

EUDR Forum in Ukraine: results and prospects

More than 200 participants attended the mixed format event.



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The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), together with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC Ukraine), the World Wildlife Fund WWF-Ukraine, and the European Union's Institutional and Policy Reform for Smallholder Agriculture in Ukraine (IPRSA) project, held a multilateral and open dialogue entitled "Impact of the European Union Deforestation and Forest Degradation Regulation (EUDR) on Ukraine: Prospects and Risks" on March 22 in Kyiv.

The event consisted of two sessions attended by key stakeholders, including EU representatives, members of the Ukrainian Parliament, international donors, government officials, representatives of forestry and wood processing industry, NGOs and academic institutions, which helped to achieve the event's goals and objectives.

The first session was devoted to explaining the Regulation in the system of European legislation and the European Green Deal political initiative, as well as assessing its impact on countries outside the EU. The keynote speaker was a representative of the European Commission, who emphasized the basis and essence of the new EU requirements. Speeches by representatives of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and central executive authorities not only supported the importance of the prospects offered by the Regulation for Ukraine, but also outlined the areas of harmonization of national legislation with the EU requirements currently being discussed.

The second session of the event covered the practical aspects of applying the Regulation, taking into account the current practice of forest management and forest conservation, the state of forestry digitalization, the development of wood processing industry in relation to forestry, and the potential of voluntary forest certification instruments, in particular, FSC.

«Today's discussion on the new rules contained in the Regulation is a strategic matter, as these changes will have an impact on both business and all players in this market," said Pierre Vauthier, Head of the FAO Office in Ukraine. – Through joint efforts and cooperation, FAO aims to support the government, business, and forestry in Ukraine by developing appropriate proposals and practical solutions. This will enable the development of an inclusive, transparent forest management system, and thus build a better, sustainable life».

«A broad partnership around the goals of preventing deforestation and forest degradation should become a catalyst for the integration of Ukraine's forest sector into the EU, – said Pavlo Kravets, FSC National Representative in Ukraine. – FSC has now proposed specific solutions that will improve the readiness of FSC certificate holders around the world to meet the EUDR requirements. We are starting to work with responsible businesses and other stakeholders to implement FSC solutions in Ukraine».

«The EUDR Regulation reminds us that a significant part of deforestation is legal under the laws of different countries. For Ukraine, the issues of clear-cutting, preservation of virgin forests and other valuable forests, and sustainable forest management in general are painful, because intensive management of even-aged forests through clear-cutting and removal of dead wood can have a serious impact on habitats, which is a manifestation of degradation. It should not be forgotten that forest protection shall not lead to the transformation or degradation of other natural ecosystems, such as steppes and meadows, peatlands and wetlands. WWF-Ukraine is ready to help take care of valuable ecosystems and thus avoid violations of the EUDR requirements», – said Ganna Lobchenko, Forestry Project Manager at WWF-Ukraine.

The main results of the event are as follows:

1. There is a demand from business and the public for an operational plan for implementing the Regulation, and therefore for closer coordination of the relevant government agencies of Ukraine with the European Commission.
2. Adaptation of the forestry sector of Ukraine's economy to the requirements of the Regulation requires further harmonization of national legislation with the EU strategy, policies and legal requirements, in particular, developing common approaches to the definition of basic forestry terms.
3. Implementation of the requirements of the Regulation is a powerful motivating factor for improving management and governance in the forest sector to prevent deforestation and forest degradation, as well as to strengthen legal liability.
4. Voluntary instruments, in particular, those proposed by the FSC, are a good basis for further integration of Ukraine into the global system of traceability of forest products supply chains in addition to IT solutions in the forestry sector.
5. Forming a competitive and transparent institutional environment will facilitate the maximum opportunity output for Ukrainian forestry enterprises from implementation of EUDR and ensure preventive forest protection.
6. Effective interaction between supply chain participants and other stakeholders in assessing and mitigating risks in traceability of forest products is a prerequisite for proper confirmation of absence of deforestation and forest degradation.

This event has become only the first step towards the adaptation of Ukraine's forestry sector to the EUDR Regulation. The need for a further practically oriented event to facilitate the implementation of the Regulation, taking into account the interests of the various target groups represented at the event, is now obvious.