



# Newsletter

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA

AUGUST 2023

## On August 3, in the afternoon, dangerous geological and hydro-meteorological events occurred in the Buba River valley, Shovi Resort, Oni municipality



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia was in the disaster zone of Oni municipality, attending the meeting of the emergency headquarters for the liquidation of the Shovi disaster.

Mr. Shamugia expressed grief over the tragedy in the Shovi resort and sincere condolences to the victims' relatives.

According to the Minister, a group of geologists and hydrologists of the National Environmental Agency was on the ground in the shortest possible time after the development of the landslide processes; Six groups are carrying out not only visual inspection but also instrumen-

tal monitoring of the mentioned area.

As stated by experts, the tragedy in Racha was caused by natural factors; at this point, there is no chance of aggravation of similar-scale disasters.

On August 3, in the afternoon, dangerous geological and hydro-meteorological events occurred in the Buba River valley, Shovi Resort, Oni municipality.

According to a preliminary assessment, the high air temperature background and the subsequent precipitations in the past months contributed to the intensive melting of glaciers, the collapse of the glacial mass and rock avalanche near the Buba glacier tongue, and the setting of the solid sediments in the valley in motion, while also developing active lateral erosion processes; the river banks were scoured and washed off. All mentioned above facilitated the formation and activation of the so-called coastal landslide processes, which later turned into mudslides.

Specialists of the National Environmental Agency continue to study the situation on the ground. Additional information will be provided to the public promptly.

Since 2014, the National Environmental Agency has intensively developed systems for observing natural processes. In recent years, especially in the last three years, more than 60 meteorological, hydrological, and geological modern, automated observation systems have been installed in Western Georgia.

Maps of natural hazards are being developed throughout the country, and modern monitoring and forecasting systems are being adopted. However, predicting the rapidly growing natural processes of the complex nature mentioned above is associated with significant difficulties worldwide.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21362>

## Otar Shamugia expresses gratitude to the National Environmental Agency specialists involved in preparing the first natural disaster assessment in Shovi Resort



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia, provided insights on the preliminary assessment of the Shovi disaster after a government session. This initial evaluation, meticulously conducted by the National Environmental Agency's experts, utilized diverse information sources, analysis, and hands-on site inspection.

"Georgia mourns today, and I extend my heartfelt condolences to the

families, friends, and our nation for the lives lost in this profound tragedy that was beyond our capacity to prevent. At a recent briefing, we provided the public with the initial assessment of specialists. We want to thank the specialists of the National Environmental Agency for their 24-hour efforts. They were able to make a preliminary conclusion in a reasonably short time. Unfortunately, today, we heard statements from various politicians as if these people had completed the order. We request everyone to refrain from such comments as long as these people are professionals. They could assess in a very short time; they were doing their job. We, jointly with the specialists and the Agency, will continue to work and investigate the affected valley. It

is important to discuss further goals to be implemented along with the causes of the disaster and determine what should happen in the future in this valley.

Appropriate recommendations should be prepared on what should be done in the future, specifically in this valley. We want to provide the public with the preliminary assessment's essential details.

The calamity's onset was marked by a rock mass collapsing west of the Buba glacier. This moving mass collided with the glacier, instigating a sequence of landslides that eventually culminated in the flood. The entire series of events, from the initial collapse to the flood reaching the disaster zone, transpired in approximately 8-10 minutes."

We need to be aware of water level fluctuations. Our data from the Chanchakhi River's hydrological station indicates no significant deviation in water levels before or during the event. Therefore, experts suggest that there was not any prolonged water accumulation, which would have certainly influenced river flow and levels."

**Also, according to the initial conclusion, this disaster's rapid and multifaceted nature renders it almost impossible to prevent, even in the most advanced nations. First and foremost, the specialists should evaluate this conclusion. We urge politicians and the public to respect and acknowledge the hard work and findings of our specialists doing significant work for our country and refrain from political conjecture,"** said Mr. Otar Shamugia.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21363>

## The Parliament of Georgia adopted the draft law “On Water Resources Management” and the related package of Legislative Amendments



Reforming the field of water resources management is a crucial step towards fulfilling obligations under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, which calls for the transformation of existing legal principles in water resources management and their conformity with international approaches and EU directives.

The reform aims to establish legal bases for water resource management to ensure the implementation of a unified state policy in water resources protection and use, the creation of a safe environment for human health, and water resources protection and sustainable use following integrated principles.

