officers at the respective plants, and regular meetings within the framework of the occupa-

tional safety and health committee, in which the management also participates, are key elements in the continuous improvement of occupational safety and health. For example, acetone was replaced last year by an alternative cleaning agent in the running gear area. This substitution of acetone is an important step towards protecting the health of our employees while reducing our environmental impact.



### The benefits of the Blaser Group include:

Flexible working hours

- Discounted lunch
- Ergonomic workstations in production and administration
- Joint breakfast for all employees once a month
- Bike leasing
- Contribution to company pension scheme
- Regular training and further education opportunities
- Employee discounts on Blaser Group products
- Company health management
- Work-life balance through coordinated working time models

### Neighborly Aid

Blaser has been working closely with Stephanuswerk, a workshop for people with disabilities in Isny, since 1990. The close proximity of the two production sites has resulted in a reliable partnership that now encompasses a wide range of services. These include office services such as mailing campaigns and packaging Christmas gifts. The main scope of the Blaser Group's commissioned volume is the folding and assembly of packaging for hunting and sporting weapons and their accessories. The main customer for the assembled packaging at the Blaser Group is the assembly department. It is supplied with cardboard boxes from Stephanuswerk every day from Monday to Friday. Thanks to the short transport route, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are also very low..



# 2

INTEGRITY &  
COMPLIANCE

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# Compliance

Compliance with applicable legal regulations and laws is of the utmost importance to the Blaser Group. This applies to all actions of the management, executives and all employees of the Blaser Group and its subsidiaries. The business success of the company must never take precedence over the law. For the Blaser Group, achieving this in a legally compliant manner is just as important as business success itself. A poor reputation or bad name for the company due to violations of applicable laws would seriously jeopardise sustainable growth. This is another reason why unlawful and unethical behaviour is not tolerated.

The Code of Conduct, which is available either on the Blaser Group intranet or as a document, provides the appropriate framework for employee conduct. It is intended to ensure that every employee is aware of the values that apply and are lived by at the Blaser Group. It serves as a guideline for all employees in their daily work and is supplemented as necessary by detailed internal guidelines and explanations in the more comprehensive Compliance Manual. We expect every single employee to live by the values of the Code of Conduct as a role model and to insist on compliance with these values in their daily work with customers, suppliers and other stakeholders. With this in mind, online training courses are also available to employees.

