



Original Article

The Readiness of Coffee Stakeholders to Comply with the European Union Deforestation Regulations in Kyarumba Sub-County, Kasese District, Uganda

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Sustainability.

The European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) introduces new sustainability requirements that affect Uganda's agricultural and forestry exports. This study investigates the level of readiness among key stakeholders in Kyarumba Sub-County, Kasese District, to comply with the EUDR. Through interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, the study finds that while there is growing awareness of environmental compliance, most local stakeholders lack the technical, financial, and institutional capacity to meet EUDR requirements. Recommendations are made for targeted capacity building, government support, and inclusive policy design to ensure that rural communities are not left behind in the global shift toward deforestation-free value chains.

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INTRODUCTION

In global environmental governance, the negative impacts of international commodity chains,

especially deforestation, have become increasingly significant (Verina Ingram et al., 2020). To align with Sustainable Development

Goal 12 on responsible production and consumption, there is growing emphasis on measuring and reducing the carbon footprint of traded goods. Although private sustainability standards have tried to fill the governance gap between local laws and global trade, they face significant shortcomings (Fernandes Martins et al., 2022; Macdonald, 2020; Negi et al., 2020). As a result, researchers and policymakers have called for more robust public regulatory frameworks (Harrison, 2023; Langford et al., 2023; Marano et al., 2024).

The European Union (EU) has responded by strengthening its environmental policies, beginning with the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) and now the more comprehensive EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), enacted in 2023 and expected to take effect in December 2025 (Berning & Sotirov, 2024). The EUDR seeks to reduce deforestation associated with products entering the EU, particularly forest-risk commodities like coffee, cocoa, soy, and palm oil (Capuzzi, 2023). It introduces requirements for due diligence, including the use of geolocation data and satellite imagery to verify compliance (European Commission, 2023).

This has serious implications for Uganda, a major coffee-exporting country that sends over 65% of its coffee to the EU market (UCDA, 2023). Uganda's coffee sector, which supports over 1.7 million households (Guyson, 2025), is largely dominated by smallholders who may not have the capacity to meet the traceability and environmental compliance demands of the EUDR. With Uganda being the largest coffee producer in East Africa, the stakes are high.

While national statistics and export data underscore Uganda's importance in the global coffee trade, it remains unclear how stakeholders at the grassroots, particularly in Kyarumba Sub-County, Kasese District-understand and are preparing for the EUDR. Kyarumba, located in the Rwenzori highlands, is one of the key Arabica coffee-producing zones. Yet, there is limited evidence on how ready farmers, cooperatives, traders, and local institutions are to comply with

the forthcoming regulation. This study, therefore, seeks to fill that gap

Problem Statement

Sustainable global trade increasingly demands accountability for environmental harm, especially deforestation tied to agricultural products like coffee. The EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), set to take effect in December 2024, requires products entering the EU to be traceable to land that has not been deforested. This presents a challenge for countries like Uganda, whose coffee exports heavily rely on the EU market (Berning & Sotirov, 2024; European Commission, 2023).

Despite efforts by both the Ugandan government and major coffee companies like Kyagalanyi, UGACOF and Kawacom to meet EUDR requirements, deforestation continues to rise alongside coffee production (Mumbere, 2025). Without full compliance, Uganda risks having its coffee exports banned from the EU, threatening a vital source of foreign income and rural livelihoods.

While research has focused on production, marketing, and consumption, little has been done to explore the readiness of smallholder stakeholders to comply with environmental trade regulations. Even fewer studies have examined this in Uganda and none specifically in Kyarumba Sub-County, Kasese District. This study, therefore, seeks to assess how prepared coffee producers and buyers in Kyarumba are to meet EUDR standards.

Objectives

- To assess the awareness of coffee industry stakeholders about EUDR in Kyarumba.
- To evaluate the institutional and technical readiness for compliance.
- To identify barriers and opportunities for achieving EUDR-aligned practices.

Significance of the Study

This research offers timely insights for policymakers, civil society, and development

partners working to ensure that Ugandan producers remain competitive in global markets while protecting natural forests. Understanding readiness at the grassroots level is crucial for designing realistic, inclusive, and locally owned environmental strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Awareness of the EUDR among Stakeholders

The European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) has gained global attention since its adoption in June 2023 (Khotas, 2023). The regulation seeks to ensure that key commodities placed on the EU market, such as coffee, cocoa, soy, palm oil, and timber, are not linked to deforestation or forest degradation. As implementation deadlines draw closer, the question of stakeholder awareness, especially among producers, traders, exporters, and government actors, has emerged as a central concern in the global effort to meet compliance.

Globally, awareness of the EUDR is uneven, with a significant information gap between high-income and low-income countries. Reports by international think tanks such as the Forest Trends Initiative (2023) and the World Resources Institute (2024) show that multinational companies and large-scale commodity traders are generally aware of the EUDR and have started internal processes to align with its traceability requirements (Brack, 2024).

