



The European Union (EU) is a longstanding partner and friend of Liberia. The EU has supported Liberia since 1973 through different channels. The forest sector is responsible for 10% of the Liberian GDP and this could significantly grow. Nevertheless, the deforestation rate is amongst the highest in the world and sustainability is seriously at stake if current practices are not halted. The EU is supporting interventions to enhance the trade of legal timber by using market mechanisms to enforce legality and sustainability in the sector.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE FOREST SECTOR IN LIBERIA?

Forests of Liberia have been commercially exploited since the 1950s, mainly for exporting purposes. The sector formally employs around 10,000 people and it is estimated that around 20,000 have their income through informal activities within the sector. The current deforestation rate is at nearly 2% per year, amongst the highest in the world.

HOW DOES THE EU SUPPORT THE FOREST SECTOR IN LIBERIA?

The EU is supporting interventions to protect biodiversity in forests and areas of conservation, as well as enhancing the legal trade of timber through the FLEGT programme (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade).

The EU support focuses on institutions delivering into the backbone of the EU-Liberia Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), as well as civil society and up to a certain extent, the private sector. The EU also collaborates with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) whose support targets institutions to ensure checks and balances in the system as well as civil society organisations. The joint support from FCDO and EU to the FLEGT programme amounted to more than EUR 20 million. Current EU interventions still amount to some EUR 8 million.

On the side of biodiversity conservation, a big deal of support from the EU is provided in this field too, overall amounting to nearly EUR 15 million. The EU supports fighting Illegal Wildlife Trafficking and preserving trans-border landscapes hosting high value for conservation within Liberia and neighbouring countries. As a global leader, the EU leads the way by promoting ambitious policies and measures to tackle the global biodiversity and climate challenges.





WHICH PROJECTS DOES THE EU FUND IN LIBERIA IN SUPPORT OF FOREST?

The **FLEGT programme** was initiated back in 2003. It implies agreements with timber producing tropical countries and by using market mechanisms enforcing legality and sustainability in the timber sector. A Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) - the legal document that rolls out the FLEGT in a given country - was signed with Liberia in 2013 and since then, jointly with FCDO, the EU has supported the establishment of a chain of custody for timber and reinforced several aspects of forest governance.

The “**Conservation of the Gola Forest Landscape**” project aims to conserve the ecosystems of the Gola Forest Landscape. To effectively manage the landscape, both the protected areas and the community forests outside the protected areas of the ecosystems of the Gola Forest Landscape must be well managed. This management must be tied together with an integrated set of land use plans covering the whole landscape and effective trans-boundary governance structures.

The “**Strengthening Local Communities and the Law Enforcement Network to combat Wildlife and Forest Crime in Liberia**” project focuses on working with local communities to empower them to be actively involved in the management and protection of forest and wildlife resources. It is in line with priorities identified by the EU and outlined in the “Law enforcement and combating wildlife and forest crime” project, the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) initiative as well as the Born Free Initiative assessment and the West Africa Strategy on Combating Wildlife Crime (WASCWC).

A significant component of the project is supporting the development of a Forestry Development Authority (FDA) “**Community Ecoguard Unit**” to harmonise and coordinate all the various local initiatives throughout the country. These community-based efforts will be complemented and supported by equipping Liberia with the legal framework and law enforcement to ensure a sustained fight against illegal wildlife trade in the country, working with all stakeholders across relevant sectors. Furthermore, ongoing livelihood support projects, focussing mainly on communities around (proposed) protected areas, will complement the proposed project, creating additional long-term benefits for the local communities.



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