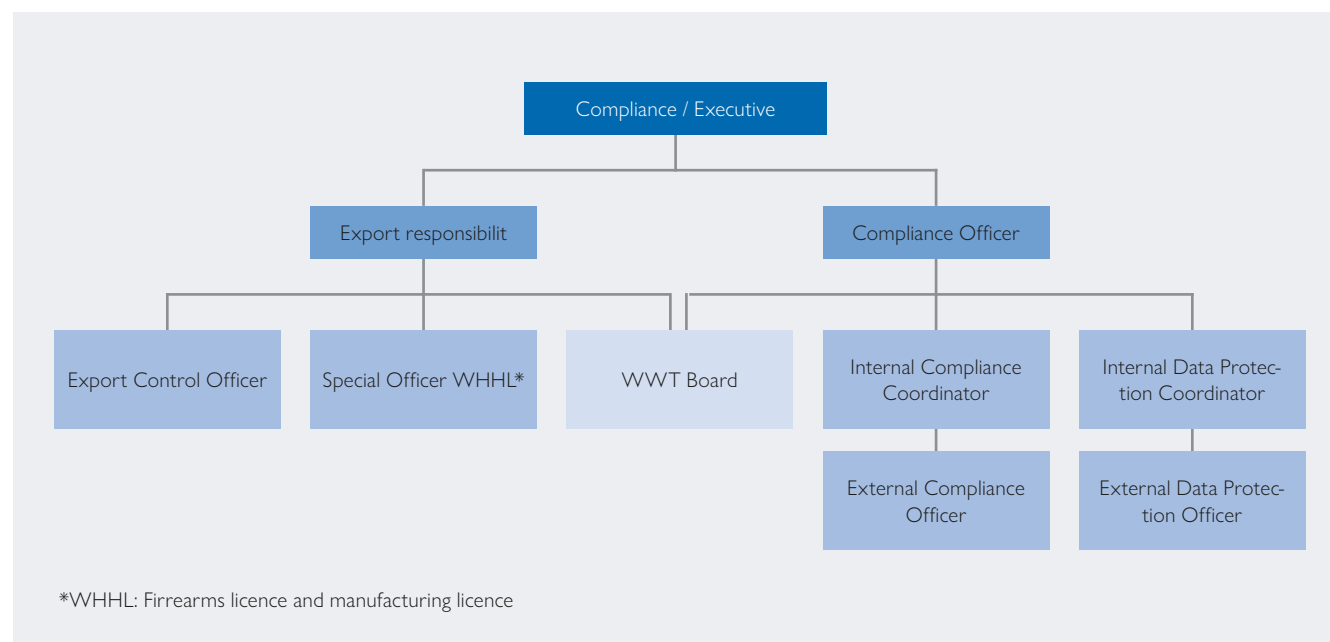
## Open corporate culture

The company management offers a way to report any kind of information anonymously and informally in order to identify illegal and unethical behaviour in good time and prevent potential damage to

the company. A whistleblower system has been introduced for this purpose. It can be accessed via the following link: Internet: <https://blaser.integrityline.com/frontpage>. Reports can be submitted anonymously via this whistleblower system. Even if a report is submitted under your own name, confidential and discreet handling is a top priority. The whistleblower system must not be used to make false accusations, and knowingly submitting false information is prohibited.

Only by explicitly addressing violations can an open corporate culture and thus the corporate interests of the Blaser Group be actively

promoted. If violations of the rules of this Code of Conduct are found to be beyond doubt, sanctions will be imposed by the company and/or government agencies. This applies to measures under labour law as well as civil and/or criminal consequences, if applicable. This happened in one case in 2022. Following a subsequent analysis of the causes, the compliance processes were adjusted in consultation with the division managers and the management in such a way that a repeat of the incident is virtually impossible.



# Anti-Corruption

As part of the compliance regulations, the anti-corruption and money laundering policy sets out the applicable rules for all employees with the aim of ensuring fair competition and transparent financial transactions at all times. The Blaser Group does not tolerate money laundering or corruption and takes all necessary measures to detect and prevent money laundering within its sphere of business influence. All employees of the Blaser Group are prohibited from offering, promising or granting advantages to decision-makers in the public sector (e.g. authorities) in Switzerland or abroad in order to obtain behaviour or decisions that are advantageous to the Blaser Group.

Furthermore, all employees are prohibited from accepting promises or offers of benefits from any third party if this could give the impression that they would be influenced in their business decisions. Employees are also prohibited from demanding personal benefits for themselves or a third party from a business partner. Conflicts of interest arising from the commissioning of family members and/or companies owned by family members must be avoided.

When commissioning third parties, objective criteria such as quality, price or reliability are decisive, not personal relationships or advantages.

When making decisions on the hiring of employees, the Blaser Group is guided exclusively by objective criteria such as qualifications, competence or work performance, and not by personal relationships or advantages.

The Blaser Group shall ensure without restriction that it does not enter into any agreements with competitors that are prohibited under antitrust law, in particular regarding prices or quantities, as well as market and/or territory allocations.

## Lobbying

Due to its position in the industry and in the region, it goes without saying that the Blaser Group is an active member of various bodies, committees and associations. The focus here is always on professional exchange. No financial contributions are made to political parties or institutions.







## Import/Export

As part of its international business activities, the Blaser Group strictly complies with all relevant regulations, particularly in the areas of foreign trade law, customs law and firearms law, both in the export of products and technologies and in the import of products and technologies. In addition to constantly reviewing all business partners, sales and procurement markets and goods movements for current licensing requirements, prohibitions and embargo regulations, the Blaser Group implements measures to prevent any attempts at circumvention with the help of contractual agreements and pursues any indications of violations of legal provisions. If there is any suspicion of possible unlawful use or onward delivery to embargoed countries or sanctioned persons, the Blaser Group categorically rejects the transaction and reports the procurement attempts to the competent authority.

