



Newsletter

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA

MAY 2024

Mr. Otar Shamugia congratulated the people of Georgia on Georgia's Independence Day



„I congratulate all the citizens of our country on Georgia's Independence Day. Our independence and sovereignty stand as the pinnacle of our achievements, earned through centuries of struggle.

This journey has been arduous, marked by challenges and dangers, yet our brave citizens have stood heroically on this path. Now, more than ever, we must rally to protect this hard-won freedom. We must safeguard our nation's independence by upholding our cherished values, fostering economic strength, prioritizing education, and striving for excellence in science, sports, and culture. As we progress and develop further, let us reaffirm our commitment to making Georgia a symbol of dignity and pride. Once again, warmest congratulations on Georgia's Independence Day“, - Mr. Otar Shamugia, the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia

Otar Shamugia: Supporting farmers and businesses in gaining access to the EU market is our task within the context of European integration



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia, attended the large-scale event dedicated to Europe Day.

The representatives of the executive government and diplomatic corps attended the event. The Prime Minister of Georgia, Mr. Irakli Kobakhidze, addressed the guests.

Within the framework of the event, the PM and Members of the Government of Georgia visited the exhibition dedicated to Europe Day in the exhibition center “Expo Georgia”.

“ This year, Georgia is already commemorating Europe Day as a candidate country for EU membership. European integration is the primary determinant of our policy. In this context, our task is to assist farmers and businesspeople in gaining access to markets, including the EU market. First and foremost, the European Union is the top priority market for Georgia. We have concrete outcomes in this direction, reflected in specific numbers. We are working on adopting the standards and regulations required to establish our products in this market”, Mr. Otar Shamugia said.



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Nino Tandilashvili meets with Ciyong Zou, Managing Director, Directorate of Technical Cooperation and Sustainable Industrial Development at the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)



The First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, met with Mr. Ciyong Zou, Managing Director of the Directorate of Technical Cooperation and Sustainable Industrial Development at the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). During the meeting, the parties discussed current and future cooperation issues.

„I would like to express my gratitude for your long-standing cooperation in the agricultural and environmental protection fields in Georgia. We are implementing important projects with joint efforts.

As we know, Georgia is at a new stage of cooperation with the European Union and I would emphasize the importance of partner organizations’ involvement in the mentioned process. As you are aware, after receiving the EU candidate status, we have to implement several recommendations, and ensuring effective and timely implementation of these recommendations is our agenda. For more efficient cooperation, it is essential that partner organizations consider the Ministry’s priorities, “ said Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili.

The conversation touched upon food security, agrotourism, and laboratory capacities-related issues, including deepening cooperation to strengthen women’s involvement in the agricultural sector.

According to Mr. Ciyong Zou, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization considers Georgia a reliable partner and expresses willingness to continue fruitful cooperation with the Georgian side in the future.

Representatives of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and relevant services of the Ministry attended the meeting.

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Mr. Otar Shamugia, The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, is actively involved in supporting farmers through various projects



In a recent visit to Didi Mughanlo village, Marneuli municipality, Shamugia emphasized the success of government-supported initiatives in agriculture. One example is the “Plant the Future” program, which helped establish an almond garden by “Green House” LLC, benefiting from state co-financing of around GEL 75,000 and a loan of GEL 500,000 through the “Preferential Agrocredit” project. This enterprise now employs locals and processes 100 tonnes of almonds annually.

Moreover, Mr Otar Shamugia highlighted the importance of irrigation infrastructure during a visit to the Kvemo Kartli region. Significant investments have been made in rehabilitating water distribution systems, such as the Khram Canal irrigation system and the Tsereteli canal, ensuring water supply to agricultural lands.

