



Newsletter

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA

JULY 2024

A New Regional Office of the National Environmental Agency opens in Batumi



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia, accompanied by the Head of the Government of Adjara, Mr. Tornike Rizhvadze, got familiar with the ongoing works at the new regional office of the National Environmental Agency in Batumi, Adjara.

A new building comprises the most important structural units of the Agency, such as the Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Water Biodiversity, Batumi Lab of the Environmental Pollution Monitoring Department, and the Adjara Regional Hydrometeorological Observatory.

The ambient air, water, and soil analysis, microbiological, hydrobiological, and ichthyological laboratories meet international standards and are equipped with cutting-edge devices and research infrastructure.

According to the Minister, strengthening institutional capacities in the environmental field is the priority direction of the country, which is also reflected in the fulfilment of environmental commitments under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement.

„We completed constructing the National Environmental Agency’s regional office in Batumi, which will comprise a laboratory with cutting-edge technology for soil, air, and water quality monitoring studies. We regularly monitor the water quality of the Black Sea, especially during the tourist season. Due to monitoring, the water quality of the Black Sea complies with the established norms. One of the Ministry’s priorities is strengthening the capacities of the National Environmental Agency, and we are working on it. Notably, the works on establishing a similar office and laboratory have started in the city of Kutaisi”, - noted the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia.

Mr. Tornike Rizhvadze, the Head of the Adjara Government, congratulated the employees of the National Environmental Agency on the opening of the new office, emphasizing the importance of the research carried out in the laboratory for the local population as well as tourists arriving in the region.



According to the Chair of the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee of the Parliament, Mrs. Maia Bitadze, constructing the office with state investments is crucial, and the environmental and technological capacities offered by the new office serve as the prerequisites for attracting new personnel and the successful implementation of the recently established paid internship program.

The new Batumi laboratory will allow researchers to expand their research components and offer new methods using cutting-edge technology. The number of monitoring stations will increase, enabling the researchers to conduct studies with the latest methods in line with the EU water and navy strategy frame directives. It is also planned to extend the scientific research capacities in the fishing and aquaculture fields in the navy area and the domestic ponds.

Notably, Batumi Laboratory, till now, could offer restricted services limited to the short chemical analysis, and the samples for the full analysis were sent to Tbilisi Air, Water and Soil Laboratory.



<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22755>

The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Otar Shamugia, accompanied by media representatives, paid a visit to Kolkheti National Park



“ Developing protected areas is one of the directions where we have made visible progress. Every year, we are establishing new protected areas. Over the past ten years, more than thirty new protected areas have been created in the country. Moreover, we currently embrace 100 protected areas covering more than 900,000 hectares. This year, a new national park was established in the Guria region, and we are actively working on expanding the existing protected area in Racha and creating protected areas in the Samegrelo and Upper Svaneti regions. First and foremost, all mentioned above is crucial for protecting our unique nature and preserving our biodiversity. Meanwhile, our protected areas have a great potential for ecotourism, and we are making the most of using this potential properly. The private sector and the state have invested over GEL 200 million in infrastructure development over the past few years. The number of visitors to our protected areas is annually increasing. The income of the Agency of Protected Areas and, more importantly, the local community involved in expanding tourist services is in-

creasing. Notably, this is one of the best opportunities for communities to engage in the service process, services, and earning income, and we have plenty of similar cases. Our strategy serves the same purpose, to safeguard and care for our nature while also attracting more tourists, creating an opportunity for even more economic development in the region”, said the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr Otar Shamugia.

During the media tour, the Minister and the media representatives visited one of the outstanding and popular protected areas of Georgia - Kolkheti National Park, which was awarded UNESCO World Heritage Site status. The media representatives also toured the remarkable protected areas in Georgia, including Okatse Canyon, Okatse Waterfall, Tetra Cave, and Kolkheti National Park. Moreover, the visitors had the opportunity to learn about the activities offered to them while visiting the national park. During the tour, the participants received information about the two-month campaign of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture to promote the country’s tourism potential. As part of the campaign, banners and information materials with the messages “Discover the Nature of Georgia” and “Georgia is the Homeland of Wine” are placed in Georgian airports. Guests receive information about Georgia’s distinctive landscape and Georgian wine as they cross the border.