Customs and export control regulations are subject to frequent changes due to economic, political and technical developments, so regular training and education in the areas concerned, as well as internal awareness-raising among employees at all levels, are an important part of the Blaser Group's internal compliance organisation. Internal and external audits and clear responsibilities also contribute to the lawful conduct of business.

## Data Protection Due Diligence

In order to record and validate relevant processes within the framework of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and to check their compliance with current regulations, the Blaser Group also works with an external data protection officer. In the 2023 report, he noted that significant progress had been made in data protection management. Among other things, a precise procedure for data protection cases was defined to ensure immediate detection and appropriate assessment. There were no data protection cases in 2023.

The Blaser Group's data protection team consists of the management, the IT management and two data protection managers.





# Data Protection

Data is a highly valuable and extremely sensitive business asset, especially in Industry 4.0. The Blaser Group strictly adheres to the applicable legal regulations on data protection. Proper handling of personal data is guaranteed at all times within the Blaser Group, as well as in cooperation with Group companies and external service providers. The data protection officer, data protection coordinator and management are available at any time to answer questions on this matter.

The protection of the intellectual property and trade secrets of the Blaser Group, as well as respect for the intellectual property and trade secrets of our business partners, forms the basis of our business success and is practised and upheld by every employee. The 'Guidelines for Blaser Group Employees on Data Protection and Information Security', developed in 2021, serve as a guide in this regard.

The IT department continuously ensures data protection during receipt, processing and forwarding by using appropriate encryption methods and providing secure connections. In 2023, the Blaser Group took further measures to increase data protection by implementing a vulnerability scanner. This regularly performs internal and external penetration tests and identifies potential security gaps so that countermeasures can be taken at an early stage. Any vulnerabilities identified are systematically addressed. The implementation of an information security management system (ISMS) is a further component of IT risk management with the aim of bringing IT security to a level that is appropriate and economically viable for the company and maintaining it at this level.

Since last year, access to the company's internal network (VPN) has only been possible with two-factor authentication. Especially in light of the fact that employees work from home, this represents a significant improvement in the security framework thanks to multi-factor authentication and up-to-date encryption. The 'Blaser Group Employee Guidelines for Data Protection and Information Security' explicitly address the necessary protective measures in a home working environment and also provide for the possibility of company controls. Access to company resources may only be granted using Blaser Group hardware. Forwarding emails to private email accounts is prohibited. E-learning training courses to raise employee awareness of potential threats, such as phishing emails, continued last year. A special email address was also set up to speed up the processing of suspicious cases. The participation rate in online training courses is to be further increased in 2024.

In the fourth quarter of 2023, an IT satisfaction survey was conducted among employees. The survey covered topics such as the quality of support, satisfaction with the hardware, software and network environment provided, and the availability of various services in the home office. The feedback was predominantly positive. The need for suggestions such as improving the availability of the hotline or setting up a key user structure across all locations has been recognised and is being addressed step by step.

Careful use of resources is becoming increasingly important in the IT sector. For example, new IT hardware is only purchased when it is

really necessary. Previous product-specific replacement cycles, such as using smartphones for only 24 months, have been abandoned. Devices remain in use until they are no longer economically viable to repair. Well-maintained devices are offered to employees via a sales platform. Before such a device leaves the IT department, all data is certified as deleted. The memory and hard drives of old devices are removed and also certified as deleted. In addition, when investing in data centres, regular checks are carried out to determine the extent to which certain older servers can be replaced by more powerful devices, thereby reducing energy consumption.



# Areas of Action of Sustainability



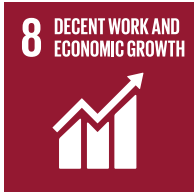
The Blaser Group is aware of the major challenge set out by the United Nations in its 17 global goals for sustainable development and a better future in 2015. The ecological, economic and social goals set out in these goals can only be achieved through joint efforts by the global community. The agenda is to be implemented by 2030 with the support of politics, business, science and civil society.

