



Newsletter

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA

MAY 2023

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture organized solemn events in Mtskheta, Kutaisi, and Ozurgeti cities to commemorate May 26, Georgia's Independence Day.



Mr. Otar Shamugia, Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, toured the area set up by the Rural Development Agency in Mtskheta.

Minister visited the space arranged by the Ministry of Defense, where local manufacturers displayed their products. During the event, Mr. Shamugia inspected the educational /entertaining corner set up for children.

“I congratulate all citizens of our country on the Independence Day. Independence is our greatest achievement, which requires special protection, caution, and attentive care. The primary responsibility of our residents is to safeguard our freedom and promote the development of our country. Our country is making progress toward the most important goal, which is membership of the EU family. I am confident that very soon, we will be a worthy member of the European Union and a country that has been able to overcome many difficulties and cope with many challenges, but has preserved its main values, preserved its independence, and continues to advance and develop”, - Mr. Shamugia stated.



As part of the solemn celebrations commemorating Georgia's Independence Day, the Agency of Protected Areas provided guests with numerous educational and recreational activities at Kutaisi Central Boulevard. Visitors and tourists had an opportunity to experience a virtual trip to Georgia's unique Protected Areas; Informational-exhibition stands were designed to showcase Georgia's Protected Areas and national parks.

The musical and theatrical events and children's entertaining activities were organized in the central boulevard throughout the day.

The Georgian national anthem was performed at 17:10 when Georgia's independence was declared in 1918. Georgian singers Rusa Morchladze, Temur Tatarashvili, and "Ocho's Hut" performed at the end of the festival.

Within the scope of the solemn events commemorating Georgia's Independence Day, the National Wine Agency of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture presented the concept "Georgia -the Homeland of Wine" in Ozurgeti.

The event featured the so-called "Sommelier's Corner" which included expert tastings, furthermore visual and informational material about the history and traditions of Georgian wine and grape cultivation, and different types of wine and grape varieties from the Guria region were presented at the event.

The exhibition and sale of Georgian wine continued throughout the day in the center of Ozurgeti city. The event also included entertaining/outdoor activities, concerts, and educational space for children.

The event ended with a gala concert and grand "fireworks".



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MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE, OTAR SHAMUGIA PAYS A WORKING VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia participated in the Ministerial meeting “Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate - AIM for Climate” at the official invitation of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).



The Ministerial meeting was held within the framework of the joint initiative of the United States of America and the United Arab Emirates, embracing representatives from more than 45 states (including Great Britain, Canada, Brazil, Egypt, Australia, Japan, Korea, India, etc.) and more than 275 non-governmental partners. The former Vice President of the USA, Mr. Albert (El) Gore, the Minister of Climate Change and Environment of the United Arab Emirates, Mrs. Mariam Almheiri, and the Secretary of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA),

Mr. Thomas J. Vilsack made opening remarks at the event. “AIM for Climate” aims to significantly increase collective engagement through innovation and investment in climate-smart agriculture and food systems.

According to Mr. Otar Shamugia, Georgia is actively working to reduce the negative impact of climate change on the agricultural sector, noting that increasing the adaptive capacity of the agricultural sector is one of the most critical priorities of the Georgian Government.

“Special attention is paid to introducing and implementing climate-smart agricultural practices in the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy 2021-2027. Saving water and rational and efficient use of water resources is an approach introduced in the agricultural sector against the backdrop of climate change. Georgia aspires to become a full-fledged member of the European Union. We are taking effective and necessary steps to fulfill international obligations taken under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement. Moreover, I believe that introducing relevant agricultural innovations will help to reduce climate change’s negative impact on the agricultural sector and increase productivity. With united and joint efforts, we can take essential steps in the respective area”, stated Mr. Otar Shamugia in his speech.

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Within the framework of the visit, the US Department of the Interior, the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture, Culture and Monument Protection, and Economy and Sustainable Development signed a Declaration of Cooperation.



