



Newsletter

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA

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Otar Shamugia delivers remarks at the Ministerial Meeting in Dijon, France



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia, delivered remarks at the Ministerial Meeting in Dijon, France. The event was organized by the International Vine and Wine Organization (OIV) as part of its centenary celebrations.

“From all the honorable tribunes, I am proud to say that I represent Georgia, the homeland of wine. With 8,000 years of continuous history in viticulture and winemaking, it is an integral part of our culture and identity. At the same time, viticulture and winemaking are key drivers of our present economy, representing one of the leading sectors and an important contributor to our nation’s growth”, stated the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Shamugia, at the Ministerial in the city of Dijon.

The Ministerial meeting, which gathered Ministers and high-ranking officials from 30 countries, served as a platform for Georgia to highlight its growing influence in the global wine industry.

According to Minister Shamugia, the quality and unique taste of Georgian wine are its key hallmarks. Over the past few years, Georgian wine exports have surged, with up to 100 million liters of wine now being sold in 70 countries worldwide. “Demand for Georgian wine is growing as it gains popularity in more markets,” he added.

In his address, Shamugia emphasized the importance of collaboration with the OIV in promoting and developing the Georgian wine industry. “We look forward to continuing our productive cooperation with the OIV, which has been instrumental in supporting the development and global promotion of Georgian wines. This partnership is especially crucial as Georgia pursues its path as an EU candidate country,” noted the Minister.

To mark the centenary of OIV, the participants adopted a declaration reaffirming their commitment to the organization’s role as an inter-governmental, scientific, and technical leader in the wine and vine sector. “The adoption of this declaration signifies our unified commitment to advancing the sector and tackling its challenges together,” said Shamugia.

The Georgian delegation in Dijon also included Mr. Levan Mekhuzla, Head of the National Wine Agency, and Mrs. Ekaterine Kokaia, Acting Ambassador of Georgia to France.

It is worth mentioning that the International Organization of Vine and Wine (OIV) was founded in Paris, on November 29, 1924, by the joint agreement of Italy, France, Spain, Luxembourg, Tunisia, Hungary, Greece, and Portugal.

Today, the OIV has 50 member countries, 18 observer organizations, and over 500 industry experts working to make recommendations on wine production, winemaking practices, viticulture, and grape processing while assisting international organizations and setting global wine standards.



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At the initiative of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, the Day of the Forester was celebrated at the Botanical Garden



The Minister, Otar Shamugia, congratulated the foresters on their professional day and expressed gratitude for their contributions to the development of the forestry sector. During the event, the most successful foresters of the year were recognized and awarded with prizes and symbolic gifts for their dedication to this challenging and often risky profession. The celebration also featured the video clip-“I am a Forester.”

“I extend my heartfelt congratulations to every forester on this special day and express my deep appreciation for their dedicated work. Forestry is a profession of pride, nobility, and great responsibility. Foresters need to have proper working conditions, fair compensation, and the right equipment to perform their duties effectively. We have committed to improving this area over the years and remain dedicated to further strengthening the capacity of our Forestry Agency. Furthermore, it is a priority on our agenda to ensure foresters with social guarantees, proper infrastructure, and the tools necessary for their work, and once again, I sincerely thank each forester for their conscientious service to our country”, said Mr Shamugia.

According to Minister Shamugia, the forestry sector has achieved significant results that will bring even greater benefits to the country’s population. To fully reap these benefits, it is essential that forest resources are

properly managed, protected, maintained, and restored, and foresters play a crucial and unique role in this process.

The Chair of the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, Mrs Maia Bitadze, attended the event.

Mrs Bitadze congratulated the foresters on their professional day and thanked them for their arduous and specialized efforts, known as working in the forests.

“On behalf of our Committee in the Parliament of Georgia, I would like to express my full support for the Ministry, the Forestry Agency, and every forester. We are committed to working closely with the Ministry to enhance the quality of the Agency’s work, and we will do everything in our power to help achieve this goal”, said Mrs Maia Bitadze.