With a view to sustainable business practices, the Blaser Group is facing up to its responsibility and is committed to the UN goals. Where the Blaser Group is not yet able to make a contribution due to the nature of its business activities, regular reviews are carried out to determine whether this will still be the case in the future. This ensures that the responsibility assumed for the environment, society and economic issues is actively lived and further developed. For the Blaser Group, this is a process of continuous improvement that takes into account current social developments and new technical possibilities. To achieve the best possible results, all employees are made aware of the importance of using resources sustainably.

The Blaser Group is already involved in many areas. Take gender equality, for example: HR management is carried out regardless of nationality, ethnicity, age, gender identity, religion or other types of diversity. As a traditionally male-dominated industry, the Blaser Group welcomes and encourages women and people of other gender identities to pursue careers in the metal industry. This includes training as a gunsmith as well as product designer in R&D..

Example: affordable and clean energy. After careful consideration, the Blaser Group has installed charging stations for e-bikes and e-cars on its premises at Ziegelstadel. Taking into account the materiality analysis that has been initiated, the Blaser Group can make a particularly effective contribution to the following UN goals:

- 8 Decent work and economic growth
- 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- 12 Responsible consumption and production
- 13 Climate Action



### Decent Work and Economic Growth

The Blaser Group offers its nearly 1,000 employees secure and rewarding jobs. Each employee has a personal contact person who advises them on issues such as work-life balance and further training. Annual employee appraisals not only assess performance, but also specifically ask about employee satisfaction and discuss further individual development..

### Occupational Safety

For the Blaser Group, responsible supplier management also means ensuring that the relevant environmental and social standards are observed not only at its own sites but also at its suppliers. This is required by means of a binding declaration of commitment.



### Industry, Innovation und Infrastructure

In line with its corporate strategy and its responsibility to achieve long-term economic growth and thus secure jobs, the Blaser Group has set itself the goal of further expanding its innovation leadership. It is consistently investing in new technologies and systematically filling its pipeline with new products.t.



### Responsible Consumption and Production

Processes at the Blaser Group are constantly reviewed for efficiency and efforts are made to use resources more sparingly. Certain recycling processes are already in place, whereby metal production waste, for example, is collected for further recycling by third parties. The hunting rifle division, which is by far the most important, also stands for extremely durable products, which are therefore very sustainable in themselves.



### Climate Action

In 2024, an energy strategy was launched with the aim of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the long term. By setting a base year (2023), progress can be tracked in the future and adjusted if necessary.







Legal Notice:

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Disclaimer: The Blaser Group accepts no liability for assumptions made in this report that relate to the future and are therefore inherently subject to risks and uncertainties, should the actual results differ from those expected. We reserve the right to make technical changes, colour deviations and errors. Climate-neutral production

The Blaser Group is committed to climate protection. We have offset all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from our production and distribution activities.

# About this Sustainability Report

With this sustainability report, the Blaser Group addresses customers, partners, employees, investors and interested representatives from business, science, politics and society.

For the first time, the Blaser Group has based its report on the uniform standards of European sustainability reporting (ESRS) of the revised CSRD as published in draft form in 2023. The rules were drawn up by the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG) on behalf of the European Commission. With this voluntary reporting, the Blaser Group is underlining its commitment to sustainable business practices, combined with the careful use of natural resources and consideration of social aspects.

This sustainability report covers the years 2022 and 2023. In future, the Blaser Group intends to prepare its sustainability report annually in accordance with the ESRS requirements and publish it as part of its non-financial reporting. The qualitative and quantitative information in this report relates to the Blaser Group, in particular to the production sites in Isny, Wetzlar and Gabrovo. The qualitative char-

acteristics of the information provided have been prepared in accordance with the fundamental principles of relevance and truthful presentation and, where already possible, supplemented with the aspects of comparability, verifiability and comprehensibility in the presentation to improve the quality of the information.

The aim of the sustainability report is to show the extent to which the Blaser Group is already taking or preparing measures to make a sustainable contribution to the UN goals. In accordance with the provisions of the ESRS, the materiality analysis was started in 2024, and its partial results have already been taken into account in the preparation of the report – even if they are not yet fully completed and further interest groups are still being involved. This underlines the firm commitment to operating sustainably and creating the necessary conditions for this.

All relevant departments were involved in the preparation of the sustainability report. This report has been approved by the management..