However, smallholder farmers, local cooperatives, and indigenous communities, especially those operating informally, often remain unaware of the regulation's implications. The global discourse stresses the need for inclusive communication strategies to ensure that all actors, especially those at the start of supply chains, understand what is at stake.

Within Europe, awareness of the EUDR is understandably high, particularly among importers, manufacturers, and government agencies (World Bank Group, 2024). EU member states are actively developing national guidance documents and digital tools to support

compliance. In countries like Germany, the Netherlands, and France, associations of traders and retailers are conducting workshops to prepare their members for full implementation. However, a recent study by the EU Parliament (2024) revealed that while large corporations are well-informed, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the EU face confusion about their obligations under the EUDR, especially in relation to due diligence and geolocation requirements (ZDECHOVSKÝ, 2024a).

In Asia, the level of awareness varies widely depending on the commodity and the country. In major coffee and palm oil producing nations like Indonesia and Vietnam, government ministries and export associations have begun public dialogues about the EUDR (Hans N, 2025). Vietnam, in particular, has shown proactive engagement by forming task forces to raise awareness and assess risks in its coffee sector. Yet, on the ground, many farmers and cooperatives still lack clear information (Nguyen & Sarker, 2018a). A 2024 GIZ report notes that while exporters are gradually becoming familiar with the EUDR, rural producers often rely on third-party buyers and have limited access to guidance or training (GIZ, 2024).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the EUDR is still a new and complex concept for many stakeholders. Countries like Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, major cocoa exporters, have taken initial steps to understand the regulation, often supported by donor-funded programs (CW, 2024). In East Africa, including Uganda, Rwanda, and Ethiopia, awareness is lower, particularly in the coffee sector. A study by ITC-MARKUP (2024) found that only 20 to 30% of interviewed coffee exporters and cooperatives in Ethiopia and Kenya had heard of the EUDR, and fewer could describe its requirements. Most smallholder farmers remain unaware that their markets may shrink or shift depending on their ability to comply.

In Uganda, general awareness of the EUDR remains low, especially among rural producers and local government actors. While a few exporters and national-level stakeholders (such as

Uganda Coffee Development Authority - UCDA) are beginning to discuss the regulation, there is limited outreach to farmers and cooperatives at the grassroots level. Kasese District, a key coffee-producing area, reflects this broader national trend. Preliminary field insights suggest that many individual farmers and even among those involved in cooperatives, have a minimal understanding of the regulation. Most rely on middlemen or buyers who have not yet relayed this information downstream. Local government officials and extension workers in Kasese also appear to have limited training or resources to sensitise communities on the matter.

Institutional and Technical Readiness for Compliance with the EUDR

As the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) regulation edges closer to implementation deadlines, attention has shifted from awareness to readiness particularly the institutional frameworks and technical systems needed for compliance (ITC-MARKUP, 2024). Across continents, varying levels of readiness paint a mixed picture of how prepared stakeholders really are, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

Globally, institutional and technical readiness for the EUDR is marked by strong disparities. High-income countries and multinational corporations are relatively advanced in aligning systems, traceability tools, and legal mechanisms to meet the EUDR's demands (CW, 2024). For example, companies involved in palm oil, cocoa, and coffee have started investing in supply chain mapping technologies, blockchain tools, and risk assessment platforms.

However, readiness often drops sharply when one moves toward producing countries, especially where production is dominated by smallholder farmers and informal markets. International organisations like FAO and ITC (2023-2024) highlight the urgent need for cross-border coordination, funding for digital infrastructure, and public-private partnerships to bridge these gaps.

In Europe, institutional readiness is advanced. Member states are actively aligning national systems with the EUDR and developing platforms to verify compliance. For example, the Netherlands has integrated its customs and environmental databases to track high-risk commodities, while Germany has introduced a digital portal for due diligence reporting. However, technical readiness within the private sector, especially among small and medium enterprises, varies.

A 2024 report by the European Commission noted that while large companies have invested in geolocation tools and supplier audits, many SMEs lack the capacity or digital infrastructure to fulfil traceability and risk mitigation requirements fully (ZDECHOVSKÝ, 2024a). In Asia, technical readiness is slowly improving, but institutional readiness remains a work in progress. Countries like Indonesia and Malaysia-major palm oil exporters, have existing traceability frameworks (e.g., Indonesia's ISPO and Malaysia's MSPO) that are being upgraded to align with the EUDR. Vietnam is also piloting systems for coffee supply chain traceability.

Still, widespread digital exclusion, limited farmer-level data, and fragmented institutional roles remain barriers. According to a 2024 WWF report, most national institutions lack the staffing, resources, and challenges to support broad-based compliance without substantial international support. In Sub-Saharan Africa, both institutional and technical readiness for EUDR compliance is currently limited, with a few exceptions. Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire have taken early steps, particularly in cocoa traceability, through digital platforms and satellite monitoring. However, across much of East and Central Africa, readiness remains low.

Weak institutional coordination, outdated land tenure systems, and a lack of digital tools for traceability continue to challenge progress. A 2024 study by Proforest notes that most African governments have not yet developed national EUDR strategies or allocated specific budgets to support compliance readiness. Furthermore, data

on land use and farm locations crucial for EUDR are often incomplete or outdated.

