Cacao Certification & Compliance

EUDR Context

Field	Value
eudr_commodity	cacao
country_focus	Colombia
eudr_article9_field	compliance_statement
eudr_evidence_type	certification
deforestation_risk	medium
last_updated	2026-05-26

Overview

Voluntary sustainability certifications play a critical role in EUDR compliance for cacao, though they do not automatically satisfy regulatory requirements. The EUDR explicitly states that certifications alone are not sufficient evidence of deforestation-free production — operators must still conduct their own due diligence. However, certification schemes provide structured data, audit trails, and traceability infrastructure that significantly reduce the compliance burden.

The Rainforest Alliance (which merged with UTZ in 2018, absorbing the world's largest cocoa certification programme) has upgraded its certification system to include EUDR-aligned requirements. Approximately 50% of Rainforest Alliance certificate holders in the coffee and cocoa sectors have opted into these additional EUDR requirements. The Rainforest Alliance system offers complete traceability options and allows buyers to identify certificate holders who comply with EUDR-aligned standards, including farm-level geolocation and deforestation monitoring.

Fairtrade International, the second-largest certification scheme in cocoa, focuses on empowering farmers through better prices and decent working conditions. Fairtrade has partnered with Satelligence to scale satellite monitoring of forested areas around certified cocoa farms, with a target to complete georeferencing of all Fairtrade cocoa farms in Latin America by end of 2025. Other relevant schemes include organic certification (which prohibits deforestation by definition but may lack geolocation precision) and origin-specific certifications like Cacao de Colombia (Denominacion de Origen).

Colombian Context

Colombian cacao benefits from a favorable certification landscape. The country's fine-flavor cacao (approximately 95% of production is classified as fine or flavor cacao by ICCO) commands premium prices in specialty markets, providing economic incentive for certification. Major Colombian cacao exporters — including Luker Chocolate (Casa Luker), Compania Nacional de Chocolates (Grupo Nutresa), and cooperative federations — maintain Rainforest Alliance and Fairtrade certifications across their supply chains.

For EUDR compliance mapping, certification evidence serves as a supporting layer rather than a standalone proof. Operators must cross-reference certification data with: (1) geolocation coordinates from the certified farm, (2) satellite imagery confirming no forest loss after December 2020, and (3) legal production documentation including land title or recognized tenure. The Rainforest Alliance's origin matching and mass balance systems for cocoa are designed to support this cross-referencing at scale.

A key gap for Colombian smallholders is that many produce certified cacao through cooperatives but lack individual farm-level certification records. The cooperative-level aggregation model, while efficient for marketing, can obscure plot-level traceability. Technical assistance programs (see CT-EX-020) are addressing this by helping cooperatives disaggregate their traceability records to the individual farm level required by the EUDR.

Cleantech Taxonomy Nodes

Primary existing node: CT-EX-018 (Deforestation-free certification services — Rainforest Alliance, UTZ/merged, Fairtrade, and other certification services directly applicable to cacao). Also relevant: CT-EX-019 (Supply chain due diligence platforms — the operator-side platforms that ingest certification data as evidence), CT-EX-021 (EUDR operator documentation services — documentation services that compile certification evidence into due diligence statements).

Proposed new node: CT-EX-024 (Cacao origin certification and mass balance systems) — covers the specific mechanisms for maintaining certified cacao identity through mass balance, identity preserved, and segregated supply chain models, including the Rainforest Alliance cocoa origin matching system and cooperative-level disaggregation tools. This is distinct from general certification (CT-EX-018) because it addresses the cacao-specific challenge of maintaining certification identity through complex multi-stage processing chains (fermentation, drying, roasting, grinding).

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