The enforcement of the new law will result in adopting the river basin management model, and restoring the special permit regime for water usage, making water resource management more effective and efficient.

In addition, the competencies of the authorized bodies will be separated based on the draft

law, including prioritization of water usage within river basins; restoration of the permit system for water abstraction from surface water bodies, and discharge of wastewater into surface water bodies; Restoration of water abstraction fees from surface water bodies (concept “on fees for the use of natural resources”).

From September 1, 2026, the norms established by the draft law, will be implemented in the entire territory of Georgia.

The draft law is in line with EU water legislation and reflects the approaches and requirements of the top EU directives.

The draft law “On Water Resources Management” was drafted by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, with the support of the European Union (EU), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and various public agencies, civil society, and private sector representatives, and developed in close cooperation with international partners.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21358>

## Otar Shamugia: “Georgian-Chinese cooperation has reached a new, extremely high level. We believe these processes will significantly stimulate the growth of wine and other products exports to China.”

The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia, visited the People’s Republic of China, where the Georgian delegation, led by Prime Minister Mr. Irakli Gharibashvili, held high-level meetings.

“Cooperation between the two countries has moved to a new, very high level, which is crucial for our country. We have actively promoted Georgian wine on the Chinese market for the last few years. As a result, 4 million liters of wine are an-

nually exported to China. We believe that the current processes will significantly provide an incentive to boost the expansion of wine and other products exports,” said Mr. Shamugia.

It should be mentioned that during his visit to the People’s Republic of China, the Prime Minister of Georgia, Mr. Irakli Gharibashvili, met with the President of the People’s Republic of China, Mr. Xi Jinping. The two countries’ leaders announced the elevation of Georgia-China relations to the level of strategic partnership.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21360>

## Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture hosts the second Steering Committee meeting of the Project “Save Nature-Georgia”



The Chairman of the Steering Committee and the First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, chaired the second Steering Committee meeting of the Project “Save Nature - Georgia”.

During the meeting, the parties discussed the third interim report of the project, including activities performed from January 1 to July 30, 2023, and the analysis of the achieved results.

The interim report presented the seven main components of the project - biodiversity policy and legal framework, floodplain forest restoration and development, area-based conservation, biodiversity mainstreaming, biodiversity monitoring, strengthening the national air quality monitoring system, strengthening the capacities of stakeholders - activities carried out to achieve goals, achievements, and the analysis of the results.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture elaborated the program “Save Nature - Georgia 2021-2024, based on the thematic policy dialogue with the Embassy of Sweden, aiming to develop the institutional capacity of the National Environmental Agency, the Wildlife Agency, and the Agency of Protected Areas, to improve the management efficiency and promote sustainable management of natural resources of Georgia.

The Steering Committee members - representatives of relevant services and Agencies of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Georgian Society of Nature Explorers “Orchis,” and invited experts attended the meeting.



<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21355/>

## On August 19-20, 2023, the Sixth Honey Festival was held in Batumi



Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili, the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, and Mr. Zaza Shavadze, Minister of Agriculture of Adjara, attended the event. Adjara Beekeeping Business Association organized the event to promote beekeeping farmers and boost the popularization of Georgian honey.

About 40 beekeepers from different regions of Georgia showcased their products at the festival. The guests and visitors had the opportunity to get familiar with and buy different types of honey and other bee products produced in different parts of Adjara and around the country.

Considering the active tourist season, the festival embraced several entertainment events. The sixth honey festival was held with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture of Adjara, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Adjara, and the Association of Beekeepers of Georgia in Batumi.



<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21371>

## Within the project “Save Nature - Georgia”, the parties discuss the conservation and development of the biodiversity of the Rustavi floodplain forest



During the working meeting, the representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, relevant Agencies included in the system of the Ministry, the representatives, and experts of the City Hall and City Council of Rustavi Municipality discussed the issues of strengthening the institutional framework for the conservation and development of the biodiversity of Rustavi floodplain forest.

The parties thoroughly examined the issues stipulated by Georgian legislation on the status of floodplain forests and their management, as well as the actions planned for the development of the Rustavi floodplain forest within the scope of the project.

The working meeting aimed to thoroughly inform the relevant services of the Rustavi municipality, whose direct competence and obligation is to be involved in the development process of the Rustavi floodplain forest, about the process and outcomes envisaged by the project.

