



# Newsletter

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA

JANUARY 2025

## Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture David Songulashvili meets the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Hungary to Georgia, Anna Maria Sikó



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. David Songulashvili hosted the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Hungary to Georgia, Mrs. Anna Maria Sikó.

During the meeting, the parties explored opportunities for future collaboration, focusing on the potential for enhancing trade and economic relations between the two countries.

The Minister emphasized the potential for cooperation in the environmental protection and agricultural development fields.

The discussions also covered deepening cooperation in science, aquaculture, livestock, grain, and tea production.

Hungarian Ambassador Sikó highlighted that Georgia is a friendly country to Hungary and expressed Hungary's readiness for multilateral, effective cooperation and the sharing of experience.

The First Deputy Minister Nino Tandilashvili, representatives from the Hungarian Embassy in Georgia, and relevant services of the Ministry attended the meeting.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22880/>

## Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture David Songulashvili hosted the representatives of the World Bank Mission



Mr. David Songulashvili, Georgia's Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, met with Dr. Holger Kray, the World Bank's Agriculture and Food Practice Manager for Europe and Central Asia.

The discussion focused on strengthening collaboration in irrigation development and sustainable land management. Particular emphasis was placed on climate-smart agriculture, improving farmers' access to modern technology and equipment, and mitigating agricultural risks associated with global warming.

"Several key initiatives are being implemented in Georgia with the support of the World Bank, contributing to sustainable agricultural development. Guided by the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy and the Action Plan, the World Bank's cooperation and involvement are essential for their successful execution, particularly in sharing cutting-edge technologies," said Mr. Songulashvili.

Dr. Holger Kray expressed gratitude for the productive partnership and reaffirmed the World Bank's readiness to launch new projects in Georgia.

"Climate-smart agriculture initiatives can be implemented more effectively since environmental protection and agricultural development are now managed under one Ministry in Georgia," noted Dr. Kray.

One notable initiative discussed was the Georgia Resilient Agriculture, Irrigation, and Land (GRAIL) project, supported by the World Bank with a total budget of USD 150 million. This project aims to enhance irrigation and drainage services for farmers, boost agricultural productivity, and strengthen institutional capacity for national irrigation and land management. Representatives from the relevant departments of the World Bank and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture attended the meeting.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22887/>

## Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture David Songulashvili meets the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Georgia Faig Guliyev



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. David Songulashvili, recently met with Mr. Faig Guliyev, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Georgia.

The discussions focused on opportunities to deepen bilateral trade and enhance economic cooperation, particularly in agriculture and environmental protection.

“Under the leadership of the Head of the Government of Georgia, our first official visit after the elections was to the Republic of Azerbaijan. I would like to express my gratitude for the warm hospitality once again. The historical and friendly relations between our nations form a solid foundation for effective and successful collaboration in agriculture and environmental protection,” stated Mr. David Songulashvili.

Ambassador Guliyev congratulated Minister Songulashvili on his appointment and expressed his enthusiasm for future joint endeavors. “A significant part of my professional life has been closely connected with Georgia, and I hold a great interest in environmental protection and agricultural development. I am confident, that we will implement several mutually beneficial projects,” said Mr. Faig Guliyev.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22882>

## Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture David Songulashvili meets the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to Georgia, Ashot Smbatyan

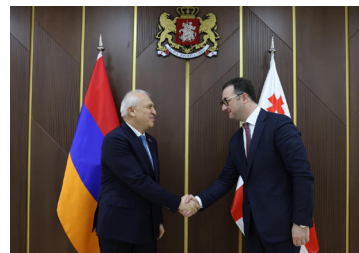


During the meeting, the sides addressed current Georgia-Armenia collaboration and future opportunities, specifically, the potential for deepening trade and economic partnerships between the two countries.

The parties emphasized the importance of bilateral cooperation and sharing experiences in the sustainable management of water resources, winemaking, agritourism, and aquaculture sector.

The Armenian Ambassador congratulated Mr. David Songulashvili on his appointment as a Minister and wished him success in his future endeavors.

According to Mr. Smbatyan, Georgia is a friendly country of Armenia, and accordingly, there is a constant readiness for multilateral and effective cooperation.



<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/22884>

## David Songulashvili: The Potential for Agricultural Trade Between Georgia and Armenia is fairly substantial

The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. David Songulashvili, accompanied by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, paid an official visit to the Republic of Armenia. During the visit, the Minister emphasized the importance of strengthening trade relations in the agricultural sector and enhancing cooperation in environmental protection between the two neighboring countries.

