



NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE

Deforestation-Free Green Value Chains in Kenya: Policy Pathways for Youth Employment and Sustainable Land Management

Concept Note

30-31 March 2026 | IBIS Styles Hotel and Hybrid

1. Introduction

The African Forest Forum (AFF) is a pan-African non-governmental organization with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. The purpose of AFF is to provide a platform and create an enabling environment for independent and objective analysis, advocacy and advice on relevant policy and technical issues pertaining to achieving sustainable management, use and conservation of Africa's Forest and tree resources as part of efforts to eradicate poverty, promote gender equality, economic and social development.

AFF in partnership with the Alliance for Agricultural Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is implementing a project in Kenya, Ethiopia and Ghana with a title "Scaling Youth-Led Climate Innovations for a Greener Africa: Enhancing Compliance with European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) through Sustainable Land management and Landscape Restoration".

The European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) aims to ensure that commodities placed on the EU market are legal and not associated with deforestation or forest degradation after 31 December 2020. It represents a significant shift toward deforestation-free global supply chains and contributes to global climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation goals.

The EUDR presents long-term opportunities for countries that are able to meet its due diligence requirements such as enhancing market access, competitiveness, and integration into higher-value supply chains. However, short- to medium-term impacts could be disruptive. Limited awareness of the regulation, infrastructural gaps in traceability systems, high compliance costs, and risks of market exclusion could disproportionately affect smallholder producers, intermediaries, youth, and women—particularly in rural and forest-dependent communities. Evidence suggests that smallholders may face greater challenges than assumed, due to structural barriers that hinder participation in formal supply chains, limited access to technology and finance, and weak institutional support systems.

In Kenya, where coffee and wood products represent a significant portion of export revenues to the EU, the potential consequences of non-compliance extend beyond trade disruptions to broader socio-economic impacts. Kenya's national development strategies, including Kenya Vision 2030 and its medium-term plans, emphasize trade diversification, value addition, and private sector-led growth, recognizing that expanding competitive and sustainable supply chains is central to national prosperity. Kenya's National Strategy for Youth Employment and Opportunities and related policy frameworks also demonstrate a commitment to integrating youth into the formal economy through skills development, entrepreneurship support, and inclusive business models.



Despite these strategic commitments, Kenya continues to face structural unemployment, particularly among youth, where the rate among young people remains significantly higher than the national average. Women, youth, and minority groups also encounter systemic barriers that limit their participation in formal value chains, including access to credit, land tenure insecurity, and limited representation in decision-making. As a result, a large share of youth engagement in the forest and agricultural sectors remains informal, precarious, and poorly integrated into national economic development pathways.

Central to future success of Kenya, in this context, is the active participation of youth in the emerging green economy. Strengthening of youth-inclusive enabling environments can create pathways for youth to integrate into formal market systems. By empowering youth with relevant skills, access to finance, and market linkages, Kenya can harness its demographic dividend to advance deforestation-free supply chains, strengthen resilience, and stimulate sustainable economic growth.

Key Drivers for Action

- Strengthening institutional, policy, and governance frameworks to support EUDR compliance
- Enhancing traceability systems and data governance accessible to smallholders and youth
- Fostering participation of youth and women in green businesses along value chains
- Promoting and aligning national trade and investment strategies with environmental sustainability standards and social equity

It is in this context that AFF in collaboration with Kenya forest Service and AGRA, is organizing this national policy dialogue that goes beyond compliance to address product standardization, stakeholder coordination, youth inclusion, and long-term competitiveness under the EUDR and entry to global premium market for Kenyan products.

2. Purpose of the Policy Dialogue

The Kenya National Policy Dialogue aims to strengthen deliberative policy processes and governance arrangements to enable Kenya to respond to EUDR due diligence requirements effectively, efficiently, and inclusively, while safeguarding livelihoods and promoting green, deforestation-free, youth inclusive value chains and market entry.

3. Objectives of the Dialogue

Overall Objective

To enhance Kenya's readiness for EUDR implementation and strategize approaches to equip youths/enterprises to respond to evolving trade and environmental regulations through inclusive policy dialogue, improved governance coordination, and youth-centered solutions for deforestation-free supply chains.



Specific Objectives

1. To assess Kenya's preparedness for EUDR implementation including standards and certification schemes affecting traceability, due diligence, and forest management
2. To discuss the socio-economic implications of EUDR and standardization schemes for smallholders, youth, women, and forest-dependent communities.
3. To provide roadmap and recommend policy options, measures, and institutional arrangements that support inclusive compliance.
4. To support youth and women engagement as key actors in green business and value chain development.

4. Expected Outputs

- Key policy actors in Kenya better informed and understand potential and short-term challenges of EUDR;
- Key youth policy makers in Kenya better enlightened on existing opportunities for youth engagement in green supply chains and to the country's sustainable development endeavor.
- Study reports validated; and recommendations and inputs provided on inclusive traceability systems and national EUDR compliance guidelines.
- Youth and state actors produced policy recommendations for better nature-based business governance and readiness
- The need for establishment of Capacity Accelerator and Knowledge Network (CaKN) emphasized as a strategic instrument to strengthen and scale youth engagement

5. Key Participants

- Representatives from national government ministries/agencies working on forest, climate and youth employment.
- County governments representatives from EUDR-relevant production zones; preferably from departments working on nature-based business development sectors
- Youth, youth-led enterprise and other private sector representatives and
- civil society, research institutions, and development partners Private sector exporters

6. Expected deliverables

1. synthesis report/dialogue summary with actionable youth recommendations
2. Policy Brief and inputs to CaKN establishment



7. Organizers and Responsibilities

- **Lead Implementing Organization (AFF):** Overall coordination, technical leadership, facilitation, and reporting
- **Government Partners:** opening, policy direction, policy leadership, stakeholder mobilization, and follow-up actions
- **AGRA:** Technical support, keynote presentation

8. Register in advance:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/qEUXZzEOQEW1Wdl6TZFjrA>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with details on how to join the meeting.

9. References

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