The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr Kakha Kakabadze, congratulated the foresters on their professional day and thanked them and the representatives of non-governmental and international organizations for their support and efforts to protect the unique resources of the country.

According to Mr Kakabadze, the scope of forest restoration is expanding each year; however, illegal forest use remains a significant challenge. Moreover, the National Forestry Agency and the Department of Environmental Supervision are ensured with technical and human resources to tackle this issue.

During the event, the Head of the National Forestry Agency, Mr Kakha Tsertsvadze, awarded well-known people, athletes, actors, singers, and media representatives for their ongoing participation in information campaigns.

Representatives of the legislative body, the academic circle, environmental non-governmental, and partner international organizations attended the event.



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The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) celebrated World Food Day 2024 in Kutaisi



On October 16, 2024, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, celebrated World Food Day in Kutaisi. The event was organized with the support of the Imereti Regional Administration and Kutaisi City Hall.

“Every year, the FAO marks World Food Day, and the Ministry is always actively involved in this important event. Promoting food production, food safety, and food security remains our top priority. The Ministry is committed to ensuring the sustainable development of agro-food production in the country, which significantly improves the population’s access to food,” said Tengiz Nasaridze, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia.

World Food Day, observed in over 150 countries, is one of the most significant dates on the UN calendar. This year’s theme, “Right to Food for a Better Life and a Better Future,” underscores the importance of guaranteeing food security and fostering inclusive, efficient, and sustainable agri-food systems that ensure access to healthy, diverse food. The right to food is recognized as a basic human right.

As part of the celebration, the agricultural market “Unique Georgian

Taste” showcased traditional food products, including dairy items, honey, dried fruits, Georgian bread, and various niche products from farmers across Georgia. Children enjoyed fun activities while the educational installation was set up to raise awareness about food losses and the redistribution of surplus food.

The event was attended by notable figures, including FAO representative in Georgia, Raimund Jehle; Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Tengiz Nasaridze; Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure, Mzia Giorgobiani; Deputy State Commissioner of Imereti, Besik Gopodze; and Deputy Mayor of Kutaisi, Mamuka Khimshiashvili.

Each year, FAO recognizes Food Heroes—individuals who contribute to advancing food security and sustainable agricultural practices. This year, the “Hero of Food” award was presented to Lali Turabelidze, a honey producer from Tskaltubo in the Imereti region, who markets her products under the brand “Tatula.” Turabelidze’s work is rooted in sustainable agricultural practices, and she has participated in numerous FAO initiatives, showcasing her products at agrarian markets.

“World Food Day holds special significance for FAO,” said Raimund Jehle, FAO’s representative in Georgia. “Today, approximately 738 million people face hunger due to conflict, extreme weather, and economic challenges. This year, we call for global solidarity to transform agri-food systems - building inclusive, sustainable systems that eliminate inequality, enhance resilience, and promote sustainable development. Only by securing access to healthy, nutritious, and sustainable food can we ensure the fundamental human right to food and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.”

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Georgia Advances Sustainable Forestry Reforms in Alignment with European Standards at the FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference



At the 9th FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference in Bonn, Germany, Georgia’s First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Nino Tandilashvili, underscored the country’s commitment to sustainable forestry as a foundation for environmental reform. During this high-level political meeting, representatives from 46 European countries and EU agencies signed the Bonn Ministerial Declaration and Bonn Decision, advancing shared goals for sustainable forest management across Europe. “Along with other European member states, we signed a declaration committed to enhancing forest management and putting sustainable forest management principles into practice,” Tandilashvili stated, reinforcing Georgia’s dedication to a sustainable approach in forestry. These reforms are part of a larger strategy that aligns with European Union standards, particularly following Georgia’s designation as an EU candidate country in 2023. As Tandilashvili highlighted, “Georgia is ready to bring its forest and environmental policies

into compliance with EU standards.” The conference discussions highlighted various priorities, including addressing climate change impacts, enhancing financial support for forestry projects, promoting forestry education, and fostering local community engagement. These themes are integral to Georgia’s recent initiatives, which include enacting the Forest Code, establishing a National Forest Inventory, and restoring over 5,000 hectares of forest in the last decade. Furthermore, 440,000 hectares of Georgian forest, covering 14% of the country’s forested area, are now classified under “highly protected” status. The Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Dmitry Mariyasin, praised Georgia’s advancements, acknowledging that “Geor-

