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Revised Budget to Strengthen the Forestry Sector

The 2021-2022 revised budget builds on the momentum of increased economic activity following the re-opening of Fiji's borders in December 2021.

For the Ministry of Forestry, the revised budget means an increase of more than half a million dollars which will boost operational infrastructure and processes.

The Ministry will also continue to support the two major forest industries - the Fiji Hardwood Corporation Ltd (FHCL) and Fiji Pine Ltd (FPL) in their efforts towards growing the economy while ensuring sustainable environmental management and restoration.

Digitisation of Forestry's Registration Platforms

In supporting Government's on-going efforts to improve the ease of doing business, the Ministry of Forestry is digitizing all its registration platforms. The transition from manual to online applications will ensure greater efficiency, transparency, accountability and effectiveness in service delivery. This technological innovation is not only convenient for forest industry stakeholders but it also ensures that the wheels of commerce keep turning in the sector.

The chaos of COVID-19, disrupted not only lives but businesses as well. Part of the Ministry's strategy to operate within the new normal of the global pandemic meant amending operational processes to facilitate business. The digitisation of the Ministry of Forestry's registration platforms is a major component of this strategy.

The Ministry's online export and import licensing systems was rolled out in June 2020, thus ensuring that licenses can be issued within 48 hours. Since the introduction of the online licensing system, over 800 export licenses with a value of over F\$146 Million have been issued and nearly 600 import permits have been approved. These are good indicators of the success of the system not only for the Ministry and forestry stakeholders but also for the economy as 74% of the 2020 export revenue amounting

to F\$76 million was generated within five months since the online system was launched. The online system is not only convenient but it is increasingly facilitating a more effective monitoring of harvesting operations, which will in turn also help curb illegal logging.

Building on the success of the online export and import licensing systems, the Ministry has added to this portfolio with the launch of an online forest harvesting license system by the Prime Minister and Minister for Forestry Honourable JV Bainimarama at the 2022 International Day of Forests celebrations on March 21.

During the launch, the Prime Minister also commended the timber industry, which he said has been a significant contributor to the national economy, especially at the height of the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The next step in digitisation will be rolled out by 31 July 2022 and this will include a revamped Timber Revenue System (TRS) that will assist the Ministry with revenue collection and auditing, thus facilitating greater accountability and financial compliance.

Forest Subsidy on Value Adding Machines

The revised budget has re-introduced the forest subsidy scheme to support cottage industries. A \$30,000 allocation will help establish small scale forestry value adding businesses such as wood carving and furniture making using various parts of high value trees such as mahogany and lesser known species. Specifically, the budget will help purchase tools including machinery.

The cottage industries empower forest-based communities to generate revenue and contribute to economic recovery while reducing the waste of forest resources. Government introduced the scheme in 2015 and had to suspend it in 2020 when funds had to be re-deployed to assist with COVID-19 operations. About 19 individuals have been assisted through this scheme thus far. Interested parties can apply for this

subsidy through an Expression of Interest (EOI) that will be advertised this month.

Support for the Industries and Outer Islands

The Ministry was allocated \$13.2m in the 2021-2022 Budget and received an increase of \$595,439 in the revised budget. The increase will support the ease of doing business within an improved digitized platform allowing the Ministry to better facilitate the needs of the forest industries and the entire sector. This aspiration is further supported with the conclusion of FPL's mix certification of its processing facility under the Forest Stewardship Council. The mix certification will enable FPL to process logs from non-certified private plantations including the islands in the maritime zone such as Kadavu.

The Ministry will continue to strengthen efforts on resource development, sustainable, production, restoration and environmental management with continuous research and development to improve the sectoral performance, lives and livelihoods of our communities and overall growth nationally, and towards the United Nations sustainable development goals.

3-Year Economic Recovery Plan

At the height of the COVID-19, which significantly affected the tourism industry - Fiji's largest revenue-generating sector - the Ministry collaborated with the stakeholders in the forestry sector to develop a 3-year economic recovery plan targeting a contribution into the national economy of not less than \$400M. The plan aimed to progressively increase the sector's contribution to Fiji's gross domestic product with the first year (2021-2022) target set at \$123.9 Million. As of March 2022, the sector has generated \$113.6m or 92% through both domestic and export production and sales. The revised budget will enhance the sector's overall performance.

