Rwandan coffee, renowned for its rich flavor and volcanic soil origins, is embracing a 21st-century solution. A unique collaboration between government agencies, a major coffee roaster, and a sustainability tech company is brewing a win-win for Rwanda’s precious forests and its nearly 400,000 smallholder coffee farmers.

This innovative partnership arises in response to a looming challenge: the European Union Deforestation Regulation. This policy, taking effect in December 2024, bans the import of coffee grown on land deforested according to the European Union Deforestation Regulation, after 2020.

This could have significantly impacted Rwandan coffee exports, a major source of income for the country.

However, Rwanda is taking proactive steps. The National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB) has joined forces with JDE Peet’s, a leading coffee roaster, and Enveritas, a company specializing in sustainability technology.

This collaboration utilizes cutting-edge solutions to ensure Rwandan coffee meets the EU’s deforestation-free standards.

Enveritas brings the tech expertise. They’ll be deploying a powerful combination of high-resolution satellite imagery, machine learning algorithms, and on-the-ground verification teams to map and monitor Rwandan coffee production. This comprehensive approach ensures that Rwandan coffee remains compliant with EU regulation.

JDE Peet’s commitment goes beyond simply sourcing coffee. The company will be working directly with farmers and local partners to identify and remediate any land used for coffee production that may have been deforested after the 2020 cutoff, as defined by the EU regulation.

This ensures not only environmental sustainability but also the livelihoods of the farmers who rely on coffee for their income.

“We are very pleased to be a part of this innovative solution,” says NAEB CEO Claude Bizimana. “This collaboration demonstrates Rwanda’s commitment to both environmental responsibility and the well-being of our coffee-growing communities.”

This partnership between government, industry, and technology paves the way for

a sustainable future for Rwandan coffee. By embracing innovation and collaboration, the country is ensuring its vibrant coffee culture continues to thrive while protecting its irreplaceable forests.