gia holds an advanced position in environmental governance and the improvement of standards.” This progress includes ongoing air protection initiatives and strategies for biodiversity conservation in cooperation with international organizations. Reflecting on Georgia’s commitment, Tandilashvili expressed, “Forests are indeed a valuable resource for current and future generations. Georgia is reconsidering its approach towards forests while making efforts to protect this unique resource.” With sustainable forest management as a priority, Georgia aims to continue strengthening its environmental policies and contribute actively to the European Green Deal’s broader goals.



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Solomon Pavliashvili: “The adoption of innovation in agriculture is a key component to the sector’s growth.”



Representatives from the government, academia, and non-governmental organizations convened to discuss the adoption of Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) in Georgia.

Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, emphasized the importance of strengthening ties between producers and the scientific community. He highlighted the exchange of global best practices to establish a unified agricultural education system and develop a model tailored to Georgia’s specific needs. *“AKIS is an agricultural management model grounded in knowledge, innovation, and education. We need to learn how to apply scientific innovations in agriculture. Many research findings have yet to be implemented in practice. With the introduction of this project in Georgia, the European Union directive will be fulfilled, and the EU management model will be adapted,”* said Mr. Pavliashvili.

The Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) aims to enhance the production of higher quality, eco-friendly agricultural products by strengthening knowledge and innovation in agriculture and rural areas.

The Environmental Information and Education Center of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture established the AKIS initiative with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

“Georgia is a country rich in agricultural traditions and culture. Without robust research and innovation, our nation would not have cultivated over 500 grape varieties. However, despite these traditions, Georgia is not self-sufficient in food production. New crops and varieties must be developed and, more importantly, adapted to market demands. Therefore, fostering the adoption of technologies and education in the agricultural sector is crucial,” said Beka Tagauri, National Programme Coordinator at the Swiss Cooperation Office (SDC).

The members of the Parliament of Georgia, officials from relevant ministries and agencies, representatives of higher education institutions and colleges, as well as representatives from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) attended the meeting.

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Launching the large-scale project for restoring and planting the Rustavi floodplain forest



“We are working on an important project to restore the Rustavi floodplain ecosystem, marking a significant step toward developing the city of Rustavi. The project will be financed by funds accumulated from environmental fines and penalties. This initiative sets the first precedent since the Law of Georgia on Environmental Liability came into force, which enabled us to adopt this approach. The project will improve air quality in Rustavi. At the same time, the residents and guests of Rustavi city will enjoy a very beautiful, well-organized, and vast recreational space”, declared the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia, during the presentation of the Rustavi floodplain forest restoration project.

The project will encompass 160 hectares of floodplain area, where tourist and recreational infrastructure will be organized. The plans include walking and cycling paths, rest areas, guard cottages, and a presentation space. Additionally, camera traps will be installed to observe local wildlife (birds, animals), and water purification barriers will be placed in the Mtkvari River. Approximately 60,000 tree saplings will be planted on 24 hectares, contributing to ecosystem regeneration. The park will ensure a safe, favorable environment for physical activities and an opportunity for educational institutions to hold educational seminars on environmental protection issues.

The Mayor of Rustavi, Mrs. Nino Latsabidze, MPs Mrs Maia Bitadze and Mr Irakli Shatakishvili attended the event.

The Mayor of Rustavi thanked the civil activists, the Parliament of Geor-

gia, and the Georgian Government team for supporting the project and making efforts to improve the ecological condition in Rustavi city.

“This space is the “lungs of our city” which was unfortunately destroyed in the 1990s. Today, our generation and our team have the opportunity to work together and, through joint efforts, restore a unique floodplain forest that will heal and improve the ecological condition of the city. This is an unprecedented, huge project, and the residents of Rustavi have been waiting for it for a long time,” said Mrs Nino Latsabidze.