In Uganda, institutional and technical readiness for EUDR compliance is still at a very early stage. National institutions like the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) are aware of the regulation but have not yet put in place a formal roadmap for national compliance.

Digital traceability platforms are underdeveloped, and geolocation data for smallholder farms is mostly unavailable. At the local level, such as in Kasese District, readiness is even more limited. District-level institutions, cooperatives, and extension services have not received adequate training or tools to support farmers in preparing for compliance. There is little to no investment in digital mapping, and institutional coordination between local government, NGOs, and producer groups. Without deliberate action, the gap between EUDR requirements and local readiness will continue to grow.

Barriers and Opportunities for Achieving EUDR-Aligned Practices

The implementation of the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) introduces both challenges and possibilities for producers, traders, and governments worldwide (van Noordwijk et al., 2025). As the regulation requires full traceability and deforestation-free verification for commodities like coffee, cocoa, and timber, stakeholders are increasingly assessing what may either obstruct or support their alignment with these new standards. Literature emerging since the EUDR's adoption sheds light on the diverse and context-specific factors that shape the success or failure of compliance efforts across the globe.

Globally, one of the most persistent barriers to EUDR-aligned practices is data and traceability gaps. Many smallholder-based value chains lack geolocation records, supply chain transparency, or historical land use data. A study by Earth Innovation Institute (2024) noted that without digitised and verified farm-level data, compliance

becomes difficult, if not impossible, for small producers. High compliance costs also remain a global barrier, especially in regions where profit margins are already thin.

On the flip side, the EUDR presents opportunities for value chain modernisation from the adoption of digital tools to more structured relationships between farmers and buyers. Some companies have used this momentum to pilot blockchain traceability systems and invest in long-term partnerships with producer groups. From the European side, one of the key barriers has been interpretation uncertainty. Many stakeholders, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs), are unclear about how to implement risk assessments or what constitutes “adequate” due diligence. However, opportunities exist in the form of regulatory clarity and support tools (Khotas, 2023). The EU is developing harmonised systems and digital platforms to reduce administrative burdens and ensure that companies, especially SMEs, can comply without being excluded from global trade. Additionally, the EUDR has spurred investment in sustainable sourcing, which may benefit compliant suppliers from developing countries in the long term.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the barriers are more structural and systemic. Weak land governance systems, lack of farm documentation, and low institutional capacity are recurring themes. According to the Africa Sustainability Lab (2024), many countries have outdated or incomplete records of land ownership, which complicates efforts to prove that land has not been recently deforested. At the same time, there are opportunities. The EUDR has the potential to strengthen farmer organisations, encourage digitisation, and attract new forms of finance and investment, especially for value chains that demonstrate a clear path to compliance (Melati et al., 2024). Pilot programs in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire show that with the right support, farmer groups can implement traceability systems and benefit from market access and price incentives (Kroegeer et al., 2017).

In Uganda, and specifically in Kasese District, the barriers to EUDR-aligned practices are both practical and institutional. Limited awareness, poor access to technology, and fragmented supply chains make it difficult for farmers and cooperatives to implement traceability measures (*ITC-MARKUP-Handbook-on-EUDR_Uganda-Coffee_2024*). Lack of geolocation tools, inadequate extension support, and limited training further widen the compliance gap. Many smallholder farmers are unaware of the EUDR and continue to sell through informal channels, where there is no pressure or incentive to track deforestation status or legality.

However, there are also emerging opportunities. Uganda's strong history of organising farmers into cooperatives and associations can be leveraged to introduce group-based traceability systems. Local NGOs and district agricultural offices in Kasese could be key players in bridging information gaps and promoting low-cost technologies like GPS mapping and mobile reporting tools. Moreover, the country's ongoing digital transformation in agriculture (such as UCDA's pilot traceability programs) could form the foundation for future compliance pathways if scaled up equitably and with grassroots involvement.

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methods that guided the study are presented. These included research design, population size studied, sampling and sample size, data collection methods, data collection tools and data analysis methods, data quality management, as well as ethical considerations.

Research Design

This study applied a cross-sectional survey design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A qualitative approach was used due to its ability to study phenomena in detail (Schoch, 2020). Meanwhile, a quantitative approach was employed to capture measurable data. The cross-sectional research design enabled the researcher to analyse land cover change by examining the phenomena as they existed within the recorded time, drawing on existing occurrences.

Population

The study involved 300 participants, including producers/farmers, coffee traders and processors, nursery bed operators, transporters, and café owners who were directly affected by coffee-related regulations. It also engaged policymakers from government departments such as MAAIF, the Ministry of Trade, UCDA, NFA, and NEMA to gain insight into their reception of the EUDR within Uganda's policy space. Private sustainability schemes like Rainforest Alliance, UTZ, and Fair Trade were included among the respondents. Additionally, coffee development partners such as the EU Embassy Office, Abi Trust, and GIZ were engaged in the study.