Otar Shamugia: “ We signed a Declaration of Cooperation with the US Department of the Interior for the first time in decades.”

The US Department of the Interior, the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture, Culture and Monument Protection, and Economy and Sustainable Development signed a Declaration of Cooperation. The Declaration envisages strong collaboration between the two countries over the next ten years, with collaborative initiatives and activities in various areas such as environmental protection, cultural and natural heritage conservation, tourism, and ecotourism development.

The International Technical Assistance Program (USDOI-ITAP) of the United States Department of the Interior initiated the signing of the agreement between the American and Georgian parties.

During the meeting with US Department of Interior Secretary Mrs. Debra Haaland and US National Park Service representatives, the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia, emphasized the importance of the Declaration.

As mentioned, the Declaration aims to increase collaboration between Georgia and the United States of America and provide a forum for sharing best practices and common challenges. Opportunities for future cooperation between Georgia and the United States of America in protected areas will seek to improve the management of protected areas.

“ We are actively working to strengthen international support for protected areas, including sharing best practices and experience and ensuring financial assistance. The Protected Areas Agency and the National Park Service of the United States of America have many years of successful cooperation, which includes technical support, employee training, and study visit programs. Within the framework of the declaration, the existing ties will be further deepened, and there will be an opportunity to lay the foundation for many new initiatives.

We would also like to emphasize that our protected areas are managed according to best international practices; we are currently implementing several projects to develop ecotourism infrastructure to raise awareness of our protected areas on a global scale, increase interest, and consequently increase the number of visitors;”, said the Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture Minister, Mr. Otar Shamugia.

It should be noted that in 2022, the area of the protected areas of Georgia increased by 116.7 thousand hectares, currently covering more than 912 thousand hectares, which is about 13% of the country's territory.

The US Department of the Interior protects and manages natural resources and cultural heritage and provides access to scientific and other resource data. With the mandate given by President Joe Biden, the department actively works toward economic and ethnic equality and the fight against climate change.

The meeting at the US Department of the Interior was attended by the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia; First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili; Deputy Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, Mr. Irakli Giviashvili, and Head of the Protected Areas Agency, Mr. Davit Iosebashvili.



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Within the framework of his working visit to the USA, Otar Shamugia met with Erin Elizabeth McKee, Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development for Europe and Eurasia in Washington, D.C.



According to Mr. Shamugia, the support of the United States as a strategic partner of Georgia is critical in implementing agricultural, rural development, and environmental protection initiatives.

Many years of successful cooperation with USAID have yielded fruitful results in several important areas, such as water resource management, the development of protected areas, the support provided in food safety and phytosanitary fields, promotion of the hazelnut sector, and several other projects that have been implemented and are still in progress.

“I am pleased that the issues discussed during my previous visit to the United States, which were related to the promotion of wine and the promotion of awareness, have already been reflected in USAID projects. We are actively collaborating with the project implementation team and anticipate tangible progress. We are also actively cooperating with the USAID local team in Georgia, led by Mr. John Pennell, and we believe we will have more visible examples of success, both in terms of increasing competitiveness in the industry and expanding exports of products, mainly to markets in the United States and other strategic partner countries. - said Mr. Otar Shamugia.

According to Mrs. Erin Elizabeth McKee, 30 years of U.S. partnership with Georgia has been particularly fruitful in agricultural and environmental protection areas.

“We will continue to support and cooperate with you because your strength means our strength. We will advocate for Georgia's economic strength and integration into Euro-Atlantic structures,” Mrs. Erin Elizabeth McKee stated.

The discussion focused on initiatives encouraging organic farming production, assisting farmers with adopting contemporary technology, supporting rational use and management of natural resources, and the need to invest in ecotourism.

It should be mentioned that, under the new large-scale program – “Resilient Communities Program” (2022-2027), and with the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), more than USD 23.7 million will be spent to improve the socioeconomic condition of the population living in the villages adjacent to the occupation line.

