Sustainable Forestry & Certification

EUDR Context

Field	Value
eudr_commodity	wood
country_focus	Colombia
deforestation_risk	high
last_updated	2026-05-26

Overview

Sustainable forestry certification represents the most viable pathway for Colombian timber to access EU markets under the EUDR. While certification alone does not satisfy the regulation's requirements (operators must still provide geolocation data and specific deforestation-free proof), certified timber operations have the management systems, documentation practices, and third-party audit infrastructure that closely align with EUDR due diligence obligations. Colombia's sustainable forestry sector is small but growing, and scaling it up is both a commercial opportunity and a conservation imperative.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is the primary international certification standard operating in Colombia. FSC-certified operations exist in both the planted forest sector (teak, pine, eucalyptus plantations) and—more critically for EUDR purposes—in natural forest management by community concessions. Community forestry initiatives in the Pacific coast and Amazon have achieved FSC certification through multi-year capacity-building programs supported by international cooperation, demonstrating that even in high-risk regions, sustainable, legal, and traceable timber production is achievable.

The EU's FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) Action Plan, while distinct from the EUDR, has influenced Colombia's forestry governance framework. Although Colombia does not have a FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), the principles of FLEGT—legal verification, stakeholder participation, and trade transparency—have informed domestic initiatives like the Pacto Intersectorial por la Madera Legal (PIML).

Colombian Context

Colombia's sustainable forestry landscape includes several distinct pathways:

- **Plantation forestry**: Approximately 427,000 hectares of planted forest (primarily teak, pine, eucalyptus, and acacia) represent the lowest-risk timber supply for EU markets. These operations are typically well-documented, many are FSC-certified, and the plantation context means the EUDR's deforestation-free requirement is straightforward to verify (the land was converted to plantation before the 2020 cutoff, or was previously non-forested).
- **Community forest management**: Colombia's territorial governance structure gives Afro-Colombian community councils and Indigenous resguardos legal authority over vast forest areas. Successful community forestry programs—supported by organizations including WWF, USAID, and FAO—have built sustainable harvesting practices, low-impact harvesting techniques, and value chain development. Some community operations have achieved FSC certification, though the process is resource-intensive.
- **PIML and the legal timber culture**: The Pacto Intersectorial por la Madera Legal, launched in 2009, brings together 70 public and private organizations to promote legal timber sourcing throughout Colombia's domestic market. The PIML has driven adoption of timber legality verification systems, promoted inter-institutional coordination, and supported the development of a "legal timber culture" among producers, processors, and consumers.

The Colombian government's ambition to become Latin America's second forestry powerhouse (after Chile or Brazil) depends on expanding planted forest area while simultaneously improving governance in natural forest extraction. The 223 forestry companies and 400,000 sector jobs represent a base that could grow significantly if legal, sustainable, and EUDR-compliant supply chains are scaled.

EUDR Compliance Requirements

Certification and sustainable forestry practices contribute to EUDR compliance through:

- **FSC certification as compliance foundation**: FSC-certified operations provide management plans, chain-of-custody documentation, annual audits, and stakeholder consultation records that address most EUDR due diligence elements. Operators must supplement FSC data with EUDR-specific geolocation requirements and the December 2020 cutoff date verification.
- **Community forestry formalization**: Community-managed forests must demonstrate that harvesting occurs under valid permits issued by the relevant CAR, within approved management plan parameters, and with documented free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) from the governing community council or cabildo.
- **Timber legality verification**: Implement or adopt a timber legality assurance system aligned with PIML standards, ensuring that every batch of timber can be traced from forest of origin through processing to export with complete documentation.
- **Sustainable yield documentation**: Demonstrate through forest inventory data and management plan calculations that harvesting rates do not exceed sustainable yield thresholds, ensuring that the harvested forest maintains its status as forest (avoiding degradation below EUDR forest definition thresholds).
- **Multi-stakeholder governance**: Engage with PIML, CARs, community organizations, and international certification bodies to build the institutional infrastructure needed for long-term EUDR compliance across the Colombian timber sector.

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