



Newsletter

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA

OCTOBER 2025

David Songulashvili Meets with President of the International Sommelier Guild



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. David Songulashvili, met with Mr. Joseph Miller, President of the International Sommelier Guild (ISG). The parties discussed issues related to advancing viticulture, diversifying wine markets, promoting the sommelier profession, and integrating ISG programs in Georgian universities and vocational institutions.

“The ISG President’s visit is significant for Georgia. Distinguished guests like Mr. Miller help elevate awareness of Georgian wine in international markets. They serve as ambassadors, helping us identify markets and enhance wine recognition. Additionally, sommeliers’ engagement within Georgia drives improvements in wine quality,” stated Minister Songulashvili.

During the meeting, the President of the Guild emphasized the importance of international partnerships, noting that the ISG has delivered educational courses on Georgian wine in multiple countries and in 14 languages for years.

“Next month, we are launching new courses in cooperation with the Georgian Technical University. For our organization, this represents a unique opportunity to further raise global awareness of Georgian wines. Expanding our educational program means we can introduce Georgian wines to entirely new continents—be it in Asian countries, China, Japan, or the markets of Latin America—communicating in various languages. We strongly believe that through joint efforts, we can significantly increase the global popularity of Georgian wines,” said Mr. Joseph Miller. The International Sommelier Guild (ISG), founded in 1982, is now a leading global educational institution in the wine industry. The organization operates in over 40 countries and offers instruction in more than 60 institutions in 14 languages. ISG programs cover professional sommelier training, winemaking, wine business management, culinary arts, and food and beverage studies. Under Joseph Miller’s leadership, ISG has become a global leader in sommelier education and certification, supporting students’ professional development and the establishment of international standards in the industry.

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David Songulashvili: “We aim to ensure that future projects deliver even greater economic benefits to the country and make a meaningful contribution to improving the quality of life for our citizens”

The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. David Songulashvili, paid a working visit to the Racha region.

“Today, we met with local entrepreneurs and representatives from our Agencies in the Racha region. Direct communication is the best way to understand the needs of local communities. This information serves as the foundation for future projects that must bring even greater economic benefit to the country and enhance the well-being of our citizens,” said Minister Songulashvili.

The Minister emphasized that the effective implementation of state policy relies on the proper functioning of the Ministry’s regional offices. “Effective, results-driven work depends on appropriate infrastructure, modern equipment, and a motivated, highly qualified workforce. We are making active progress in this direction, and I’m confident that in the near future, we will be fully equipped and will have state-of-the-art facilities nationwide—delivering quality services to communities through dedicated professionals,” Mr. Songulashvili noted.

During his visit to Racha, the Minister met with small and medium-sized business owners and visited several enterprises, including the “Bimbili” winery, Itsisi Winery LLC, and the Racha Natural Products honey production cooperative.

“Racha is preparing for the upcoming grape harvest. We saw the preparations firsthand and discussed the needs of local winegrowers. It is important to think about how to better utilize Racha’s agricultural potential. We are evaluating what steps we can take, within the Ministry’s mandate, to further strengthen the region,” the Minister added.

The Minister also held meetings at the regional office of the National Food Agency, which oversees food safety, veterinary, and plant protection services across all four municipalities in the region (Ambrolauri, Oni, Tsageri, Lentekhi). He visited the newly established regional office of the National Forestry Agency and met with its staff. The Agency’s services will benefit residents of approximately 250 villages in the region. In addition, the Minister reviewed ongoing renovation works at the regional

office of the Department of Environmental Supervision in Western Georgia. He visited rangers at the temporary administrative building of the Protected Areas and inspected new equipment acquired for the Racha National Park. "I would like to emphasize that the expansion of protected areas opens up new opportunities for Racha. This development will allow the region to become a new point of attraction and further promote tourism," stated Minister Songulashvili.

The Minister also visited the family-run hotel Askroni, which is a ben-

eficiary of the "Promotion of Entrepreneur Activity in Mountainous Region," implemented by the Rural Development Agency.

Minister Songulashvili was accompanied by the State Representative in the Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti region, Mr. Papuna Margvelidze; Member of Parliament representing the region, Mr. Gocha Enukidze; First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili; heads of the Ministry's subordinate Agencies; and representatives of local self-government.