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During the official visit to the USA, Otar Shamugia met with Antonella Bassani, Vice President of the Europe and Central Asia Region at the World Bank.

The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia, expressed his gratitude to the Vice President of the World Bank for Europe and Asia for the significant support of the World Bank over the past 30 years and considerable assistance in implementing ongoing reforms.

“Since 2014, with the support of the World Bank, “Irrigation and Land Market Development Project for Georgia” has been launched in the country. The project aims to improve the irrigation and drainage services and implement necessary policies and procedures for land registration. We should mention that we have good results in this direction, which we highly appreciate,” said the Minister.

Minister highlighted that in 2023, the World Bank launched a new investment project: the “Georgia Resilient Agriculture, Irrigation, and Land Project” (GRAIL), to develop a sustainable and productive agricultural sector. The total value of the project is 150 million euros.

According to the Vice President of the World Bank, the World Bank will continue its active

cooperation with Georgia and implement projects in agricultural areas. Mrs. Antonella Bassani positively assessed the active involvement of the Minister in the planning/implementation of the World Bank projects.

Georgia's Ambassador to the United States, Mr. David Zalkaliani, and the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, attended the meeting along with the Minister.



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A Memorandum of Cooperation was signed at the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture to boost trade in agro-food products.



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia, and the Minister of Agriculture of Hungary, Mr. István Nagy, signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to promote the trade in agri-food products.

During the official meeting, the parties addressed Georgia's investment potential and prospects for increasing collaboration in the honey and wine export-related fields.

Mr. Otar Shamugia emphasized the importance of diplomatic partnership with Hungary and briefed his Hungarian counterpart on Georgia's favorable business environment and investment climate.

"Hungary's assistance, partnership relationship, and exchange of experience from the Hungarian side are particularly important for us as a candidate country. During the meeting with the Minister of Agriculture of Hungary, we discussed the strengthening of cooperation in various sectors, including the possibility of increasing wine exports. There are all circumstances to support the business sector in establishing connections, and attracting investments in those sectors that may be attractive to the Hungarian side", stated Mr. Otar Shamugia.

"Georgia has a great potential for agricultural development. I believe that signing the Memo-

randum will create a solid foundation for further deepening of existing relations, and I hope that our cooperation will soon yield tangible and mutually beneficial results," Mr. Istvan Nagy stated.

During the meeting, the conversation touched upon the issues of sharing knowledge/experience in developing dairy farming and cattle breeding.

The First Deputy Minister, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, Deputy Ministers Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze and Mr. Yuri Nozadze, and the Heads of relevant Departments attended the meeting.

As part of the official visit to Georgia, the Hungarian delegation visited the Jighaura village and inspected the experimental-demonstration base of perennial crops of the Scientific - Research Center of Agriculture. The Director of the Scientific Research Center of Agriculture, Mr. Levan Ujmajuridze showed the Minister the collection of vines grown on the experimental base. The guests got acquainted with the history of viticulture and winemaking in Georgia and the country's potential in the mentioned area, they also tasted wines made from rare Georgian grape varieties.

During his working visit to Georgia, the Minister of Agriculture of Hungary, Mr. István Nagy, and members of the Hungarian delegation visited the fruit processing companies "Caucasus Organic Fruits" LTD and the "August Fruit Factory".



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A New Project will be implemented in Georgia to support the Low-emission and Climate-resilient Agricultural Sector.



The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UNFAO) is launching a new project in Georgia, which aims to support the low-emission and climate-resilient development of the agriculture sector.

The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia, and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Representative in Georgia, Mr. Raimund Jehle signed a new two-year project.

The project "Strategic Readiness to Support the Updated NDC and its Climate Action for Georgia: Transforming Agriculture Sector through Low-Emissions and Climate-Resilient Pathways" is funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The project has a budget of USD 500,000 and will be implemented over two years.

During the meeting, Mr. Shamugia expressed his gratitude to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization for its close partnership and cooperation and spoke extensively about the progress made by the country in fulfilling obligations taken under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement. The Minister underlined the importance of FAO's support in the mentioned process.