Description	Details	2021/2022 Budget	Change	Revised Budget
Program 1 Activity 1	Policy & Administration General	1,611,338	159,121	1,770,459
Program 1 Activity 2	Economic Policy , Planning & Stats	204,656	-	204,656
Program 2 Activity 1	Forestry General Administration	1,435,994	43,558	1,479,552
Program 2 Activity 2	Forest Conservation & Management Services	2,721,709	1,000	2,722,709
Program 2 Activity 3	Training & Education	469,834	11,058	458,776
Program 2 Activity 4	Silviculture Research, Resource Assessment & Development	334,565	1,000	335,565
Program 2 Activity 5	Timber Utilization Research & Product Development	1,291,518	392,900	1,684,418
Program 2 Activity 6	Extension & Advisory Services (Forest Planting and Afforestation)	1,943,434	3,500	1,946,934
Program 2 Activity 7	Monitoring , Control & Surveillance	2,924,086	4,918	2,929,004
Program 2 Activity 8	Forest Parks, Recreation & Nature Reserves	293,350	500	293,850
TOTAL		\$13,230,484	\$595,439	\$13,825,923

IDOF Theme Challenges us to value Forests More, Prime Minister Address at the 2022 International Day of Forests



Prime Minister and Minister for Forestry
Hon J V Bainimarama at the 2022
International Day of Forests

“ Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
The Permanent Secretary and Staff of the Ministry of Forestry;
Distinguished Guests;
Members of the Media;
Ladies and Gentlemen. Bula Vinaka and Good Morning

This International Day of Forests is a good time for us to both celebrate and take stock. We can celebrate the vital contributions forests make to our everyday living and we can take some pride in what we are doing in Fiji to conserve and sustainably manage this important natural resource. The theme for this year's International Day of Forests is “Forests and Sustainable Production and Consumption,” and it asks us to take a very serious look at the way we value forests - not just as a source of raw materials, but as a means of absorbing carbon and helping to sustain life on this planet.

Certainly, forests have been harvested and used to build homes and make many products we have come to depend on. Our forests have brought in foreign exchange, spurred industrial development, created jobs and helped develop our rural infrastructure.

Fiji has established plantations of pine and mahogany as part of Government's long-term strategy to support timber trade while also protecting and conserving the remaining natural forests. The Fiji Pine Group of Companies lead the sector and currently contribute more than 80% to Fiji's log production and exports of wood products.

The Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited and the Mahogany sector are making a strong contribution to the economy and showing great potential. In the past year alone, mahogany log production grew by 75% and exports of mahogany products grew by 60%.

The role of natural forests is changing significantly, too, and we are seeing clearly how forests can generate revenue and create jobs and small businesses when we do not exploit them for timber. Natural forests attract eco-tourism, which creates the potential for a wide range of products and services that directly benefit rural and forest-dwelling communities. Fiji may be best known for its beautiful ocean, but more and more domestic travellers and foreign visitors are showing an interest in enjoying our forests.

In the past, forests were valued only in terms of the products they yielded. That's how forestry shows up when a country's gross domestic product is calculated—by how much timber is produced, how much pulp for paper, how many wood chips. In the process, the world has under-valued the role of forests as a carbon sink. That is changing.

With climate change upon us, we know that we must finally recognize the total economic value of forests.

We are embracing this concept firmly in Fiji. In one important example, Fiji has entered into a carbon trade agreement with the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. The 5-year Agreement is aimed at addressing the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation through the sustainable management of the natural forests.

The Emissions Reduction Programme is supported by the Ministry of Forestry as part of our national climate action agenda -- which, of course, is led by the Ministry of Economy's Climate Change Division. Let me remind everyone: our mission is to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by 2.5 million tons by 2024 and achieve net-zero emission by 2050.

That effort is guided by our world-leading Climate Change Act which sets out the governance and institutional arrangements to establish a carbon market for Fiji.

It is urgent and vital that we know exactly how much forest we have and

what it consists of—a kind of forest census, if you will. The Ministry of Forestry is currently conducting one—the National Forest Inventory—and expects to complete it before the end of the year. The inventory will provide a more realistic and updated account of the status of Fiji's forest resource and also quantify the level of forest carbon stock available. That improves our bargaining position with regards to the carbon trade agreement and any future carbon trade agreements we might wish to make.

As most Fijians should know, in 2019 the Ministry of Forestry began a nationwide tree-planting programme as part of the 30 Million Trees in 15 Years campaign. That is a lot of trees. It is an ambitious programme worthy of an ambitious country. And we are an ambitious people. We set high standards for ourselves in fighting climate change, just as we set high standards for ourselves in developing our economy and contributing to making the world a better place.

When I think about the huge undertaking that this campaign truly is, I cannot help but think about the former Minister for Forestry, the late Honourable Osea Naiqamu, and pay tribute to him for his unwavering commitment and dedication to ensuring the success of this campaign. To-date, more than 8 million trees have been planted—a total of 9,357 hectares.

This supports the Emissions Reduction Programme by establishing sinks for absorbing greenhouse gas emissions, but it is also important for securing Fiji's future log supply. This is one more way we disprove the myth that economic growth and environmental responsibility are at odds with each other. They are not; they can go hand in hand if we are smart enough and if we care enough.