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<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/24149>
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Phase II of Arsenic Waste Sarcophagus Construction Completed in Tsana 3, Lentekhi Municipality



The second phase of constructing a sarcophagus for arsenic-containing waste in the Tsana 3 area of Lentekhi Municipality has been completed. Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of

Georgia, Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili; Deputy State Representative of Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti, Mr. Berdia Chankseliani; and Head of the Nuclear and Radiation Safety Agency, Mrs. Nino Utiashvili, visited Lentekhi Municipality to inspect the conservation work of the sarcophagus. The project involves the secure placement of 50,500 m³ of arsenic-containing waste into the sarcophagus at the Tsana 3 site.

By 2026, Lentekhi Municipality is expected to be fully cleared of arsenic-containing waste from the Tsana 1 and Tsana 2 areas.

"This project will significantly improve the region's ecological condition, contributing to both tourism development and increased economic activity," noted Deputy Minister Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili.

The Nuclear and Radiation Safety Agency continues to carry out daily monitoring of the ongoing sarcophagus construction activities.

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David Songulashvili Meets with the Ambassador of France



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. David Songulashvili, met with the Ambassador of France to Georgia, H.E. Olivier Courtes.

During the meeting, the parties discussed current issues of bilateral relations and opportunities for further cooperation.

Minister Songulashvili highlighted the significance of the reforms in environmental protection and agricultural areas. He emphasized that sharing France's experience in water resource management and disaster risk reduction would be valuable.

The discussion also touched upon strengthening cooperation in food security, the adoption of modern technologies in the agricultural sector, knowledge and expertise sharing, boosting exports, irrigation development, and enhancing laboratory capabilities.

Additionally, the Minister drew attention to the upcoming enforcement of regulations concerning the use of single-use plastics that come into contact with food.

The Deputy Minister, Mr. Lasha Dolidze, attended the meeting.

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David Songulashvili: "Our core principle is to fully harness the potential of agricultural production, support farmers and entrepreneurs, and help them create and sell as much high-quality Georgian products as possible."



Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. David Songulashvili, visited the Shida Kartli region, where he met with farmers and entrepreneurs and personally observed the ongoing apple harvesting and storage process.

"Apple harvesting and storage are in full swing in the Shida Kartli region. Today, we met with farmers and entrepreneurs in Gori Municipality. It is crucial for us to ensure that the process is carried out in an organized and coordinated manner. For this purpose, a Coordinating Center has been established," the Minister stated. According to the Minister, Georgian apples are successfully marketed both domestically and internationally. It is essential that not a single kilogram of produce goes to waste. The state program supporting the selling of non-standard apples is fully operational, enabling the processing of surplus and lower-grade fruit into apple concentrate - a high-value export product that generates direct economic benefits for the country.

"Our core principle is to fully harness the agricultural production potential we have, support farmers and entrepreneurs in producing and marketing as much high-quality Georgian produce as possible. This is the foundation of a strong economy and, consequently, the well-being of our citizens. Starting January 1, the Rural Development Agency's state programs will be presented in a renewed format. Our visits to the regions are aimed at understanding the real needs of farmers - and these needs will shape the design of new programs, all of which will ultimately support the production of quality Georgian goods," said Minister Songulashvili.

During his visit to Gori, the Minister received detailed information at the Coordinating Center on the progress of apple harvesting and storage.

The Minister also visited the apple orchards of "Tiriponi Gardens", the cold storage facility operated by "Tiriponi Fruits", and the processing plant of Geo Concentrate, where he observed the apple processing workflow on-site.

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Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, David Songulashvili, met with the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Italian Republic to Georgia, Massimiliano D'Antuono



During the meeting, the parties explored avenues for future collaboration and discussed ways to expand bilateral trade and economic ties.

The Minister highlighted the strong relationship between Georgia and Italy, emphasizing substantial opportunities for joint efforts in environmental protection and agricultural advancement.

The discussion also covered issues related to sharing knowledge and strengthening cooperation in environmental and agricultural education, particularly in the viticultural area.

The parties emphasized the importance of exchanging experiences in implementing early warning systems.

Ambassador D'Antuono reaffirmed Italy's full readiness for comprehensive and effective cooperation, including sharing best practices.

Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Lasha Dolidze, also attended the meeting.

