

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.

Revisión #1

Creado 2026-05-27 03:59:06 UTC por Gideon Blaauw

Actualizado 2026-05-27 03:59:07 UTC por Gideon Blaauw