"Cooperation with you is extremely important for the development of climate-smart agriculture in the country. I believe, that within the new project, we will be able to achieve effective results", said Mr. Shamugia.

Minister Shamugia discussed issues regarding ensuring research to evaluate the effectiveness of the projects implemented by the Ministry and emphasized FAO's support in the fight against the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug.

According to Mr. Raymond Jehle, Georgia is an important partner for FAO; The UN Food and Agriculture organization will continue to support the development of the agricultural sector in the country.

"FAO recognizes the importance of supporting Georgia in its efforts to tackle climate change and accelerate nature-positive development. By supporting Georgia in achieving its climate goals, we aim to enhance the resilience of agricultural communities, ensure green growth and foster an overall sustainable future for the country," said Mr. Raimund Jehle.

Mr. Mamuka Meskhi, Assistant FAO Representative in Georgia, and representatives of the relevant services of the Ministry attended the meeting.



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Otar Shamugia hosts the Senior Secretary for the Future Strategy Office of the President of the Republic of Korea.



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia, hosted the Delegation of the Republic of Korea, which was headed by Mr. Jang Sung Min, Senior Secretary for the Future Strategy Office of the President of the Republic of Korea.

During the meeting, the parties addressed the country's investment potential and highlighted prospects of strengthening bilateral cooperation in wine export and tourist development areas.

Mr. Shamugia spoke about the diplomatic and partnership relations with the Republic of Korea and briefed the Delegation on the favorable environment for making investments and doing business in Georgia.

The Minister emphasized the importance of the existing close partnership in the field of Protected Areas and expressed his desire to further cooperate in the mentioned area.

According to Mr. Jang Sung Min, the current investment climate and conditions in Georgia are attractive for the Republic of Korea, and the mentioned meeting will be a prerequisite for deepening relations and bringing timely and effective results for both countries.

The Deputy Minister, Mr. Yuri Nozadze, and representatives of relevant services of the Ministry attended the meeting.

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Mtatsminda Park hosts the annual Tea and Honey Festival.



The annual Tea and Honey Festival was held in Mtatsminda Park with the support of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia. About 15 local tea producers and importers participated in the Tea and Honey festival, offering guests a wider range of products.

Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, and Mr. Davit

Tsitlidze, Director of the Rural Development Agency, attended the ceremony.

"Georgian tea standouts by its taste and quality indicators. The Ministry makes active efforts to develop the tea and beekeeping industries in the country and support farmers and entrepreneurs through different state programs. This festival has been held for years with the support of the Ministry and serves to popularize Georgian tea and honey. We will continue to actively support manufacturers in developing, manufacturing, and promoting their production", said Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze.

Since 2005, the Tea and Honey Festival has been annually held in Tbilisi at various locations. The event has been organized by the Georgian Tea Producers Association and supported by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture. Mtatsminda Park has hosted the event for the past seven years.

The festival aims to support local small and medium-sized enterprises and promote natural tea and honey products among consumers. The Tea and Honey Festival encourages entrepreneurs to directly offer their products to customers, raise awareness of their products, look forward to local and global partners and develop commercial ties.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21239>

Georgian Exhibition Stand at the International Exhibition "CASPIAN AGRO 2023" in Baku visited by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev.



The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili, and Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Georgia to the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Zurab Pataradze, hosted the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev at the Georgian exhibition stand.

With the support of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and the Rural Development Agency, 10 Georgian companies presented and offered their agricultural products to the visitors of the international agricultural exhibition CASPIAN AGRO in Baku.

The exhibition stand displayed the products of the following companies: Achinebuli, Gemuani, Anigozi, Blue Garden, Geo Natural, National Delicacy, Ojakhuri-Fami-

ly, Kvevri Wine Cellar, Caucasus Organic Fruits and Fudoliz products - Georgian walnuts, blueberries, various spices, honey, dried fruits, sublimated fruits, organic Juices and others that fully meet international standards.