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October 10 – Forester's Day!



At the initiative of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, an event dedicated to the celebration of Foresters' Day was held at the Botanical Garden.

Minister David Songulashvili congratulated the foresters on their professional day and expressed his gratitude for their contribution to the development of the forestry sector.

"As you know, forests are one of our country's most important treasures, deserving of protection and care. Forest conservation and restoration are among the top priorities of our policy. The implementation of our plans is only possible with the support and dedication of foresters. Together, we can safeguard our unique natural heritage and preserve it for future generations. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all foresters on their professional day and wish them success," said Mr. David Songulashvili.

In recognition of their outstanding work, representatives of the National Forestry Agency, the Agency of Protected Areas, the Environmental Supervision Department, and the Forestry Agency of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara were awarded badges of honor and monetary prizes. Representatives from the scientific and academic community working in the forestry field were also



honored at the event.

On Minister Songulashvili's initiative, veteran professionals received the honorary title of Distinguished Forester and special awards.

Over the past decade, forestry reform in Georgia has achieved major strides towards sustainable management. All current and future initiatives focus on protecting forests, which are vital for both the environment and economic development.

The Chairperson of the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, Mrs. Maia Bitadze, emphasized that Minister Songulashvili not only continued the tradition of celebrating Forester's Day, but also, under his leadership, numerous important initiatives and innovations have been implemented and planned as part of the ongoing forestry reform.

The event also featured the premiere of the video "I Am a Forester."

Mr. Gela Samkharauli, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Mr. Denis Salukvadze, Minister of Agriculture of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, as well as representatives of executive and legislative bodies, the academic community, and environmental NGOs attended the event.

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David Songulashvili: “The Gurjaani Wine Festival, held annually since 2017, is now Georgia’s largest wine event”



On October 11, Gurjaani hosted its ninth annual wine festival, gathering hundreds of companies while displaying about 200 wine varieties. The Prime Minister, Government Officials, and Legislators attended the event. “The Gurjaani Wine Festival has been held since 2017, which means it has become a tradition for Gurjaani to welcome numerous guests every second Saturday of October. It’s a special day not only for the Kakheti region but for the whole country. It provides an excellent opportunity for small and medium-sized wineries and winemakers to present their wines to a wider audience. It’s also a valuable

platform for establishing business partnerships-something that has happened more than once, making the festival even more exciting for its participants. Notably, last year the festival hosted over 30,000 visitors, and this year we expect even more.

Every year, the festival’s scale continues to increase. With over 500 participants this year, it clearly highlights the relevance and importance of the event. I would like to wish the Gurjaani Wine Festival, the municipality, and the entire region continued success. The Gurjaani Wine Festival is the largest wine event in Georgia,” said Mr. David Songulashvili, Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

As part of the festival, the Minister toured the exhibition stands and met with local wine producers.

The main goals of the festival are to promote wine tourism, raise awareness about Qvevri wine-recognized by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and support the development of wines with protected designation of origin.

The festival featured wines produced by both large-scale and boutique wineries, including traditional Georgian cuisine, handmade crafts, and a cultural program. Since 2022, the festival has become an official partner of the International Wine and Spirit Competition (IWSC), with the support of the National Wine Agency of Georgia.

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Racha National Park Expands by 4,759 Hectares



The Government has proposed a draft law “On Amendments to the Law of Georgia on the Establishment and Management of the Racha Protected Areas”, presented to the Parliament’s Budget and Finance Committee by Mr. Zurab Ezugbaya, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

As a result of the expansion, a complex network of protected areas consisting of various categories will be established within the Racha region.

According to the draft law, the territory of Racha National Park-located within Ambrolauri Municipality-will increase by 4,759 hectares. The amendments also envisage the creation of the Ambrolauri Protected Landscape and five natural monuments: the Usholti, Kidobani, Sakishori, Muradi, and Shareula caves.

According to Mr. Ezugbaya, the project is of great importance for the development of Georgia’s protected areas system, including the enhancement of recreational spaces and tourism infrastructure in the region. It will contribute to both the further development of local traditional livelihoods and the restoration and preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems.

Racha National Park is located in Oni Municipality, within the Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti region. Established in 2023, the park currently covers an area of 50,835 hectares.

The committee members supported the draft law during its first reading.