Floodplain forest restoration and development is the second of seven key components of the “Save Nature - Georgia” project, one of the goals of which is the management and development of the Rustavi floodplain forest by the City Hall of Rustavi Municipality.

“The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, with the financial support of the International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) of the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden, within the framework of the project “Save Nature - Georgia” developed the strategy and plan of historical significance for the residents of Rustavi and

visitors to the city, which is unique for restoring the floodplain forest, and incorporating the development and conservation.

Sustainable management of the outstanding ecosystem of Rustavi floodplain forests is a prerequisite for restoring biodiversity, providing the city’s population with clean air and recreational spaces,” said the Head of the Department of Biodiversity and Forestry of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Carl Amirgulashvili.

According to the Mayor of Rustavi municipality, Mrs. Nino Latsabidze, restoration of the floodplain forest is being launched in Rustavi city. The floodplain forest located within the borders of Rustavi municipality is an important resource for improving the ecological situation in the city of Rustavi.

**“In the 1990s, during the energy crisis, the floodplain forest suffered serious damage. It is important to mention that, with the support of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and the Swedish Development Agency (Sida), within the project “Save Nature - Georgia”, a strategic development document for the Rustavi floodplain forest was created, which includes a detailed plan for the development of the floodplain forest. To carry out the mentioned project, it is also vital to bring together Rustavi residents and those who believe that improving our city’s and nation’s ecological state is a top priority”** said the Mayor of Rustavi Municipality, Mrs. Nino Latsabidze.



<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21369>

## With the state's financial support, a grain storage facility opens in Samtredia



With the financial support of the EU-Georgia "Integrated Development Program of Pilot Regions," the Company "Kailashi" opened a grain storage enterprise in Samtredia, the Imereti region.

The Deputy Georgian Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze; the Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure, Mrs. Mzia Giorgobiani; the State Representative of Imereti Region, Mr. Zviad Shalamberidze and Mayor of Samtredia, Mr. Davit Bakhtadze inspected the facility.

The company "Kailashi" received a loan of GEL 450,000 within the EU-Georgia "Integrated Development Program of Pilot Regions" to set up a modern storage facility, with the Rural Development Agency funding GEL 270,000.

The enterprise will store up to 1 000 tonnes of grains produced and collected by the company "Kailashi" LLC and local farmers. The company employs eight people.

**"Imereti region takes one of the essential places in the "Integrated Development Program of Pilot Regions." Within the program, the storage infrastructure created in Samtredia will contribute to the smooth storage and further sale of crops in the region," - noted Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.**

According to the Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure, Mrs. Mzia Giorgobiani, local enterprises should be supported for developing regions, and the EU-Georgia "Integrated Development Program of Pilot Regions" is crucial in this respect.

The EU-Georgia "Pilot Regions Integrated Development Program" is implemented by the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure and the Rural Development Agency of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture in four pilot regions of Georgia - Imereti, Kakheti, Guria, and Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti regions. The third component of the program aims to promote small and medium-sized businesses, which means the creation of new enterprises and the expansion or retooling/ reequipment of existing enterprises.

Within the framework of the program, 48 enterprises were financed throughout Georgia.

The approved loan amounted to GEL 32.6 million, of which the Rural Development Agency co-financing exceeded GEL 19.2 million.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21361>

## During the six months of this year, Georgian wine was presented at 35 different events in 11 countries of the world with the support of the National Wine Agency



During six months of this year, the products of various Georgian wine-making companies, small and medium-sized wineries, were presented to the USA, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Latvia, China, Poland, Great Britain, South Korea, and Denmark with the financial and organizational support of the National Wine Agency. Georgian wine companies participated in such international exhibitions as: "VinExpo Paris," "Foodex Japan," "Vinexpo New

York," "ProWein," "The 108th China Food & Drinks Fair," "London Wine Fair," "Seoul Wine and Spirits Expo," etc. In total, Georgian wine was presented at ten international exhibitions, nine festivals, and 16 tastings with the support of the National Wine Agency. By participating in such exhibits, Georgian wine producers can present their products to wine professionals, importers, and representatives of trade and restaurant chains, which is one of the top prerequisites for increasing interest in Georgian wine and its sales.

The state determined GEL 14 million as the 2023 budget for the Georgian wine promotion program, which is GEL 2 million more than the 2022 budget.