Sampling Techniques

Simple random sampling was used to select participants from the general community, primarily coffee producers. The researcher randomly chose participants, ensuring that everyone in the study population had an equal likelihood of being selected. Additionally, purposive sampling was employed to select key informants. This non-probability sampling method involved deliberately choosing participants based on specific qualities. Buyers, policymakers, and development partners were selected through purposive sampling since they were clearly identified and known to be relevant to the study.

Sample Size

The study sample size was 165 respondents, determined using the guidance of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to sample the population of producers.

$$s = \frac{X^2NP(1-P)}{\{d^2(N-1) + X^2P(1-P)\}}$$

s= required sample size

X²=the table value of chi-square for the degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841) N = Population size

P = the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample

size) d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.50)

$$s = \frac{X^2NP(1-P)}{\{d^2(N-1) + X^2P(1-P)\}}$$

Data Collection Methods

Being a qualitative study, the research involved interviews, questionnaires and documentary reviews to collect data from participants.

Questionnaire Method

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from producers. This helped the researcher to collect quantifiable data, which was used to provide triangulation and validation of the qualitative findings from key informants (Rathi & Ronald, 2022).

Interviews

Interviews helped the researcher to engage more deeply with the participant and thus a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of the study (Tenny et al., 2025). Data from MDAs and other key stakeholders were collected using Key informant interviews.

Review of Documentaries

This involved systematic collection, documentation, analysis and interpretation to collect data from secondary sources (Wickham, 2019). Relevant publications such as institutional reports, research publications, textbooks, newspapers and others were visited by the researcher to collect relevant information about coffee production and sustainable regulations. During the discussion, primary data was validated using information from the secondary data.

Data Management and Analysis

The collected quantitative data was entered using different software like Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20 and NVIVO V-12, cleaned, and coded. The cleaned data was subjected to the relevant analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics, mainly the use of frequency, summation

and percentages (Kaliyadan & Kulkarni, 2019). This was presented using frequency distribution tables and charts.

Thematic Analysis

Qualitative data was thematically analyzed through categorization into similar groups which groups were then presented and explained as narratives, experiences, proverbs and quotations to make the data meaningful (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The fields were systematically arranged in their order of occurrence to make them more meaningful and the events in these themes were chronologically analyzed.

Data Quality Control

Reliability

This looked at data collection instruments' capability to produce similar results when used to measure something severally (Blumberg *et al.*, 2005). Before going to the field, the researcher conducted a pilot study and peer review of the tools so as to identify any omissions and eliminate possibilities of error.

Validity

Validity is the extent to which the research instrument measures what it is meant to measure (Sudaryono et al., 2019). The study objectives were clearly operationalised and well defined and questions were well developed in line with the objectives by the researcher.

Besides, just like Korstjens & Moser (2018), to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were used to triangulate data collection methods, instruments and sources. The researcher shared the data interpretations and conclusions with the peers and some key informants to reduce errors and for clarification, and, where needed, to provide additional information.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles as guided in scientific research were observed closely by the researcher. First, informed consent was sought from all participants

and for in-school adolescents, being mainly minors, it was sought first from the responsible authorities at the local government and line MDAs. Objectivity from the level of sampling were observed through the simple random sampling technique (Tyrer & Heyman, 2016). Furthermore, anonymity was highly observed so that respondents’ identities wouldn’t be attached to their responses, but responses will be treated as general findings (Mozersky et al., 2020). Confidentiality was observed and individual data will not be exposed to third parties, but their contributions were treated as general data. The study also kept academic that no material rewards were given to respondents in exchange for data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents (N=165)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	95	57.6
Female	70	42.4
Total	165	100.0

(Source: Primary data 2024)

From the table, the majority of the respondents were male, 95 (57.6%) and only 70 (42.4%) were females.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents N=165

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-28	40	24.2
29-38	50	30.3
39-48	35	21.2
49-58	25	15.2
59 and above	15	9.1
Total	165	100.0

(Source: Primary data 2024)

According to the table, the majority of the respondents were in the 29-38 age group, 50 (30.3%), followed by those in the age group 18-28 who were 40 (24.2%) and 39-48, 35 (21.2%). 25 (15.2%) of the respondents fell within the age

This chapter presents and analyses the demographic information of respondents, the study’s findings on land cover change, sustainability initiatives, and stakeholder readiness to comply with the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) in Kyarumba Sub-County. It explores the impact of coffee farming on deforestation, the adoption of sustainable practices, and the challenges faced by farmers. The chapter also compares local trends with global practices, offering insights into the balance between agricultural growth and environmental conservation.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