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The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Continues Efforts to Reduce Plastic Consumption



The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture is actively continuing reforms aimed at reducing plastic consumption and gradually tightening regulations on single-use plastics and plastic bottles, working closely with businesses, public institutions, and the general public.

The Ministry is holding consultations with representatives from various sectors to discuss regulations that aim to balance public health and environmental protection interests with economic needs.

According to the draft version, the production, import, and sale of single-use plastic items that come into contact with food - such as knives, forks, plates, straws, food containers, and cups - will be prohibited, except for products intended for export. Additionally, an initiative is being considered to ban the purchase of beverages in plastic bottles by budget-funded organizations and the hospitality sector.

The Ministry emphasizes that new regulations should be implemented gradually, under conditions acceptable to businesses. In parallel, it continues to

work with bag manufacturing companies to reduce the use of plastic bags and adopt environmentally safe alternatives.

It is worth mentioning that since 2018, Georgia has banned the production, import, and sale of plastic bags with a thickness of less than 50 microns, permitting only biodegradable or compostable materials as alternatives.

The Ministry also focuses on raising environmental awareness. As part of meetings held with school students, young people received information about the national waste management policy and the harmful effects of plastic.

During discussions organized by the Environmental Information and Education Centre, particular emphasis was placed on the need to nurture environmental awareness from an early age.

Each year, approximately 612.5 million single-use plastic products are used in Georgia, amounting to 3.9–5.9 thousand tonnes of plastic. According to the Ministry's assessment, excessive plastic consumption remains one of the key environmental challenges, while its reduction is a national priority for ensuring ecological safety.

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Head of the Forest Policy Department of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Elected Vice-Chair of the European Forestry Commission



At the 43rd session of the European Forestry Commission during Forest Innovation Week in Istanbul, Mr. Carl Amirgulashvili, Head of the Forest Policy Department of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, was elected Vice-Chair for a two-year term.

The European Forestry Commission and its Bureau serve as an important international platform determining the key directions of forest management and policy, promoting sustainable forest management, supporting the implementation of forestry innovations, strengthening the forest-based economy, and facilitating the restoration of forest cover.

The representatives of UN member states attended the session. Notably, the event marks the first time Georgia has been elected to lead the European Forestry Commission, highlighting the country's active engagement and growing international recognition in the field of sustainable forest management.

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Modern Olive Processing Plant Opens in the Kakheti Region



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. David Songulashvili, State Representative in the Kakheti region, Mr. Giorgi Aladashvili, and Member of Parliament for Gurjaani, Sagarejo, Dedoplistskaro, and Signaghi Municipalities, Mr. Gia Benashvili, opened a modern olive processing plant owned by company "Svanidze's Olive".

The newly inaugurated factory is equipped with the latest Italian and German production systems. It fully complies with EU standards and can process up to 150 tonnes of olives per day.

"Olive cultivation is becoming more popular in Georgia. With the expansion of olive orchards, we expect higher yields every year. It is essential to process this product locally. This approach adds value and creates more jobs. The new plant will further support this process and improve many livelihoods. Its production capacity will boost local output and help expand exports. More high-quality Georgian products will enter global markets, supporting growth in our economy," said Minister David Songulashvili.

The enterprise will create up to 150 seasonal jobs, with the majority of these



positions to be filled by local residents. The operation of the factory will facilitate farmers' access to olive processing and enhance the competitiveness of Georgian agribusiness in international markets.

"We aim to make Georgia one of the leading olive-producing countries on the world map. The plant will serve not only the orchards owned by "Svanidze's Olive" but also accept harvests from farmers across Georgia. I would emphasize the vital importance of state support and the programs implemented by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture," stated the company's founder, Giorgi Svanidze.

Notably, with government support under the "Plant the Future" program, olive orchards have been established on 3,208 hectares nationwide, with co-financing exceeding GEL 22 million. In addition, through the "Preferential Agrocraedit" program, 27 loans worth more than GEL 9 million have been issued to support olive cultivation, with the Rural Development Agency's co-financing exceeding GEL 3 million.

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Georgia Joins the Global Celebration of World Food Day



Georgia, together with more than 150 countries worldwide, marked World Food Day. This year's theme - "Hand in Hand for Better Foods and a Better Future" emphasizes collective action for a more sustainable and food-secure future.

Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. David Songulashvili, attended the event dedicated to World Food Day. In his address, the Minister thanked the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for its long-standing partnership and active efforts to raise public awareness about the importance of the day. He also congratulated FAO on its 80th anniversary.

"FAO has played a crucial role in improving access to safe food for people around the world. The Government of Georgia is actively engaged in this process. Our goal is to ensure the highest quality of agricultural products in the

country and establish a fully functional value chain that will make Georgian products competitive on the global market. FAO remains an active partner and an important supporter in achieving this mission," said Minister Songulashvili.

During the event, guests explored interactive exhibits showcasing FAO's regional and national initiatives and programs, including Food Banks, One Country – One Priority Product (OCOP), the Digital Villages Initiative (DVI), Youth Empowerment in Agri-Food Systems, and One Health.

"World Food Day reminds us that agriculture and food are fundamental elements for human development, and supporting them is essential. FAO's 80 years of experience and efforts in transforming agricultural and food systems are now more relevant and necessary than ever," stated Mr. Raimund Jehle, FAO Representative in Georgia.

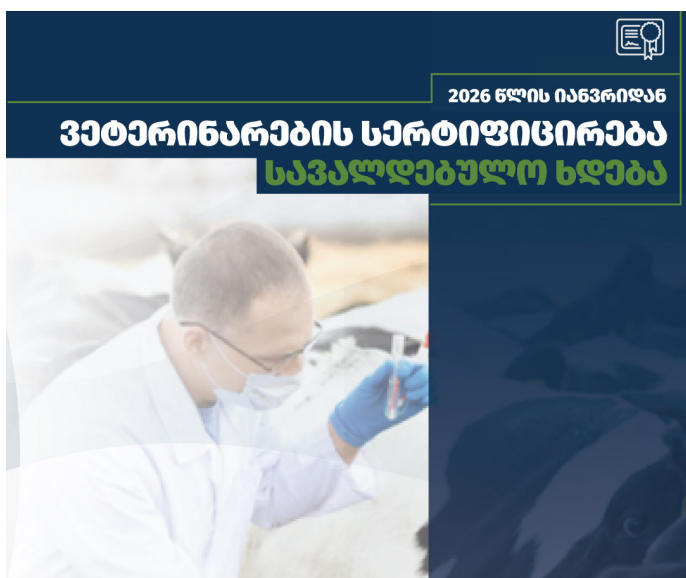
The event also featured a youth dialogue on the role of young people in transforming agri-food systems, where participants shared their experiences and ideas.

On World Food Day, FAO places special emphasis on the role of "Food Heroes" - farmers, chefs, volunteers, teachers, and citizens whose efforts contribute to ensuring access to safe and nutritious food.

This year, in recognition of their outstanding contributions to sustainable agri-food system development, Sopho Tabatadze, a young farmer promoting sustainable agricultural practices, and Nana Olqishvili, head of Georgia's first accredited food bank "Enkenia," were named Food Heroes. Their work plays a vital role in enhancing food security and strengthening social inclusion across Georgia.

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Veterinarians' Certification Becomes Mandatory from January 1, 2026



In accordance with the Decree No. 288 of the Government of Georgia, "On the Approval of the Rules and Conditions for Conducting State Certification

Exams for Veterinarians and Veterinary Technicians and for Their Professional Development," from January 1, 2026, veterinarians in Georgia will be required to obtain a state-issued certificate to practice veterinary medicine.

Applicants must first collect the required documents, including a relevant diploma as defined by the Law of Georgia "On Higher Education," a veterinary certificate, or a document confirming relevant professional education. These documents should then be submitted in an application to the National Food Agency, following the detailed procedure specified by the decree.

Until January 2026, certificates will be given without taking an exam or extra training. These certificates will be valid until January 1, 2030.

The regulation does not apply to veterinarians employed in positions within budget-funded organizations, veterinarians working under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, or those engaged in educational and scientific institutions, international organizations, and programs/projects that do not directly perform veterinary practice. The certification of veterinarians aims to:

Ensure the provision of veterinary services that meet international standards; Protect the health and safety of citizens and animals by preventing unqualified practice.

Safeguard the rights of professionals engaged in veterinary activities.

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