The government aims to spend over USD 300 million on similar

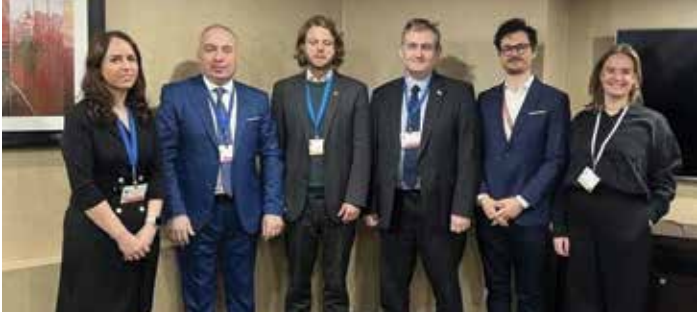
infrastructure projects in the coming years. Another notable project involves the rehabilitation of the Yakublo reservoir in Dmanisi municipality. Costing GEL 7 million, the project aims to strengthen the reservoir’s infrastructure to ensure reliable water supply for agriculture.

Similar efforts have been made to address the threat of drying up Kumi Lake, an important wetland for wildlife. Through canal cleaning and water redirection projects, significant progress has been made in replenishing the lake’s water levels and improving its ecological condition.



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Solomon Pavliashvili meets with Eirik Lindebjerg, Global Plastics Policy Lead at WWF International in Canada



During his working visit to Canada's capital, Ottawa, Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili, the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, met Mr. Eirik Lindebjerg, Global Plastics Policy lead at WWF International.

The Deputy Minister thanked the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) for its assistance, emphasizing the significance of initiatives of the South Caucasus Office in Georgia in the environmental protection and sustainable forest management areas. At the meeting, the Deputy Minister underlined that Georgia is actively participating in the discussions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee and, along with Estonia, represents the Eastern European regional group.

It is worth mentioning that the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture participated in the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in Canada, which aims to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including, in the marine environment (INC-4).

Mr. Pavliashvili briefed Mr. Lindebjerg on the reforms implemented by Georgia towards sustainable waste management and prevention of plastic waste.

According to the Deputy, Georgia has joined the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution (HAC), launched by Norway and Rwanda. As stated by Mr. Eirik Lindeberg, Georgia plays a unique role in intergovernmental negotiations also Georgia has made significant efforts to ensure the effective fulfillment of the international commitments outlined in the new agreement.

Giorgi Meskheli, Acting Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Georgia to Canada, attended the meeting.

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Tengiz Nasaridze meets the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management of Austria, Johannes Funkhauser



During the meeting, the parties discussed a wide range of topics, such as agrotourism, winemaking, and grain production, and focused on expanding bilateral cooperation in the future.

„Relationships with EU member states and sharing their experience, including Austria's experience in agrotourism and organic farming, are of the utmost importance for us. Moreover, we have taken numerous steps to get closer to the European Union, first and foremost is harmonizing our policy documents and legislative framework,” said Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze.

At the meeting with the officials of the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management, the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture, and Austrian municipal authorities, Mr. Nasaridze emphasized the significance of a close partnership between the two countries. He also noted that Georgia carries out several agricultural programs with the support of the Austrian government.

According to the Austrian Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management, Mr. Johannes Funkhauser, Austria will continue supporting Georgia on its way to the European Union and launching joint projects.

„In agriculture, quality is our top priority. Organic farming makes up about 27% of all farms in Austria. We prioritize the development of biological agriculture and agro-tourism as a source of increasing household income. The countries with small land should focus on producing quality agricultural products, to this end, Georgia should work on occupying this niche”, - noted Mr. Johannes Fankhauser.

The Chairman of the National Wine Agency, Mr. Levan Mekhuzla, the Director of the Rural Development Agency, Mr. Davit Tsitlidze, and Heads of relevant departments of the Ministry attended the meeting.

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Nino Tandilashvili participates in the 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC)



The First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, participated in the 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) in Rome, Italy.

During the session, high-level representatives explored the role of innovation and digitalization in strengthening resilient and low-emission agri-food systems in Europe and Central Asia. The parties shared ideas for preserving agricultural biodiversity and improving efficient water governance in these challenging and changing times while also discussing regional and global perspectives on food security and the transformation of agriculture and food systems. The Conference brought together FAO member countries from Europe and Central Asia, including the representatives of the United Nations Foundation, programs, and specialized agencies.

