Soy

EUDR mapping for soy — v1.2

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Soy EUDR Overview — Colombia

EUDR Context

Field	Value
eudr_commodity	soy
country_focus	Colombia
deforestation_risk	low
last_updated	2026-05-26

Overview

Soy is one of the seven commodities regulated under the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), though Colombia's role in global soy trade is fundamentally different from that of Brazil, Argentina, or the United States. Colombia is a minor soybean producer with fewer than 100,000 hectares under cultivation, but it is a significant importer—particularly of soybean meal for the animal feed industry. This dual position means the EUDR affects Colombia both as a potential producing country (where domestic soy expansion could encroach on forests in the Orinoquía) and as a consumer of imported soy that may carry deforestation risk from origin countries.

The EUDR requires operators to verify that soy products placed on or exported from EU markets were produced on land not subject to deforestation after December 31, 2020. For Colombian domestic production, the primary compliance pathway involves mapping the relatively small number of producing farms in Meta, Vichada, and the eastern plains. For imports, Colombian processors using imported soy in products ultimately destined for EU markets may face indirect due diligence obligations under the regulation's supply chain provisions.

Colombia's government has identified the Orinoquía (Altillanura) as a major agricultural expansion frontier, with UPRA estimating that Meta has approximately 5 million hectares and Vichada 4.7 million hectares suitable for agricultural development. While much of this land is currently degraded savanna rather than forest, expansion in certain corridors risks converting gallery forests and transitional ecosystems that the EUDR would classify as protected.

Colombian Context

Colombia's soybean production is concentrated in the departments of Meta and Vichada within the Orinoquía region, with smaller cultivation areas in Valle del Cauca and Tolima. USDA estimates for MY 2025/2026 project a national yield of approximately 2.94 MT/ha, indicating reasonable productivity but on a limited area base. Domestic production covers only a fraction of national demand, with the United States being a major soy supplier

alongside Brazil and Argentina.

The Orinoquía region presents a nuanced deforestation risk picture. The World Bank's BioCarbon Fund Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes (ISFL) has been operating the Orinoquía Sustainable Integrated Landscape Program specifically to promote agricultural intensification without deforestation. The program recognizes that the Altillanura's well-drained acid soils can support soy and other crops without requiring forest clearing, provided expansion is directed to existing grasslands and degraded pastures.

Rare's regenerative agriculture program in the Orinoquía is working directly with farmers to protect tropical savannah biodiversity while enabling productive agriculture. These initiatives demonstrate that Colombia's soy expansion can be managed to meet EUDR requirements, but only with deliberate land-use planning that prevents encroachment into the gallery forests, morichales (palm swamps), and forest-savanna transition zones that are ecologically critical.

EUDR Compliance Requirements

For Colombian soy operators targeting EU markets, compliance requires:

- **Farm-level geolocation**: Provide GPS polygon data for all soybean-producing plots, with particular attention to plots near gallery forests, morichales, and forest-savanna boundaries in the Orinoquía.
- **Deforestation-free proof**: Verify through satellite monitoring that no forest conversion occurred on producing land after December 31, 2020. Given the relatively small number of farms involved, individual plot verification is feasible.
- **Savanna conversion distinction**: While the EUDR focuses on deforestation (forest-to-non-forest conversion), operators should document that soy expansion occurred on grassland/degraded pasture rather than on naturally forested land, including secondary growth areas.
- **Import chain due diligence**: Colombian processors who import soy from Brazil/Argentina and re-export processed products to the EU must maintain due diligence records covering the imported soy's origin, even though Colombian territory is not the source of deforestation risk.
- **Livestock-soy rotation documentation**: In areas where cattle ranching and soy farming alternate (common in Meta), document that neither the soy phase nor the cattle phase involved land cleared after the cutoff date.