<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22757>

Enhancing agriculture: Minister Otar Shamugia visits rural enterprises created with the financial help of the Government



Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia, recently visited agricultural hubs in Dedoplistskaro and Gurjaani municipalities, showcasing Georgia’s strides in agricultural development.

In Dedoplistskaro, Minister Shamugia inspected the walnut processing facility of “Roni” LTD, established with GEL 1.7 million in state support, including GEL 500,000 from the Rural Development Agency and GEL 1,200,000 from preferential agro-credit. The facility processes up to 25 tonnes of walnuts daily, benefiting from state co-financing.

Minister Shamugia highlighted the impact of state initiatives, stating, “Over GEL 29 million in preferential agro-credit supports walnut processing nationwide, with Kakheti receiving over GEL 12 million.” These investments aim to bolster rural economies and promote sustainable agriculture.

In Gurjaani, Minister Shamugia visited peach harvest operations, commending a successful project that has facilitated exports of approximately 12,000 tonnes. He noted improvements in storage facilities, crucial for maintaining product quality and international competitiveness.

Supported by state programs, “Gold Kakheti” invested GEL 600,000 in a modern cold storage facility, benefiting from GEL 160,000 in state co-financing and GEL 200,000 in preferential agro-credit. This facility supports local employment and enhances storage capacity.

With numerous cold storage facilities across Kakheti, Minister Shamugia reaffirmed Georgia’s commitment to strengthening agricultural infrastructure. “Our focus remains on ensuring sustainable growth and resilience in Georgia’s agricultural sector,” he concluded.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22767>
<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22765>

Nino Tandilashvili participates in the Informal Ministerial Meeting on the Energy Community



The First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, held a bilateral meeting with the Director of the Energy Community Secretariat, Mr. Arthur Lorkowsky, and the Head of the European Green Deal Unit, Mr Adam Cwetsch, under the Informal Ministerial on the Energy Community.

During the meeting, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili discussed Georgia's current progress in climate change, emphasizing the importance of the Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy 2050 (Lt-LEDS) adopted by Georgia in 2023 (LT LEDS).

According to the First Deputy Minister, with the mentioned document, Georgia aspires to become "carbon neutral" by 2050, which directly corresponds to the carbon neu-

trality target for 2050 announced by the European Union and the Energy Community.

Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili spoke about the process of updating the Nationally Determined Contribution, noting that the updated version is scheduled to be submitted to the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change by 2025 under the Paris Agreement. The conversation also included the deployment of a greenhouse emissions monitoring, reporting, and verification system for carbon-intensive industries in Georgia, as required by the Energy Community Treaty.

Mrs Nino Tandilashvili emphasized the significance of a draft law, "On Amendments to the Law of Georgia on Environmental Protection," prepared in compliance with EU legal acts, based on which the country will have reliable data on the annual greenhouse gas emissions from industrial sectors, which is one of the necessary prerequisites for the adoption of the EU emissions trading system.

The Director of the Energy Community Secretariat commended Georgia's progress toward fulfilling its climate change obligations and showed a willingness to provide financial and technical support.

Notably, an Informal Ministerial Meeting was held in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, with one of the primary goals of introducing the carbon pricing mechanism and the initial report of the Regulatory Impact Assessment of the European Commission.

Representatives of the European Commission, Ministers of Energy and Environmental Protection sectors, and other high-level officials of the Contracting Parties of the Ener-

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21753>

Otar Shamugia meets with Didier Trebucq, UN Resident Coordinator in Georgia

The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia, and Mr. Didier Trebucq, Resident Coordinator at the United Nations in Georgia, addressed issues on enhancing strategic collaboration in the rural and agricultural development areas, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation. During the meeting, Mr. Shamugia briefed the UN Resident Coordinator on the Ministry's current programs and the progress made in the legislative area. The Minister thanked the partners for their assistance in implementing reforms.

„We are implementing significant initiatives in agricultural and environmental protection areas with the support of the United Nations. Moreover, we have implemented several environmental reforms to achieve sustainable development goals, besides agricultural support programs are being launched, which help farmers, entrepreneurs, and rural residents produce quality products, increase income, and improve their socioeconomic conditions. Since gaining the EU candidate status, our commitments have expanded even more, which requires closer cooperation with our partners,” said Mr Otar Shamugia.

The Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Georgia emphasized the long-standing and fruitful cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, noting that the United Nations will continue to support Georgia further.

„We continue cooperating with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia on rural and agricultural development, climate change mitigation, and biodiversity protection areas. I am happy to see very fruitful cooperation with various UN organizations. It is necessary to work with the local community and promote the development of the agricultural sector to achieve sustainable development in Georgia and reduce poverty, which is a national priority,” said Didier Trebucq.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22758>

An Agreement worth USD12 million was signed with a Korean company to design irrigation systems

Under the World Bank "Georgia Resilient Agriculture, Irrigation and Land (GRAIL) project," the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture signed two international agreements with the South Korean company "Yoshin Engineering Corporation" in designing irrigation systems. Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, and Mr. Jeong Hwan Kim, Vice President of the company "Yoshin Engineering Corporation" signed the agreements.

„The Agreement was signed with a prominent South Korean company, which has great experience designing and supervising irrigation construction works. I believe the irrigation system in our country will advance to a qualitatively different level in about five / six years. We will have modern, water-efficient, and climate-smart systems that will be useful for our farmers. This will be a significant catalyst for even greater agricultural productivity and successful farming practices,” said Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze.

The respective agreements include the preparation of the detailed engineering project/design and the technical supervision of the rehabilitation works of Tashiskari, Tirifoni Upper Canal, Zemo Alazani Irrigation Systems, Shavghele Massif Drainage System, and Narekavi Reservoir. The total value of the two contracts is USD 11,936,845.

According to Mr. Jeong Hwan Kim, their company has extensive experience designing irrigation systems, noting that they wish to implement another successful project in cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia.

„Yooshin Engineering Corporation” is one of the largest consulting companies worldwide. Since 1966, the company has been working on large-scale infrastructure projects in many countries worldwide and has extensive experience designing water reservoirs and irrigation systems.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22769>

Georgia's comprehensive efforts in irrigation system rehabilitation and agricultural development



Georgia's Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, under the leadership of Minister Otar Shamugia, has embarked on a series of ambitious projects aimed at revitalizing irrigation systems and bolstering agricultural productivity across the country. These initiatives are crucial for ensuring sustainable water management and enhancing crop yields, particularly in regions heavily dependent on agriculture.

Recently, Minister Shamugia, accompanied by Mr. Giorgi Aladashvili, the State Representative of Kakheti region, visited Samtatskaro village in Dedoplistskaro municipality to inspect the rehabilitated mechanical irrigation system. This system now serves not only the village but the entire Kakheti region, facilitating the irrigation of up to 500 hectares of agricultural land. Farmers, who previously struggled with manual water transport for vineyards, now benefit from efficient irrigation practices that conserve water and boost crop quality.

The rehabilitation efforts include the installation of a 24.5 km closed irrigation network, culverts, water intake points, and hydrants equipped with wells across 11 distributors using metal pipes. Valued at GEL 4.5 million, this project exemplifies Georgia's commitment to modernizing agricultural infrastructure to meet the challenges of climate change and ensure sustainable agricultural practices.



Simultaneously, the Ministry is advancing another crucial project at the Lakbe reservoir, aiming to increase its capacity by approximately 600 thousand cubic meters. This enhancement is vital for providing reliable water access during dry seasons, crucially benefiting the agricultural lands connected to the reservoir. The project, supported by substantial funding from multiple financial institutions exceeding USD 300 million, underscores Georgia's dedication to large-scale infrastructure development aimed at agricultural sustainability.

The ongoing rehabilitation works at the Lakbe Reservoir, initiated in fall 2023 and slated for completion by the year's end, are set to significantly improve water supply in the Kvemo Samgori irrigation system's left main channel. This enhancement is projected to irrigate approximately 2,755 hectares of agricultural land, further boosting agricultural output and enhancing food security across the region.

Minister Shamugia affirmed, "One of our top priorities is the rehabilitation and modernization of irrigation systems. These efforts are critical for enhancing agricultural productivity and ensuring sustainable development. The investments we're making now will pave the way for a more resilient agricultural sector capable of meeting future challenges."

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22766>
<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22762>

Nino Tandilashvili participates in the thirty-ninth meeting of the GCF Board



The First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, participated in the thirty-ninth meeting of the GCF Board in Songdo, Republic of Korea.