During the meeting at the FAO headquarters, the Georgian side presented Georgian wine as part of the “One Country- One Priority Product” initiative.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21687>

Government of Georgia approves the 2024–2027 Action Plan of the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia 2021–2027



Rural and agricultural development plays a crucial role in sustainable economic development and inclusive economic growth of the country.

The Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia 2021–2027 aims to overcome current challenges and utilize agricultural potential.

The 2024–2027 Action Plan of the Strategy was created by considering the existing experience and analysis of the situation. The overall project cost is GEL 4 276 021 657, of which GEL 4 155 293 570 comes from the state budget allotments, while GEL 118 868 087 is the funds raised from donor organizations and international partners. The three primary objectives of the 2024–2027 Action Plan of the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia 2021–2027 are as follows:

Promotion of competitive agricultural and non-agricultural sectors entails awareness raising of farmers, developing agricultural and non-agricultural value chains, and taking significant measures for people employed in the rural/agricultural fields, including market diversification, farmer/entrepreneur integration, improving reclama-

tion/irrigation systems, developing rural infrastructure, and expanding accessibility to services.

Establishing efficient systems of food products/animal feed safety, veterinary and plant protection implying approximation of Georgia’s legislation to EU legislation in sanitary and phytosanitary fields, ensuring that products delivered to local and export markets comply with sanitary and phytosanitary standards, enhancing laboratory capacity, and ensuring the quality of agricultural output (means of production).

Sustainable use of natural resources, preservation of ecosystems, and climate change adaptation are among the significant environmental tasks such as promoting the development of ecotourism, maintaining agro-biodiversity, sustainable use of forest resources, including promoting the adoption of energy-efficient and renewable energy technologies and practices; Establishing efficient systems of food products/animal feed safety, veterinary and plant protection implying approximation of Georgia’s legislation to EU legislation in sanitary and phytosanitary fields, ensuring that products delivered to local and export markets comply with sanitary and phytosanitary standards, enhancing laboratory capacity, and ensuring the quality of agricultural output (means of production).

The Inter-Agency Coordinating Council on Agricultural and Rural Development approved the draft Action Plan 2024–2027, which was developed in coordination with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

The 88 activities outlined in the plan will be handled by the Ministries of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Regional Development and Infrastructure, Economy and Sustainable Development, Education, Science and Youth.

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The Second Workshop of the Project “The Peace Forest Initiative”



Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, attended a workshop on sustainable forest management and land degradation solutions aiming to enhance cross-border cooperation in the South Caucasus region.

The Deputy Minister emphasized the necessity of regional coordination, noting that overcoming global problems requires united efforts.

“Coordinated efforts within the scope of the project “The Peace Forest Initiative in the South Caucasus” is vitally important. This type of cooperation is the only way to address the problems and challenges posed by climate change as soon as possible. Forest restoration and sustainable management help to reduce the risk of soil erosion and disaster while also generating a variety of economic benefits. The mentioned program will assist in reducing land degradation and promoting sustainable forest management at regional, national, and global levels,” said Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze.

“Forest Peace Initiative in the South Caucasus” is a unique global

initiative promoting peace and trust-building by restoring degraded lands and forests in post-conflict regions.

South Caucasus countries: - Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan joined the initiative in 2024, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Regional Environmental Center for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus), the World Bank, the Korea Forestry Service (KFS) and the Global Partnership for Sustainable and Resilient Landscapes (PROGREEN) are implementing the initiative.

“The mentioned initiative will contribute to building cross-border trust, coordination among allies, increasing the capacity of stakeholders, and developing a joint plan for the management of common natural resources, to ensure the resilience of local communities to climate change. We all need to work together to find ways to solve the problems that hinder the sustainable development of society and economy,” said Mr. Utchang Kang, Programme Management Officer of the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

The working meeting will last three days, and the parties will draft the regional concept paper on sustainable land management and restoration.

The representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, the Ministry of Environment of Armenia, the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan, UNCCCP, the Korean Forestry Service, the World Bank, and REC Caucasus attended the meeting.