Soy Deforestation Risk & Monitoring

EUDR Context

Field	Value
eudr_commodity	soy
country_focus	Colombia
deforestation_risk	low
last_updated	2026-05-26

Overview

Colombia's soybean sector presents a relatively low but non-negligible deforestation risk, primarily concentrated in the Orinoquía expansion frontier. Unlike the Brazilian Cerrado or Argentine Gran Chaco—where soy expansion has been a primary deforestation driver—Colombia's limited soy footprint means that direct forest conversion for soybean cultivation has been modest to date. However, the government's ambition to develop the Altillanura as a major agricultural zone creates future risk that monitoring systems must address proactively.

The EUDR's monitoring requirements apply regardless of a country's risk classification tier. Even if Colombia is classified as a "standard" or "low" risk country for soy under the EUDR benchmarking system (Article 29), operators must still conduct due diligence and provide geolocation data for their supply. The key monitoring challenge in Colombia is distinguishing between natural savanna conversion (which does not constitute deforestation under the EUDR's forest definition) and conversion of gallery forests, secondary growth forests, and forest-savanna ecotones that do qualify as deforestation.

The indirect deforestation pathway is also relevant: soy expansion onto cattle pasture can displace livestock production into forested areas, creating deforestation that is causally linked to soy but geographically separated. This livestock-soy displacement dynamic is well-documented in Brazil and is beginning to emerge in Colombia's Orinoquía.

Colombian Context

Three deforestation risk dynamics are relevant to Colombian soy:

- **Orinoquía expansion front**: The departments of Meta and Vichada contain the largest soy-suitable areas. UPRA's agricultural zoning identifies nearly 10 million hectares of potentially arable land across these two departments. While the majority is degraded savanna grassland, patches of gallery forest

(bosque de galería) along rivers and streams—plus morichales (Mauritia palm wetlands)—represent protected ecosystems that expansion must avoid. IDEAM's annual deforestation monitoring shows localized clearing along the Meta River corridor.
- **Livestock-soy rotation**: In Meta, farmers commonly alternate between cattle pasture and soy cultivation. This rotation can be EUDR-compliant if the original pasture was not established through post-2020 deforestation. However, operators must document the full land-use history to prove that the rotation cycle does not include any deforestation-linked phase.
- **Imported soy risk transfer**: Colombia imports significant volumes of soybeans and soybean meal from Brazil and Argentina, where deforestation risk is much higher. While imported soy consumed domestically is not directly subject to the EUDR, Colombian companies that process imported soy into products exported to the EU may face supply chain liability.

Colombia's monitoring infrastructure for the Orinoquía includes IDEAM's national deforestation monitoring system (SMByC), the Orinoquía ISFL landscape monitoring, and academic research from institutions including the Alexander von Humboldt Institute, which tracks biodiversity in the region's ecosystems. Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems research has specifically modeled early warning indicators for agricultural expansion impacts on Orinoquía biodiversity.

EUDR Compliance Requirements

Monitoring and risk management for Colombian soy under the EUDR requires:

- **Ecosystem mapping**: Map all forest types within and adjacent to soy-producing areas, including gallery forests, secondary forests, and transitional woodland-savanna zones, using Colombian forest definitions aligned with IDEAM's national classification.
- **Satellite-based monitoring**: Deploy annual or semi-annual satellite analysis (Sentinel-2, Planet) for all registered soy plots and a buffer zone around them to detect any encroachment into forested areas.
- **Land-use change detection**: Specifically monitor for the savanna-to-cropland conversion pathway, flagging any instances where the converted area contained tree cover exceeding the EUDR's forest definition thresholds (typically >0.5 ha, >5m canopy height, >10% canopy cover).
- **Displacement risk assessment**: Evaluate whether soy expansion in the sourcing area is displacing cattle ranching into forested zones, and document mitigation measures if displacement risk is identified.
- **Data integration with IDEAM**: Leverage Colombia's national deforestation alerts and annual forest monitoring reports as part of the due diligence evidence base, supplemented with higher-resolution commercial imagery where national data is insufficient.