During the meeting, the First Deputy Minister discussed the efficiency of organizing a regional dialogue in Eastern Europe to get more familiar with the current changes in the Green Climate Fund and effectively engage herself in the mentioned processes.

Mrs. Tandilashvili emphasized the importance of enhancing the capabilities of member countries to access the finances of the Green Climate Fund.

"The Eastern European region is still lagging behind other regions in attracting financial resources from the GCF, although the Eastern European region is facing significant challenges due to climate change. The mentioned challenges become more apparent against the backdrop of increased natural disasters. Considering all mentioned issues, it is necessary to improve the regional access to financing of the Green Climate Fund and the effective involvement of countries in the projects", said Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili.

The parties also addressed issues regarding funding within programs, collaboration with the fund, accessibility, and GCF's streamlined accreditation process.

It is essential that since January 2023, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili has served as the representative of the Eastern European region on the Governing Board of the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The First Deputy Minister is also the Chair of the Accreditation Committee of the Green Climate Fund. The Accreditation Committee is making active efforts to streamline accreditation procedures. Finances attracted from the GCF serve to undertake climate change mitigation initiatives through streamlined procedures. It is worth noting that, at the 39th meeting, the GCF Board approved 17 new climate project proposals, totaling approximately USD 1.0 billion in GCF funding. The mentioned initiatives will contribute to undertaking measures for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22773>

Minister Otar Shamugia recently visited Kakheti to oversee wheat harvesting and inspect grain drying facilities



During his visit, Minister Shamugia witnessed record-breaking wheat yields exceeding 3 tonnes per hectare, attributing this success to favorable weather conditions and robust state support. The government's provision of 60 new combine harvesters ensured timely and efficient harvesting across the region. Farmers, such as Nugzar Alughishvili, utilized state-backed agro-credits to procure essential equipment and improve their operations significantly.

Minister Shamugia emphasized the importance of enhancing both yield and quality, highlighting his inspection of a grain drying facility financed through state support, boasting a capacity of 3,300 tonnes and an investment exceeding GEL 900,000. This facility stands as a testament to Georgia's commitment to modernizing agricultural infrastructure and ensuring adequate storage capabilities for harvested crops.

In addition to supporting individual farmers, the Ministry's initiatives encompass

broader efforts to boost the sector's competitiveness. This includes the acquisition of 53 harvesters through state co-financing of GEL 7.4 million and the development of grain storage infrastructure with GEL 29.2 million, benefiting 313 projects in Kakheti alone.

„Our comprehensive approach aims to strengthen agricultural productivity and resilience,” Minister Shamugia affirmed. “By investing in equipment, infrastructure, and storage facilities, we empower farmers to achieve sustainable growth and enhance Georgia's agricultural sector.”

The Minister's visit underscored the government's commitment to fostering a thriving agricultural environment in Kakheti and beyond, ensuring that farmers have the necessary support to maximize their yields and contribute to the country's economic prosperity.



<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22764>
<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22763>

Solomon Pavliashvili and Papuna Margvelidze got acquainted with the ecological condition in the Tsana village



The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili, accompanied by the Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti State Representative, Mr. Papuna Margvelidze, got acquainted with the ecological condition in the village of Tsana, Svaneti region.

Since the closure of mining and chemical facilities in the region throughout the 1990s, there has been a challenging ecological condition at the sites of arsenic-containing waste in the village of Tsana, with arsenic-containing waste left in the open air without control. Recently, the Government of Georgia has started working on the mentioned problem by launching a “project of historical significance” through coordination with

the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

„Over the last 30 years, no government team has been able to make a decision, and this issue is being solved under the ruling Georgian Dream Party. Currently, embankment works and the construction of a protective wall have already started. Next year, the construction of the sarcophagus will begin. All these activities will provide a safe environment for the health of the local community while minimizing the impact on nature. Moreover, the road connecting the Kvemo Svaneti and Zemo Svaneti regions runs in this area, which attracts tourists. Therefore, after the completion of the project, the tourism potential of this area will expand even further,” said Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili.