According to Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, showcasing Georgian products at international trade fairs significantly contributes to extending the promotion and boosting the export potential of products.

"Azerbaijan is a strategic partner of Georgia. With the support of the state, our entrepreneurs and farmers actively participate in the international exhibition CASPIAN AGRO. Most of the participants are beneficiaries of state projects. I think they will establish contacts with new partners and enter new markets during the exhibition", said Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili.

International exhibition CASPIAN AGRO has more than 13,000 visitors every year. This year, 25 countries and about 500 local and international companies operating in the agricultural sector are participating in the exhibition. "CASPIAN AGRO 2023" was opened on May 17 and ended on May 19.

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Otar Shamugia meets the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Japan to Georgia, Imamura Akira.



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia, hosted the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Japan to Georgia, Mr. Imamura Akira, who completed his mission in Georgia.

The Minister thanked the Ambassador for his outstanding contribution to enhancing bilateral relations and wished him success in his future endeavors.

During the meeting, the sides underlined the importance of close partnership relations between the two countries in the climate change, agriculture, and waste management fields.

Mr. Imamura Akira emphasized that Georgia is a reliable partner for Japan, which has laid a strong foundation for further strengthening bilateral cooperation.

The representatives of the relevant services of the Ministry attended the meeting.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21255>



GREEN CLIMATE FUND



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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Swiss Agency for Development

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



ISSUE#8 / May 2023

“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

Cooperation between the German Energy Agency (dena) and the State Procurement Agency of Georgia and the first workshop on energy-efficient procurement principles

With the goal of energy efficiency promotion in the country, the ECO.Georgia project established a partnership with the State Procurement Agency (SPA) of Georgia to introduce the principles of energy-efficient public procurement in the country.

Within the frames of the ECO.Georgia project, the German Energy Agency “dena” (<https://www.dena.de/>) got involved in sharing the best European practices of advanced European countries with the SPA and bringing knowledge in energy-efficient public procurement to the country.

As part of the cooperation between “dena” and the SPA, the parties will develop methodological guidelines and recommendations on energy-efficient public procurement for the organizations. At the beginning of May, the workshop took place at the State Procurement Agency where the participants from dena, SPA, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia and GIZ held a discussion to develop the methodological guideline and exchanged experience of energy-efficient public procurement.



© State Procurement Agency of Georgia
Workshop on energy-efficient procurement



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Workshop on energy-efficient procurement

Municipality toolkit concept development for decision-making in the municipal forest management (MFM)



Workshop on the municipality toolkit concept development for the decision making in municipal forest management

The ECO.Georgia project conducted a workshop in the Guria region together with the target municipality representatives. The main objective of the workshop was to present and agree on the concept of the development of a toolbox for decision-making in the field of municipal forest management (MFM). The development of such a toolbox is important for the availability of a comprehensive set of analytical and implementation tools for making decisions on (1) whether to engage in MFM, (2) on the implementation structures of MFM, respective capacity development measures, and equipment procurement, and (3) on the implementation of specific MFM measures. Thus, the agreement on the toolbox concept based on discussion is very important for the joint implementation.

At the workshop, the participants also presented and discussed the main findings of the study on “Assessment of the 8 municipalities - existing human, technical, and financial capacities and their administrative and political interests.”

Another aspect of the workshop was to increase awareness among the municipality representatives of the forest functions and their importance, since according to the forestry legislation and existing practise, partner municipalities are not engaged in forest management.

Since the municipalities are comparatively new partners of the project, for the successful joint implementation of the planned activities within the project, it is important to establish or increase the trust between the parties and their ownership of the planned activities. Thus, the workshop also served as an opportunity to present and involve the partner municipalities more in the process and create more effective working conditions in the cooperation process.

The workshop was attended by nine representatives of the municipalities of the Guria region and project representatives from the Biodiversity and Forestry Departments of MEPA and GIZ.