“The potential for trade between Georgia and Armenia is substantial. One of the crucial issues is boosting the export of agricultural products. We are committed to fostering active cooperation in this regard. Additionally, we have several environmental protection issues to address collectively in a regional context. By working together and reaching a consensus, we can implement effective solutions. There are also valuable practices that both countries can share, further strengthening our collaboration,” stated Mr. Songulashvili.

The Minister highlighted that trade in agricultural products between Georgia and Armenia is already dynamic, with wine being one of Georgia’s key exports to Armenia. However, he underscored that there is significant room for growth, and by deepening cooperation, both nations can unlock new opportunities and achieve remarkable results in agricultural trade and environmental sustainability.





GREEN  
CLIMATE  
FUND



გერმანიის  
თანამშრომლობა  
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development

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



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“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

## Supporting activities for the artisans in the regions of Kakheti, Guria and Mtskheta-Mtianeti



© GHCA: Tatia Khavtasi, Chichilaki masterclass

To develop and strengthen forest-related value chains - timber, non-timber forest products, and eco-tourism, one of the key initiatives aims to boost the marketing potential of wooden handicraft products and support local artisans, implemented in collaboration with the Georgian Heritage Craft Association (GHCA).

Local woodmasters from Kakheti, Guria, and Mtskheta-Mtianeti have received training in business skills, pricing, product diversification, digital marketing, and export regulations. Additionally, they received business consultations and participated in field trips to local museums for inspiration. Several strategies have been employed to increase visibility and sales, such as linking artisans with tourism providers, organizing info tours for travel agencies, participating



in trade fairs, and launching social media campaigns to showcase each artisan's story.

The info tours for travel agency representatives were particularly impactful. They provided constructive feedback to local workshops and considered to include the masterclasses in their tours to Guria. One tour operator shared, "The Chichilaki workshop was a pleasant surprise - I'll definitely offer these experiences to my groups."

Recently, product labeling for more than 50 items was completed, and a Christmas Fair took place from December 7th to January 9th in Tbilisi's central malls, such as City Mall, HomeMart and Ethnodesign store.



© GHCA: Christmas fair in city mall

Promotional videos highlighting the artisans' stories and passion for their craft are currently being produced and will be launched by GHCA through social media campaigns by March. They will also continue meetings with tourism service providers to explore potential collaborations.



© GHCA: Vazha Dumbadze: "If I find a differently shaped piece of wood in the forest, I can't even sleep before I take it home and make something out of it"



Artisans have expressed gratitude for the support, noting that "such initiatives will motivate future generations to learn and preserve these traditions. Your project gifted me a huge excitement and supported me a lot - I am grateful even for the feeling of not being alone" - says one of the wood-master in his interview.



## Closing event of the sub-project “MSE Development Support for Sustainable Forest Management”

On 22nd January, the closing event for the project “MSE Development Support for Sustainable Forest Management” organised by Sparkassenstiftung took place.

The event was opened with a warm welcome from Papuna Kapanadze, Head of the Forest Policy Division, who highlighted the importance of collaboration with stakeholders and sustainable practices in the development of the forest sector.

Salome Moistrapishvili, the Country Director at Sparkassenstiftung Georgia, followed with

a presentation on the project’s key outcomes. She focused on the significant impact the project had on beneficiaries, particularly those operating in the timber forest products (TFP), non-timber forest products (NTFP), and eco-tourism sectors.

A key highlight of the event was the sharing of success stories by grantees from the NTFP, TFP, and eco-tourism sectors. The beneficiaries described their efforts to promote and sustain their businesses.



© giz: Story of the “Carpenter’s House”



© giz: Story of the “Badishi”



© giz: Story of “Merkani”

The afternoon sessions provided an in-depth look at the sawmill sector, with a panel discussion exploring its needs and opportunities. Experts and industry representatives discussed the challenges faced by sawmill businesses and explored potential solutions for enhancing sustainability and efficiency within the sector.

Ramaz Tkemaladze, an expert in primary wood processing, introduced a new guidebook designed specifically for sawmill businesses. The guide provides essential insights into best practices in wood processing and aims to help sawmill operators improve productivity while maintaining high environmental standards.

The event also featured presentations from key state institutions, including the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, the National Forestry Agency, and the Department of Environmental Supervision. Representatives from these institutions outlined their roles in forest sector development and shared their plans and ongoing processes relevant to beneficiaries’ work.

Simultaneously, a masterclass on sales management, provided valuable tools and strategies for project grantees, to scale up their businesses effectively.

The closing event not only celebrated the project’s achievements but also offered an opportunity for future collaborations.



© giz: Guide for the primary wood processing