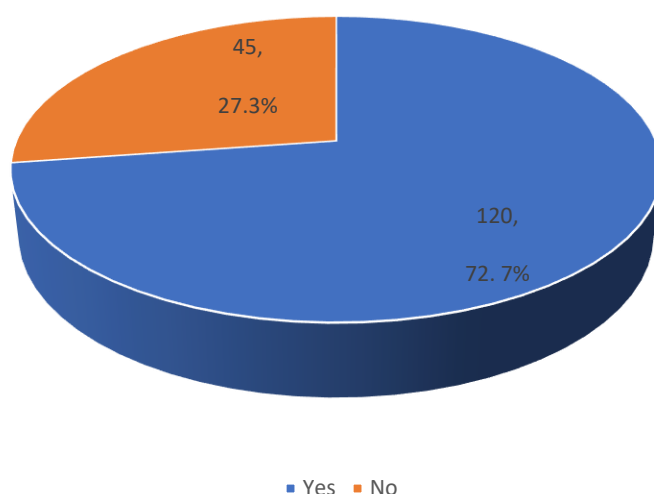
Gender Distribution of Respondents

Age Distribution of Respondents

bracket of 49-58 years. The smallest proportion of respondents fell within 59 and above 15 (9.1%).

Respondent’s Engagement in Coffee Production

Figure 1: Engagement in Coffee Production (N=165)

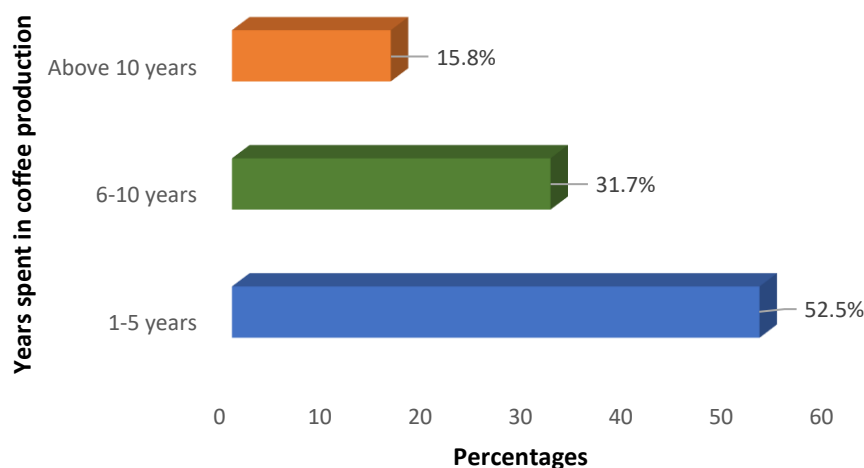


(Source: Primary data 2024)

From the graph, a significant proportion of respondents, 120 (72. 7%) were involved in coffee production, while 45 (27.3%) were not engaged in it.

Respondent's Period in Coffee Production

Figure 2: Years in Coffee Production (N=120)



(Source: Primary data 2024)

The data collected shows that among coffee producers, the majority of coffee producers 63 (52.5%), had been in the business for 1-5 years, while 38 (31.7%) had been in coffee production

with 6-10 years of experience. Only 19 (15.8%) had been farming coffee for over 10 years.

Analysis of the Study Objectives

Awareness of the EUDR among Stakeholders

Table 3: Awareness of the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) (N=165)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	27	16.4
No	138	83.6
Total	165	100.0

(Source: Primary data 2024)

According to the table, the majority, 138 (83.6%) of respondents were not aware of the EU Deforestation Regulation, with only 27 (16.4%) aware.

Institutional and Technical Readiness for Compliance with EUDR

Table 6: Responses on Stakeholders’ Readiness to Comply with EUDR.

Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	NS (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total
Ready to comply with EUDR	60 (36.4%)	50 (30.3%)	30 (18.2%)	15 (9.1%)	10 (6.1%)	165 (100%)
Financial resources available	25 (15.2%)	15 (9.1%)	40 (24.2%)	40 (24.2%)	45 (27.3%)	165 (100%)
Political support exists	20 (12.1%)	20 (12.1%)	30 (18.2%)	45 (27.3%)	50 (30.3%)	165 (100%)

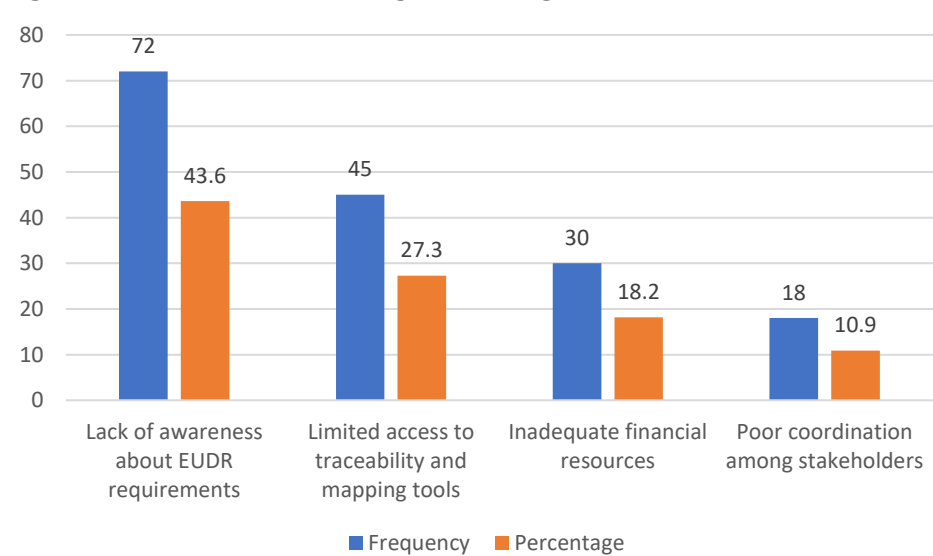
(Source: Primary data 2024)

