# Cacao Smallholder Technical Assistance

## EUDR Context

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

## Overview

The EUDR recognizes the disproportionate compliance burden on smallholder producers through its amended provisions (Regulation 2025/2650), which allow small and micro primary operators in low-risk countries to submit simplified one-time declarations instead of full due diligence. However, even simplified compliance requires geolocation data, legal production evidence, and basic traceability — capabilities that many cacao smallholders lack without external technical assistance.

Technical assistance for EUDR compliance encompasses several dimensions: farm registration and geolocation (GPS data collection, plot boundary mapping), production documentation (harvest records, sales receipts, cooperative membership), legal compliance verification (land tenure documentation, environmental permits), and digital literacy (using mobile applications for data submission and record-keeping). For cacao smallholders, the most critical gap is typically the combination of informal land tenure and absence of georeferenced farm records.

The cost of EUDR compliance for smallholders is a major concern. Research indicates that compliance costs — including GPS device acquisition, data collection time, cooperative system upgrades, and third-party verification — can be significant relative to smallholder income. Without technical assistance and shared infrastructure (through cooperatives and sector organizations), many smallholders risk being excluded from EU supply chains entirely, redirecting their production to less regulated markets at lower prices.

## Colombian Context

Colombia has approximately 180,000 cacao-farming families, with 93% classified as smallholders cultivating an average of 3 hectares. Fedecacao, through the National Cacao Fund (Fondo Nacional del Cacao), coordinates the primary technical assistance infrastructure for these farmers, including extension services, agronomic training, genetic improvement programs, and increasingly, EUDR compliance support. The Ministry of Agriculture and strategic allies provide additional funding and coordination.

The FAO/GIZ EUDR pilot initiative in Colombia is specifically designed to build institutional capacity for smallholder compliance, deploying open digital tools (WHISP and GROUND platforms) for geolocation and deforestation verification. This initiative positions Colombia as a potential regional model for how producer countries can build public infrastructure that reduces per-farmer compliance costs. Key challenges identified during pilot workshops include: limited internet connectivity in remote cacao zones (particularly Tumaco and parts of Caqueta), low digital literacy among older farmers, informal land tenure (many farmers lack formal title), and the cost of upgrading cooperative-level data systems to support individual farm traceability.

Engagement with supply chain buyers (exporters and EU importers) is also critical. Operators can support compliance by investing in cooperative-level data systems, financing GPS device distribution, training local technicians, and funding independent verification. Luker Chocolate and Compania Nacional de Chocolates have invested in upstream traceability programs that combine certification requirements with EUDR compliance data collection, reducing duplication of effort for farmers. Community-based organizations and NGOs (including the World Cocoa Foundation's programs in Caqueta and Putumayo) complement government and industry efforts by providing localized, culturally appropriate technical assistance.

# Cleantech Taxonomy Nodes

Primary existing node: CT-EX-020 (Smallholder technical assistance for EUDR — the core node for EUDR technical assistance programs, currently focused on coffee but directly applicable to cacao). Also relevant: CT-AF-006 (Smart Farming — digital tools and data platforms that smallholders need to access), CT-EX-017 (Precision agriculture data platforms — the data infrastructure underpinning farm-level compliance).

Proposed new node: CT-EX-025 (Cacao smallholder digital inclusion platforms) — covers the specific platforms, tools, and programs designed to bring cacao smallholders into digital traceability systems, including mobile-first farm registration apps, offline-capable GPS tools for areas without connectivity, cooperative data management systems, and integration with national cadastral systems. This extends CT-EX-020 (general smallholder TA) with the cacao-specific digital infrastructure dimension that is the primary bottleneck for Colombian smallholder EUDR compliance.

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