The MP, Mrs. Maia Bitadze, emphasized the scope of the project, noting that the Rustavi floodplain forest restoration project will support the recreational development within the city, which will be attractive to local inhabitants and tourists.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, with joint efforts with Rustavi City Hall, will repair and regenerate the Rustavi forest floodplain on 160 ha of area. This is an unprecedented project, which will be implemented through funds accumulated from the environmental protection fund,” said Mrs. Maia Bitadze.

The finances for implementing the project were allocated from the environmental fund, which was created through monetary compensation paid for the environmental damage.

Environmental funds exist in almost all European countries, but Georgia is the first in Eastern European countries to create such a fund. The fund aims to plan and implement necessary measures in various municipalities to improve the environment. It is worth mentioning that the Rustavi floodplain forest restoration project is the first project funded by the Environmental Fund.

The floodplain forest is within the borders of Rustavi municipality, on both banks of the Mtkvari River between the old and new bridges.

According to the floodplain forest development strategy, this section is currently an unused space where the ecosystem is degraded and polluted with various types of waste.



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The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Tengiz Nasaridze, delivered remarks at the conference “Reducing food losses and waste” in Budapest



The conference, organized by the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture and the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), was held in Budapest, the capital city of Hungary, under the auspices of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The topics covered included food waste and the sustainable development of food systems. Hungarian Minister of Agriculture, Mr. István Nagy, delivered opening remarks at the conference.

During the panel discussion at the conference, Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze noted that in 2023, Georgia adopted the law on “Food Loss and Food Waste Reduction, and Food Donation”. Thereby, Georgia became the

first country in the region to lay the foundation for a qualitatively new system through the adoption of this law, which aims to adopt measures linked to preventing and reducing food losses and waste at each step of the food supply chain, including encouraging food recovery and further redistribution.

“Today’s conference and meetings held within the framework of the conference are an important platform for sharing international experience, including for Georgia, which is taking the first steps in this direction. Complex work is underway with FAO, which, on the one hand, will ensure the reduction of food losses and waste in the country and, on the other hand, will make safe, surplus food more accessible to the population,” said Mr. Nasaridze.

The top officials of the Ministry of Agriculture from ten countries attended the conference “Reducing Food Losses and Waste”.

High-ranking officials from Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Cyprus participated in the Ministerial panel discussion in addition to Georgia. Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Mrs. Tamar Liluashvili, attended the events along with the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia.

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Georgia launches a Strategy for Sustainable Sludge Management and Reuse in Partnership with ADB



The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), has initiated a strategic project aimed at sustainable sludge management and reuse in the country. The Italian company IDROSTUDI SRL will implement the project with the support of international experts.

The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili, alongside representatives from the Asian Development

Bank and IDROSTUDI SRL, discussed the challenges in this area and outlined the key objectives of the project.

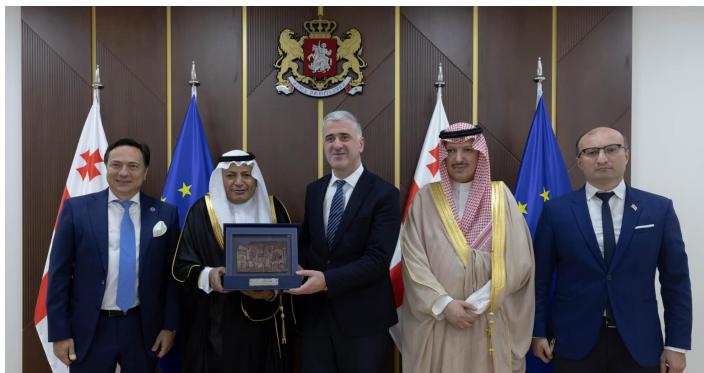
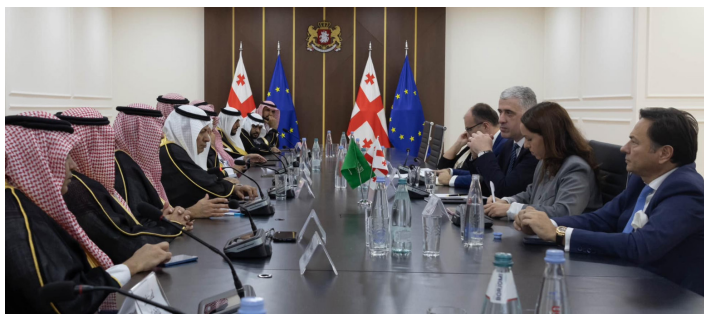
The one-year project aims to develop a comprehensive sludge management plan tailored to Georgia’s specific needs, including the launch of a pilot program. The project focuses on four main tasks:

1. Assessing the current situation and planning the next steps based on existing conditions.
2. Developing a legal framework aligned with international standards.
3. Engaging and training stakeholders, including the state and private sectors.
4. Developing pilot projects in selected municipalities.

“Due to the increased volume of sludge and the establishment of new treatment facilities, Georgia is required to take effective sludge management measures. This is a new area for our country, and it is crucial to ensure the active involvement of both the state and private sectors,” said Deputy Minister Pavliashvili.

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Otar Shamugia meets the members of the Saudi Arabian delegation



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr Otar Shamugia, met with the Federation of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry President, H.I. Hassan Al-Huwaizi, and business sector representatives.

During the meeting, the parties discussed the possibilities of investing in Georgia's agricultural sector and the prospects of deepening bilateral trade relations.

According to the Minister, countries have effective trade and economic cooperation with a significant growth potential.

Mr. Shamugia spoke extensively on Georgia's flexible investment climate and presented detailed information regarding the state's agricultural development projects.

The parties focused on the opportunities to increase the export of agricultural products, specifically hazelnut crops, juices, vegetable juices, and blueberries.

The President of the Federation of United Chambers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expressed gratitude to the Minister for his hospitality, noting that Georgia has significant agricultural growth potential and is an appealing investment destination.

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Tengiz Nasaridze: “The Law on Agriculture and Rural Development fully complies with the requirements of the European Union”



The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze, participated in the session of the Civil Committee of the Interagency Coordination Council for Agriculture and Rural Development.

During this session, the civil sector was introduced to the new law on “Agriculture and Rural Development”.

The respective law aims to promote rural entrepreneurship and enhance farmer competitiveness by establishing the general principles and requirements for formulating agricultural and rural development policies, including the competencies of the authorized state agencies responsible for their management.

According to Mr. Nasaridze, the law was drafted in close collaboration with European counterparts and fully meets EU requirements.

“This law is a significant milestone for the industry, as there was no single legislative framework in previous years that systematically regulated agricultural matters. Under the law, structural organi-

zation, sector development targets, policy principles, and various terms were defined in numerous directions. Like other advanced countries, Georgia has now adopted legal approaches to developing its agricultural industry,” Mr. Nasaridze stated.

The Law on “Agriculture and Rural Development” was developed with the technical assistance of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the financial support of the European Union.

Mr. Nodar Kereselidze, National Project Manager, UNDP, believes that the adoption of the law on “Agriculture and Rural Development” represents a step forward in Georgia's integration with the EU.

“This law aims to align agriculture and rural development policies of Georgia with those of the E U. As a result, Georgia will move closer to the EU in this area, while the programs implemented by the state for farmers will become more effective, productive, and profitable, “-said Mr. Nodar Kereselidze.

Civil sector representatives have welcomed the law, noting that it brings the field under a unified framework.

According to Sofo Diasamidze, Director of the Organic Aquaculture Development Association FORENJI, the law will promote the collaboration of state agencies, the civil sector, and associations.

Representatives of the European Union, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Heads of relevant Departments of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia attended the session.

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The Forest Education Concept is complete

To contribute to the implementation of the forest sector reform road-map, the forest education concept was developed by ECO.Georgia project.

The vision for the forestry education sector is to create a structured and holistic education system by 2030, capable of meeting both the quantitative and qualitative workforce demands of the sector. The Forest Code (2020) legally mandates forestry education and appropriate staffing, stipulating that at least one forester with a university degree must oversee every 3,500 hectares and that forest work specialists must possess vocational training.