The United States of America, Great Britain, Germany, Poland, Baltic countries, China, South Korea, and Japan are recognized as strategic markets for Georgian wine. In addition to strategic needs, Georgian wine is presented at important international exhibitions and tastings in various European countries.

Within the Georgian wine promotion program, wine exhibitions, competitions, tours, and festivals are held throughout Georgia. All mentioned above is crucial for fully utilizing the potential of wine tourism and increasing wine consumer culture.

It is important to note that, since 2023, the USAID agricultural program has been involved in events supporting the promotion of Georgian wine. Within the Memorandum signed with the National Wine Agency, marketing events are held in the United States of America, Germany, and South Korea.

<https://wine.gov.ge/En/News/36018/>



GREEN CLIMATE FUND



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development

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



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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

## GIS training for the municipality representatives



©GIZ: GIS Training for the municipalities

To strengthen the municipalities and capacitate them for municipal forest management (MFM), the ECO. Georgia project envisages different activities. To achieve this goal, a toolbox concept was developed for MFM-related decision-making. The concept was presented and agreed upon during the regional workshops.

The first tool from the Toolbox concept is using Geospatial Data (GIS). Since GIS is an integral element of forest management and there is low knowledge of GIS in municipalities, a training course for the municipality representatives was defined as a priority. This tool is important to identify and map the potential forests and green areas within the municipality's borders and to monitor their development and changes in the future. The training modules that correspond to international standards were developed considering the knowledge and needs of the participants. In August, five-day training was delivered to 16 participants from all three municipalities of Guria region and Telavi, Akhmeta, and Kvareli municipalities from Kakheti. Tianeti and Dedoplistskaro municipalities will also be covered in September.

## Training course for forest-related entrepreneurs was successfully accomplished



©Sparkassenstiftung: During the training session in Guria

Effective execution of two modules for the forest-related entrepreneurs was achieved across all three participant groups: two in Kakheti and one in Guria. The incorporation of business simulation games yielded a notable triumph, captivating the participants and furnishing them with skills for fostering businesses and honing analytical acumen. Collaboratively with Spar-

kassenstiftung, the project team initiated the inaugural training session for Module 1 on June 26, concluding the final session of Module 2 on August 11.

Consequent to the successful implementation of Modules 1 and 2, alongside other scheduled activities, participants underwent comprehensive training in devising business plans and assimilating the intricacies of the developmental process.

A consequential outcome emerged: 72 participants meticulously crafted their initial business plan draft. These drafts will be significant in the subsequent phase of selecting the definitive 32 participants for Module 3, centered around business coaching, a process slated for the upcoming autumn season. Significantly noteworthy is the fact that all 72 participants have obtained certificates, which serve as a testament and motivation, affirming their completion of the training.

Looking ahead, planning for the third module—concentrating on business coaching—is presently in progress. The collaborative efforts of the project team and Sparkassen Stiftung are underway to finalise the shortlist of 32 participants by the close of September.

## Assessment results of the timber and non-timber forest products value chains in the regions of Kakheti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, and Guria were presented to the relevant stakeholders



©GIZ Presenting the results of the assessment of timber and non-timber forest products

On August 24, the assessment results on non-timber (NTFP) and timber forest (TFP) product value chains in Georgia were presented to the ECO.Georgia project stakeholders, including public and private representatives, as well as associations inclusive of MEPA, NFA, DES Institute of Botany. The assessment was conducted under the component of Livelihood Opportunities and Local Self-Governance in Forest Management, funded by the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development.

The workshop included presentations on non-timber and timber forest product (NTFP/TFP) value chain (VC) assessment in Kakheti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, and Guria regions, VC challenges, and findings by target municipalities.

At the workshop, the roles of different genders and socially vulnerable groups were discussed, along with recommendations on support measures for VC actors, sustainable harvesting, and benefit-sharing approaches.

In the context of timber forest products (TFP), the participants of the workshop reviewed the TFP-related legal framework, extraction, and use of timber in Georgia. The discussion was also directed to the primary production and secondary processing, charcoal production, trade, and export practices of the products, and VC challenges and findings by target regions, including charcoal and handicraft businesses.

The workshop participants acknowledged the need for broader assessment coverage within the TFP value chains, suggesting the inclusion of additional value chain activities beyond sawmills and secondary processors.

In conclusion, the workshop yielded insightful outcomes for both NTFP and TFP value chains and assessment results will also be shared with local forest management bodies to contribute to the informed decision-making process.