The data showed that a majority of stakeholders (66.7%) were ready to comply with the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), while a smaller portion (15.2%) were not. Only 24.3% agreed that financial resources are available, while a significant 51.5% disagreed. Similarly, only 24.2% believed there is political support, whereas

57.6% thought otherwise. This suggests that while willingness to comply is high, limited financial resources and weak political backing could hinder effective implementation.

Barriers to Achieving EUDR-aligned Practices

Figure 3: Barriers for Achieving EUDR-aligned Practices



According to the graph above, the findings indicate that the major barrier to achieving EUDR-aligned practices is a lack of awareness about EUDR requirements, cited by 43.6% of respondents, highlighting a significant knowledge gap among stakeholders. This is followed by

limited access to traceability and mapping tools (27.3%), pointing to technical challenges, especially for smallholder farmers. Inadequate financial resources were mentioned by 18.2%, suggesting that many actors cannot afford the investments needed for compliance. Lastly, 10.9% cited poor coordination among stakeholders, which may hinder collective efforts and information sharing. These results suggest that improving awareness, providing access to tools and financial support, and strengthening stakeholder collaboration are critical for promoting EUDR compliance.

DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussions

Awareness of the EUDR among Stakeholders

Findings from the study show a significant gap in knowledge about the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) among stakeholders in Kasese District. Out of 165 respondents, 138 (83.6%) reported that they had never heard of the EUDR, while only 27 (16.4%) indicated some level of awareness. This low awareness is concerning, as it suggests that many coffee farmers and local actors may be unprepared to meet EUDR requirements such as traceability, deforestation-free sourcing and due diligence. One farmer put it plainly, asking,

“EUDR... I think I have heard it today. Does it concern us coffee farmers?”

This finding corresponds to global trends reported from studies of the Forest Trends Initiative (2023) and the World Resources Institute (2024), which confirmed that awareness of the EUDR is uneven, with large multinational companies and traders in high-income countries already preparing for compliance, while smallholder farmers and informal actors in low-income countries remain largely uninformed.

This finding also corresponds to experiences in Asia, where countries like Vietnam and Indonesia have started national awareness efforts, but many rural farmers still lack access to information (giz, 2025; Nguyen & Sarker, 2018b). Similarly, in

Sub-Saharan Africa, while cocoa-producing countries like Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana have begun engaging stakeholders through donor-supported programs (Capuzzi, 2023), awareness in East African countries such as Uganda, Rwanda, and Ethiopia remains low. A study by Markup (2024) found that only 20–30% of coffee cooperatives and exporters in Ethiopia and Kenya had heard of the EUDR.

In Uganda specifically, this finding reflects the national reality. While a few exporters and institutions like the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) are beginning to discuss the EUDR, there has been limited outreach to rural producers and cooperatives.

Without targeted awareness campaigns and capacity building efforts, the chances of successful implementation and compliance with the regulation remain low. Therefore, raising awareness should be the first step in any strategy aimed at preparing stakeholders for EUDR enforcement.

Low Awareness of the EU Deforestation Regulation in Uganda: An Analytical Review

Stakeholder awareness of the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) was critically low. The study found that 83.6% of respondents had never heard of the EUDR, while only 16.4% indicated any awareness. This finding reflects broader national trends, where a recent review also confirmed that the majority of Ugandans, especially smallholder farmers and rural actors, remain unaware of the regulation.

More so, the findings correspond with global literature highlighting a sharp awareness divide between actors in high-income and low-income countries. Harrison (2023) notes that multinational companies and large traders are generally aware of the EUDR and are already taking steps to align with its traceability requirements. In contrast, giz (2025) reports that most rural producers in coffee-growing countries still lack access to accurate information and support. This imbalance is especially pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the European Commission (2023) found

that engagement with the EUDR is still in its early stages and largely driven by donor initiatives.

Within the EU, awareness levels are notably higher. According to (Bledi et al., 2024), importers, manufacturers, and regulatory bodies in countries like Germany and the Netherlands are actively preparing for enforcement through workshops and national guidance. However, Zdechovský (2024b) observes that even among European SMEs, confusion remains particularly around due diligence and geolocation requirements. Similarly, in Asia, Nguyen & Sarker (2018b) highlight efforts in countries like Vietnam and Indonesia to build national awareness, but emphasise that rural farmers remain poorly informed.