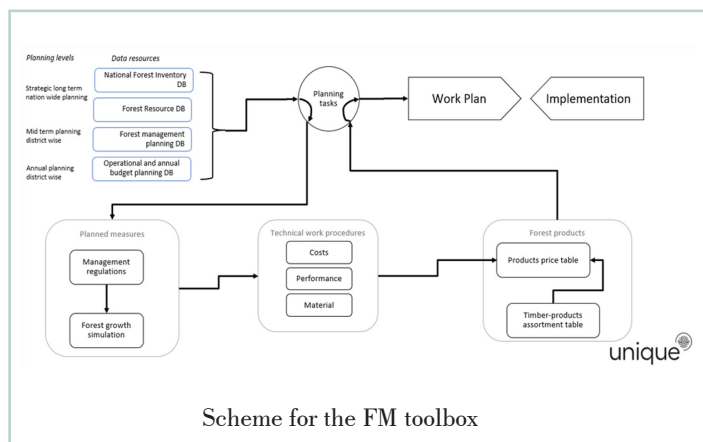
The concept outlines the current situation of forestry education in Georgia and aims to contribute to establishing a structured approach to its necessary development starting from 2024. The concept addresses the challenges, including the lack of qualified human resources in the field of forestry and vision and approaches regarding the further development of forestry education – both in academic and vocational settings.

The proposed approach encompasses the following aspects:

- a capacity development and retraining system for the existing staff of forest management bodies (NFA, APA, AFA) and the private sector
- the promotion of forest work specialists programme and short-cycle courses to attract new enrolments.
- Proposal for the establishment of a dual education system. This initiative aims to enhance the number of graduates working in the sector and contribute to a more labour-relevant vocational education and training (VET) system.
- Knowledge management and information dissemination through the newly established Knowledge Management and Training Platform (KMTP), which will serve as the primary hub for knowledge sharing and online training within the forestry sector.
- Enhanced attractiveness of the forest sector as employers (which can be fulfilled through a competitive salary, diverse employability, safe and good working conditions, increased reputation, and social recognition)

Some of the proposed approaches can go beyond the project’s capacity and scope and require the MEPA’s intervention.

The works to develop the Forest Modeling Toolbox for the Forest Information and Monitoring System (FIMS) are being advanced



The development of the forest modelling toolbox has been advanced. In October number of consultation meetings took place among the international consultants and the representatives of the departments of the National Forestry Agency, to collect information needed for the Forest Modeling Toolbox.

The international consultants continue working together with the national expert, making the toolbox complete and functional for the forest management bodies.

The forest modelling toolbox will serve as a planning and controlling instrument incorporated in the Forest Information and Monitoring System (FIMS), allowing the simulation of the growth and development of forests, and management interventions and allowing to evaluation of economic impacts.

Energy-efficient stoves demonstration bus travelling in the municipalities

Within the framework of the ECO.Georgia project, the Environmental NGO Ecovision launched a demonstration initiative featuring an energy-efficient stove bus that toured the target municipalities of the ECO.Georgia project. This initiative provided an opportunity for local communities to observe new stove designs and learn about the advantages of energy-efficient models compared to common stoves, which are mostly used by households relying on firewood.



© Ecovision: Demonstration bus visiting the target municipality

During the bus's visits to popular gathering places within these municipalities, residents were not only introduced to various new stove designs but were also informed about the environmental, economic, and health benefits these stoves offer. These advantages include reduced fuel consumption, lower indoor pollution, increased heated space, enhanced comfort, and a longer life cycle for the stoves - all of which contribute to reduced pressure on forests, a healthier environment, financial savings, and improved quality of life.

Moreover, community members were informed about how they could participate in the co-financing programme administered by the Rural Development Agency. It is noteworthy that the application process for this programme has been simplified, making it more accessible to households. Additionally, the percentage of co-financing has increased from 30% to 50%, serving as an incentive for families to purchase an energy-efficient stove for their homes.