

Rubber EUDR Overview — Colombia

EUDR Context

Field	Value
eudr_commodity	rubber
country_focus	Colombia
deforestation_risk	low
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Overview

Natural rubber is the seventh commodity regulated under the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). The regulation covers natural rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis* latex) and derived products but excludes synthetic rubber, which is petroleum-based. Colombia is a minor natural rubber producer globally, with approximately 55,660 hectares under cultivation distributed across 17 departments, making it a small player compared to Southeast Asian producers (Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam) that supply over 70% of global natural rubber. Nevertheless, Colombian rubber falls within EUDR scope when exported to EU markets or when used as an input in products destined for Europe.

Colombia's rubber sector has a distinctive social origin: it emerged primarily as an alternative development crop to replace coca cultivation in conflict-affected departments, particularly in Caquetá, Meta, Santander, Guaviare, Putumayo, and southern Bolívar. The National Alternative Development Plan promoted rubber in 42 municipalities as a medium-term economic alternative for rural communities transitioning away from illicit economies. This origin means the sector is overwhelmingly smallholder-based, with many producers holding plots of 5-20 hectares.

From an EUDR compliance perspective, Colombian rubber presents a mixed picture. The smallholder, alternative-development character of the sector means that most plantations were established on previously cleared or degraded land (former coca fields, degraded pasture), which supports a deforestation-free claim. However, the informality of many operations, limited documentation infrastructure, and the remote locations of many plantations create practical challenges for meeting the regulation's due diligence requirements.

Colombian Context

Colombia's rubber cultivation is concentrated in five principal departments: Meta leads nationally with 19,849 hectares (35.7% of the total planted area), followed by Santander (15.7%), Vichada (15.3%), Caquetá (10.4%), and Antioquia (7.6%). In terms of producer distribution, Santander has the highest share of rubber producers (20.5%), followed by Caquetá (19.8%), Antioquia (14.8%), and Córdoba (12.6%).

The sector faces structural challenges: low yields compared to Asian competitors, limited processing infrastructure (only one centrifuged latex plant in the country), and price competition from synthetic rubber. The domestic market absorbs most production, with tire manufacturers and industrial goods companies as primary buyers. Direct exports to the EU are currently limited, though this could change as EUDR compliance creates demand for verified deforestation-free rubber from origins with lower corruption and governance risks than some Southeast Asian suppliers.

The Colombian rubber sector has been proactive on EUDR preparation. Preferred by Nature has worked with the sector since 2018 under the "Uniendo Eslabones" (Joining Links) strategy, which focuses on integrating value chain members and building traceability from plantation to finished product. A milestone achievement was FSC certification for 85 small producers, one centrifuged latex plant, and Colombia's leading balloon manufacturer—demonstrating that smallholder certification is feasible. The sector is also developing a "100% Colombian Natural Rubber" brand as a market differentiation tool.

EUDR Compliance Requirements

For Colombian rubber operators, EUDR compliance requires:

- **Plantation geolocation:** Provide GPS polygon data for all rubber plantations in the supply chain, traceable to individual smallholder plots. Given the smallholder structure (thousands of producers with small plots), mobile-based GPS mapping tools are the most practical approach.
- **Deforestation-free verification:** Demonstrate that rubber plantations were not established on forested land cleared after December 31, 2020. For most Colombian rubber, this is straightforward since the majority of plantations were established before 2020 as alternative development crops on previously cleared land.
- **Legality documentation:** Verify that plantations comply with Colombian agricultural and environmental law, including any required environmental permits and compliance with forest reserve restrictions. Many rubber-growing areas overlap with environmental protection zones where documentation requirements may be complex.
- **Supply chain traceability:** Map latex collection from plantation through intermediate aggregation points to the processing facility and export point. The sector's work on traceability since 2018 provides a foundation, but system coverage must be extended to all producers in the export chain.
- **Smallholder support programs:** Develop affordable compliance pathways for the thousands of smallholder rubber tappers, potentially through group certification models (as demonstrated by the 85-producer FSC group) and digital data collection tools that reduce per-farmer compliance costs.

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