In Uganda, this lack of awareness is compounded by structural and institutional challenges. Information about the EUDR has not been simplified or translated into local languages and no major grassroots sensitisation efforts have been undertaken. Government agencies responsible for agriculture, forestry and trade are not coordinating effectively, making it unclear who is responsible for outreach. The absence of a national traceability system also leaves many farmers feeling unprepared and disconnected from the regulation's requirements.

These realities suggest that low awareness is not a matter of unwillingness, but of inadequate communication, limited institutional support and insufficient investment in systems that make compliance possible. As the European Commission (2023) warns, with the EUDR coming into force, failure to act could lead to exclusion from key EU markets. To avoid this, Uganda must prioritise awareness campaigns, capacity building and inter-agency coordination to ensure that no stakeholder is left behind.

Institutional and Technical Readiness for Compliance with EUDR

As international regulations on sustainable coffee production become stricter, stakeholders in Kyarumba Sub-County are increasingly assessing their ability to comply with the European Union

Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). This study examined their level of preparedness, financial capacity, and the political support available for meeting these sustainability requirements.

The findings indicated that a majority of stakeholders (66.7%) felt ready to comply with the EUDR. Many farmers and industry players acknowledged the importance of sustainable practices and were making efforts to align with these regulations. As one key informant noted,

“We know that following these rules will help us sell our coffee, so we are trying our best.”

This aligns with broader global trends, as seen in Brazil and other major coffee-producing countries, where traceability and deforestation-free practices have become industry norms (Capuzzi, 2023).

However, financial constraints pose a significant challenge. Only 24.3% of respondents believed that adequate financial resources were available to support compliance, while a majority (51.5%) disagreed. Many smallholder farmers struggle to afford the necessary investments in sustainable farming techniques.

One opinion leader expressed his concern, stating,

“We want to follow the rules, but money is a big problem...”

This reflects a broader issue identified in studies by Edward B. Barbier (2014) and Ronald Twongyirwe et al. (2018), which highlight the financial barriers that African smallholder farmers face in achieving sustainability. In contrast, larger producers in South America often benefit from government-backed initiatives that provide financial and technical support.

Beyond financial concerns, there is also uncertainty regarding how farmers will navigate compliance. A significant portion (24.3%) of respondents were unsure whether they would receive adequate assistance to meet the new requirements. Some expressed frustration over the lack of clear guidance, with one farmer remarking,

“We hear about these rules, but no one has explained how we will manage.”

This highlights the need for greater awareness programs and financial interventions to bridge knowledge gaps and ensure a smooth transition.

Political support for EUDR compliance is another critical factor, and the findings suggest that it remains weak. Only 24.2% of respondents believed that political leaders are actively supporting compliance, while 57.6% disagreed. Government involvement plays a crucial role in facilitating sustainability initiatives, as seen in international examples where strong regulatory frameworks and incentives have helped accelerate compliance efforts (Senyonyi, 2022). Without stronger political commitment, Uganda risks falling behind in the global push for sustainable coffee production.

Barrier to Achieving EUDR-aligned Practices among Stakeholders

The findings from the study reveal that the most significant barrier to achieving EUDR-aligned practices among stakeholders is the lack of awareness about the EUDR itself, as reported by 43.6% of respondents. This indicates a substantial knowledge gap, particularly among producers, local traders, and grassroots institutions who are directly involved in the agricultural value chain.

Without a clear understanding of what the regulation entails, it becomes difficult for these actors to take any meaningful steps toward compliance. The second most cited challenge, reported by 27.3% of respondents, is limited access to traceability and mapping tools, which are essential for meeting the EUDR's requirement for deforestation-free products. This barrier is especially pronounced among smallholder farmers who lack the technical capacity or digital infrastructure to map and monitor their production areas.

Financial constraints were also highlighted, with 18.2% of respondents noting inadequate resources to support EUDR compliance efforts. These financial limitations affect the ability to invest in training, technology, and systems that would

otherwise support traceability and sustainable production. Additionally, poor coordination among stakeholders, cited by 10.9% of participants. This points to gaps in collaboration and communication across different sectors, government agencies, NGOs, producers, and buyers, hindering collective efforts to prepare for the regulation.

Together, these findings suggest that promoting EUDR compliance in Uganda will require a multifaceted approach. There is a need to raise awareness at all levels of the value chain, improve access to affordable traceability tools, offer targeted financial support, and enhance coordination among key actors. Addressing these issues will be critical in ensuring that Uganda's agricultural exports remain competitive in the European market under the EUDR framework.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The findings reveal a clear gap between policy ambition and grassroots readiness. Compliance with the EUDR requires systems that many rural communities have yet to develop, including digital traceability, formal land records, and sustainable farming practices. International partners and the Ugandan government must prioritise inclusive investments to avoid marginalising smallholders.

Stakeholders in Kyarumba Sub-County are not yet ready to fully comply with the EUDR, primarily due to limited awareness, capacity, and institutional support. However, there is a willingness to adapt, especially among organised farmer groups and youth.

Recommendations

- There is a need to conduct targeted information sessions on the EUDR for farmers, traders, and local officials.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries should train local extension workers and farmer leaders in digital tools and compliance tracking.