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Tengiz Nasaridze meets with the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Georgia, Ahmed Ibrahim Ahmed Taher Al Nuaimi



The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze meet with the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Georgia, Mr. Ahmed Ibrahim Ahmed Taher Al Nuaimi. During the meeting, the parties discussed the prospects for deepening trade and economic cooperation between the countries.

The conversation also included issues for future cooperation in the food safety area.

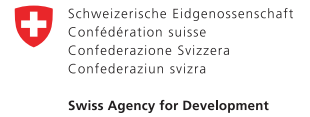
“Activation of trade and economic cooperation with partner countries is an important part of our agenda. We welcome the initiative to cooperate on food security. I think the mentioned process will be mutually beneficial”, said Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze.

According to Mr. Ahmed Alnuaimi, Georgia is a significant partner of the United Arab Emirates, noting that deepening and expanding bilateral cooperation is in the interest of both sides.

The representatives of relevant services of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture attended the meeting.

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ENABLING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GEORGIA'S FOREST SECTOR REFORM - **ECO.Georgia**



ISSUE#10 / April 2024

“What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another.” - Mahatma Gandhi

PROJECT BRIEF

The project “Enabling the implementation of Georgia’s forest sector reform - ECO.Georgia” is jointly implemented by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture together with the National Forestry Agency, Rural Development Agency, Environmental Information and Education Centre, Department of Environmental Supervision; by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The project aims to mitigate GHG emissions through the nature-based management of the country’s forests and the improvement of energy efficiency to reduce the demand for fuelwood. It also envisages the strengthening of local self-governance and diversifying livelihood opportunities in the forest adjoining rural communities to benefit from diversified income opportunities through improved forestry value chains and better access to forestry knowledge and skills. The project focuses on three target regions (Guria, Kakheti and Mtskheta-Mtianeti) and eight municipalities: Ozurgeti, Chokhatauri, Lanchkhuti, Telavi, Kvareli, Akhmeta, Dedoplistskaro and Tianeti. The Project is funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Government of Georgia (GoG) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Component 1: Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)

- Activity 1.1:** Development and implementation of SFM plans
- Activity 1.2:** Strengthening of forest supervision
- Activity 1.3:** Provision of sustainably produced fuelwood by NFA
- Activity 1.4:** Enhancement of enabling environment for the nation-wide implementation of sustainable forest management (SFM)
- Activity 1.5:** Improvement of monitoring and measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) systems for the forest sector

Component 2: Market Development for Energy Efficiency (EE) and Alternative Fuels (AF)

- Activity 2.1:** EE-AF supply chain development
- Activity 2.2:** Implementing consumer financing instruments for EE-AF solutions
- Activity 2.3:** Creating consumer awareness and provision of technical advisory services for fuelwood users
- Activity 2.4:** Enabling policies and regulations

Component 3: Livelihood opportunities and local self-governance in forest management

- Activity 3.1:** Development and introduction of municipal-level tools, practices, plans and necessary capacities for participatory SFM and conservation
- Activity 3.2:** Development, testing and promotion of mechanisms at the local level to better protect interests of adversely affected stakeholders
- Activity 3.3:** Development of professional skills and knowledge relevant to SFM and conservation through vocational education and international partnerships with centers of knowledge
- Activity 3.4:** Strengthening of selected value chains (e.g., timber, NTFP, parts of eco-tourism)

■ Activity in 3 target regions only ■ Nation-wide activity □ Nation-wide activity with focus on 3 target regions



Establishment of an Environmental and Social Safeguard system in the forestry sector

As envisaged through the Environmental and Social Management Plan of the ECO.Georgia project, the National Forestry Agency (NFA) approved the following documents (1) Occupational Health and Safety Policy, (2) Emergency Response Plan, (3) Waste Management Plan, and (4) Procedures for Construction Contractors, thereby committing to the implementation of the Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) system in the forestry sector. For this purpose, the National Forestry Agency assigned three staff members to take responsibility for raising awareness of Environmental and Social Safeguards and ensuring their implementation and monitoring.