According to Mr. Margvelidze, State Representative for Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti region, the process of resolving the mentioned issue is underway, and particular steps have already been taken. Last year, contaminated sites were fenced, thus preventing human and animal access to dangerous locations. Meanwhile, a decision was made to clean up arsenic-contaminated areas in Lentekhi municipality and make a specific burial ground.

Under the decree of the Government of Georgia, the Nuclear and Radiation Safety Agency LLC has been determined as the Agency responsible for the systematic management of waste disposal sites generated by the processing of arsenic-containing ore in the territory of Tsana village, Lentekhi Municipality.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22768>



GREEN
CLIMATE
FUND



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development

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

The Forest Management Planning (FMP) process is underway in Ozurgeti



The forest management planning (FMP) process for the Ozurgeti Forest District has been launched. The National Forestry Agency (NFA) already contracted the service provider company and organized the first FMP introductory meeting in Ozurgeti City on 28 June.

The meeting was attended by representatives from the Biodiversity and Forestry Department, the NFA central and Guria offices, local authorities, NGOs, and private entrepreneurs.

During the meeting, representatives from the BFD introduced the ongoing and planned processes in the Forest Sector Reform. Concurrently, CENN presented the Improved Public Participatory Approach and the ecosystem service mapping concept to the audience. Attendees expressed their willingness to participate in Participatory Ecosystem Mapping exercises scheduled for August.

The meeting was interactive, with questions covering topics such as forest boundaries, non-timber forest products, ecotourism, and other forest-related issues.

Currently, preparatory desk work for taxation fieldwork, such as delineation of forest boundaries and mapping exercises, is ongoing. Taxation fieldwork is expected to start in September. Meanwhile, the Forest Management Inventory (FMI) fieldwork, involving forest assessment using statistical methods by NFA foresters, is ongoing and is expected to be completed at the beginning of August.

Training for Ecosystem-based sustainable forest Management

The training cycle continues to support the introduction of Sustainable Forest Management principles. In July, national and international experts jointly organised training for foresters on how to incorporate the principles and criteria for sustainable ecosystem-based forest management. The training sessions took place in the Guria and Kakheti regions.

The programme included both theoretical and practical modules, covering topics such as Forest Management (FM)-related National Forest Policy (NFP) guidelines and the Forest Code (FC), national and operational level criteria and indicators of Ecosystem-Based Forest Management and international experiences in Close-to-Nature Forest Management from Slovenia and Western Balkan countries.

The practical exercises of the modules were conducted in training areas arranged as “Marteloscope sites” in two target municipalities of the ECO.Georgia project. Marteloscope sites are 1-hectare training areas where trees are inventoried according to species, diameter, height, etc. This data is stored in the special application “I+ Trainer” and is utilised for future training purposes.

The training was attended by representatives from the National Forestry Agency’s central and regional offices, the Biodiversity and Forestry Department of MEPA, and GIZ.

The goal of the training programmes is to support the introduction of close-to-nature forest management principles in the country



The Fourth Plenary Session- dedicated to the “National Roadmap for Georgia’s Transition to a Circular Economy”.

According to the findings of the EE Stove Voucher Programme satisfaction study, several major changes have been prepared based on the feedback from various stakeholders interviewed during the survey. The team working on EE stove market development, including GIZ and the Rural Development Agency (RDA) representatives, prepared changes in three areas: 1. The percentage of the subsidy; 2. Simplification of the procedure; 3. Reduced number of documents required to apply for the voucher programme.

The percentage of the subsidy for the energy-efficient stove price has increased from 30% to 50%, not exceeding 300 GEL. The amendment is already approved by the donor (Green Climate Fund) and will be in force before the upcoming heating season. This step will reduce the financial burden for the potential beneficiaries and will be a good incentive to replace traditional stoves with energy-efficient ones.

Additionally, the application procedure has been simplified. Consumers no longer need to go to Liberty Bank to apply for the voucher, instead, they can fill in the application and pay 50% of the stove price at the producers’/shop and immediately get the stove after the payment. The producer/shop is then in charge of delivering the documents – application form (1), proof of payment (2) and copy of beneficiary’s ID card (3) to the bank and acts like a mediator between the bank and beneficiary in case the documents need to be corrected.

To support market development and increase product accessibility in the regions, producers will place their products in retail shops during the new heating season. Negotiations between shop owners, producers, and the respective project team (RDA/GIZ) have already begun in July.