- There is a need to support small-scale pilot projects that test traceability and deforestation monitoring in collaboration with cooperatives.
- Advocate for national-level strategies that protect smallholder interests while meeting global environmental goals.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Structured Questionnaire

Good morning/afternoon, Sir/Madam. My name is **Bisathu Nason**, a student of Msc. Climate Change and Food Security and an academic researcher from Bishop Stuart University, conducting a study on “**The Effect of the EU Deforestation Regulations on Coffee Producers and Buyers in Kyarumba Sub-County, Kasese District**”. In this research, the data collected and the results from the research will all be used for academic purposes, but not for any other reasons. Some of the questions asked in this survey may be personal and sensitive and the language used may be explicit, but this is because the study seeks to be clear on what specific information is being asked and the specific responses sought. I understand it may, in some cases, make you uncomfortable, but that is not the intention of the survey. It is not a must to participate in this survey and feel free not to answer any questions that you feel absolutely uncomfortable answering.

Some of the issues asked may be delicate, but we summarised and analysed as a whole to further promise to protect your confidentiality and reduce the risk of identifying any answers from anonymity, as the study responses will be any respondents.

Section A: Demographic Information

(For the following questions, kindly tick the option that best describes you)

S/N	QUESTION	RESPONSE
1.	What is your sex?	1. Male 2. Female
2.	What is your age bracket?	1. 18-28 2. 29-38 3. 39-48 4. 49-58 5. 59 and above
3.	Do you engage in coffee production?	1. Yes 2. No
4.	For how long have you been a coffee producer/farmer?	1. 1-5 years 2. 6-10 years 3. Above 10 years
5.	Are you aware of EUDR?	1. Yes 2. No

Section A: The Readiness of Stakeholders to Comply with the EUDR

Instructions: For the following questions, please rank your opinions on the scale of 5 = strongly agree (SA), 4 = agree (A), 3 = Not sure (U), 2 = disagree (D), and 1 = strongly disagree (SD)

S/N	Indicate your level of agreement with the following constructs for the readiness of stakeholders to comply with the EUDR	SA (5)	A (4)	NS (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1	I am very ready to comply with EUDR					
2	There are enough financial resources to invest in compliance with EUDR in this area					
3	The existing political leadership has goodwill for promoting compliance with EUDR in this area					
4	We have access to enough extension workers that will support us in complying with EUDR in this area					
5	The natural environment in these areas is favourable for complying with EUDR					
6	The existing legal regime is favourable for complying with EUDR					

Section D: Barriers to Achieving EUDR-aligned Practices

S/n	Question	Response Options (tick where applicable)
1	What do you consider to be the main barrier to achieving compliance with the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) in your area?	1. Lack of awareness about EUDR requirements. 2. Limited access to traceability and mapping tools. 3. Inadequate financial resources. 4. Poor coordination among stakeholders.

Thank you for your time

Good morning/afternoon, Sir/Madam. My name is **Bisathu Nason**, a student of Msc. Climate Change

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

and Food Security and an academic researcher from Bishop Stuart University, conducting a study on **“The Effect of the EU Deforestation Regulations on Coffee Producers and Buyers in Kyarumba Sub-County, Kasese District”**. In this research, the data collected and the results from the research will all be used for academic purposes, but not for any other reasons. Some of the questions asked in this survey may be personal and sensitive and the language used may be explicit, but this is because the study seeks to be clear on what specific information is being asked and the specific responses sought. I understand it may, in some cases, make you uncomfortable, but that is not the intention of the survey. It is not a must to participate in this survey and feel free not to answer any questions that you feel absolutely uncomfortable answering.

Some of the issues asked may be delicate, but we promise to protect your confidentiality and anonymity as the study responses will be summarised and analysed as a whole to further reduce the risk of identifying any answers from any respondents.

Section A: Assessing the awareness of the EUDR among stakeholders

- Have you ever heard about the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)? If yes, what do you know about it?
- Where did you first hear about the EUDR, and who shared that information with you?
- Do you think the people you work with—farmers, traders, or processors—are aware of the EUDR? Why or why not?
- In your view, what kind of information or training would help people better understand the EUDR?

Section B: Evaluate the institutional and technical readiness for compliance

- Do you think your organisation or community is ready to meet the requirements of the EUDR? Why or why not?

- Are there any systems in place (like mapping, record-keeping, or digital tools) to trace the origin of agricultural products?
- What kind of support, technical, financial, or otherwise, do you currently receive to help improve sustainable production?
- How well do different institutions (government, NGOs, cooperatives) work together in your area to support compliance with market regulations?

Section C: Barriers and opportunities for achieving EUDR-aligned practices

- What challenges do you or others face when trying to follow regulations related to forest protection or sustainability?
- In your opinion, what makes it difficult for smallholder farmers or local businesses to comply with EUDR requirements?
- Are there any existing practices or projects in your area that could help support compliance with the EUDR?
- What would make it easier for your community or organisation to align with EUDR practices in the future?