To fulfil this commitment, the designated NFA staff members have been trained and certified in occupational health and safety regulations, standards, and practices. The course included modules on labour safety policy, risk assessment, in-house training instructions on labour safety, emergency response plan and its implementation, personal protective equipment, and more.

As one of the first steps of fulfilling their responsibility, the above-mentioned staff members already visited the National Forestry Agency Business Service Yards (BSY) and gave ESS-related instructions to the BSY personnel in all three target regions of the ECO.Georgia project.

The ECO.Georgia’s Environmental and Social Safeguard system consists of the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), supporting to effectively and equitably manage environmental and social risks.

The ESMP represents a system of processes for achieving improvements in environmental and social outcomes while addressing any unintended adverse impacts of the project. With the implementation of the ESMP the overall project will comply with GCF Environmental and Social Standards, GIZ and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), as well as with the Georgian regulatory framework.

Forest Road rehabilitation plans are being developed

The principles of Forest Sector Reform and Sustainable Forest Management were introduced to the locals of Tianeti municipality during an information meeting organized by the Environmental Information and Education Centre of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA).

Representatives from MEPA and its subordinate agencies, including the National Forestry Agency, the Department of Environmental Supervision, and the Rural Development Agency, presented the changes outlined in the new Forest Code.

The meeting ran in an interactive format and the representatives of the Ministry answered the questions from local community members

and the administration regarding the new regulations.

The meeting also addressed the benefits of using energy-efficient and alternative fuel solutions. The Rural Development Agency explained the details of the co-financing scheme, making energy-efficient stoves more affordable.

The meeting was opened by the First Deputy Governor of Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Gocha Kavtaradze, and facilitated by the Deputy Head of the EIEC, Ekaterine Bendeliani. Such information meetings in all project municipalities are part of the awareness-raising and informational campaigns on the Forest Sector Reform, outlined within the ECO.Georgia project.



A market study was conducted for energy-efficient stove production

To support the development of the energy-efficient (EE) stove market in the country, a market study was conducted in close collaboration with the Rural Development Agency (RDA) and GIZ.

The study revealed that out of 360 identified producers working with steel materials nationwide, approximately forty expressed interest and demonstrated the potential to develop EE stove production.

These producers will be involved in the co-financing program administered by the RDA as part of the ECO.Georgia project.

The study involved thorough interviews and factory visits, allowing for an accurate assessment of each factory's capacity and potential. Within the project, interested producers will be supported in testing their products in the Georgian Technical University lab, enabling them to place tested products on the market for the upcoming heating season.

Detailed information and explanations about the stove testing procedures will be provided through the Rural Development Agency and GIZ.

The goal is to complete the EE stove testing phase before the heating season, making these stoves accessible and affordable for consumers. Moreover, producers will have the opportunity to join a training cycle scheduled for the latter part of June. This training will cover essential topics such as stove certification, standards, business and legal frameworks, labour safety, waste management, and gender considerations.

The diversity of producers will increase competitiveness, ultimately resulting in affordable prices and the attractiveness of the stoves.

Forest Road rehabilitation plans are being developed

Representatives from the Forest Use Department of the National Forestry Agency, along with regional foresters and an international road construction expert, recently visited the Chokhatauri and Akhmeta forest roads to assess their current conditions and develop a rehabilitation plan.

The National Forestry Agency has already completed the design for the Tianeti forest road project, incorporating consultations and recommendations from international experts. This design is now ready for submission and approval by the head of the National Forestry Agency. The development of forest roads and skid trail networks is crucial for the successful implementation of Sustainable Forest Management practices in the country. Currently, many forest roads are in poor condition and require rehabilitation to meet accessibility and international standards. Problems such as inadequate width, steep inclines, and damaged surfaces caused by water erosion make it difficult or impossible for machinery to access forestry activity areas. As part of the ECO.Georgia project, the National Forestry Agency is supported to enhance the accessibility to the forest sites considering Environmental and Social Safeguard standards during rehabilitation works.