The Emissions Reduction Programme is of vital importance to the future outlook of the Forest Sector and Government's plans. It will establish a system for monitoring, reporting

and verifying the level of emissions based on how well Fiji is managing its land and forest resources at any given time.

And in time, we will surely be able to quantify the economic value of forests as a carbon sink—that value that has been overlooked for years as we calculated Gross Domestic Product by the resources we used and excluded the resources we saved.

The theme “Sustainable Production and Consumption” for the International Day of Forests reminds us that the Timber Industry also has an important role to play in the Emissions Reduction Programme.

I want to commend the Timber Industry, which has been a significant contributor to the national economy, especially at the height of the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now I believe is a good time for the Timber Industry to realign itself somewhat and make more meaningful and concerted effort towards the goal of “sustainable production”. I am, therefore, calling on the Timber Industry to play a larger role in reaching our national target of 30 million trees, and to do so by fostering partnership arrangements with forest owners and forest-dwelling communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my Government is under no illusion that it can unilaterally achieve these goals and objectives. It is up to all of us to think seriously about our relationship to our forests—whether we use them or abuse them, sustain them or degrade them, nurture them or exploit them.

We can have a healthy relationship with our forests, a relationship that supports our economy, ensures a good quality of life, protects us from the effects of climate change, and ensures that Fiji remains the beautiful country it has always been.

Vinaka Vakalevu, and I wish you all a blessed International Day of Forests.

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Community Partnerships Contribute to Forest Restoration



*FDB staff planting to mark 2022
International Day of Forests*

We depend on Trees and Forests for our survival. Apart from providing habitats for animals, insects and birds, and sustaining our livelihoods, forests also offer watershed protection, prevent soil erosion and help in the fight against Climate Change through carbon sequestration.

Partnership with the Fiji Development Bank

In 2019, the Fiji Development Bank (FDB) formalised a partnership with the Ministry of Forestry and the iTaukei Affairs Board for the purpose of long-term engagement with communities in the West, North and Central/ Eastern divisions to restore degraded forests.

The partnership is mutually beneficial to all parties in that while it is part of FDB's Corporate Social Environment Responsibility, the communities, the forests and their ecosystems also gain from the restoration efforts.

Benefits include better local climate regulation, improved flood and erosion control, an increased variety and availability of food and non-food products and economic opportunities for the communities.

Ministry of Forestry Permanent Secretary Pene Baleinabuli said that the Ministry is grateful to the FDB and other stakeholders and development partners for sharing Fiji's vision to have sustainable forests that can benefit the people, economy, environment and nature.

Forest Restoration

FDB Chief Executive Officer, Saud Minam said the Bank remains strongly committed to promoting environmental responsibility and climate action initiatives.

To mark this year's International Day of Forests, 100 FDB and Live and Learn staff joined forces with the Ministry to plant over 2000 trees in the North, West and Central/Eastern divisions over the weekend. All the trees planted are now included in the 30 Million Trees in 15 Years (30MT15Y) national tally.

"Such activities are part of the Bank's annual calendar of events as Social Corporate Environmental Responsibility," Mr. Minam said. He further reiterated that "the FDB family is pleased to participate in activities that contribute

towards achieving programmes that complement the National Development Plan, and Fiji's growth as a nation."

The 2000-plus trees planted included pine, kavika and fruit trees. The trees will provide fruits and shade, and help to improve air quality. All these trees could also be monetised through carbon trade, fruit or timber production purposes.

In addition to the partnership with the Fiji Development Bank, the Ministry also has similar restoration arrangements with the UNDP-Pacific Community Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project, FAO-IKI project, Conservation International, and community engagements through the World Bank REDD+ programme, among others.

Celebrating International Day of Forests

With the theme Forests and Sustainable Production and Consumption, the International Day of Forests is celebrated globally on March 21.

Activities for the day complements

the global community's pledge during COP26 to reaffirm commitments, collective and individual, to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Particular emphasis is placed on the critical and interdependent roles of forests of all types, biodiversity and sustainable land use in enabling the world to meet its sustainable development goals; to help achieve a balance between anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and removal by sinks; to adapt to Climate Change; and to maintain other ecosystem services.

Since January 2019, Fijians have collectively planted more than 8.1 million trees under the 30MT15Y tree-planting and growing initiative. On this International Day of Forests, we revisit the importance of trees and forests, and their impacts on nature, biodiversity, ecosystem services, environment, economies and the current and future generations.

Grievance Mechanism to address gender based risks in forest communities



Women of Draubuta

The Fijian Government, supported by the World Bank and the Forest Partnership Facility (FCPF), has developed the first-ever Feedback, Grievance and Redress Mechanism addressing gender based risks (FGRM+) within the national Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) programme. REDD+ was introduced in Fiji in 2009 and the

REDD+ readiness phase has since been implemented through a multi-stakeholder approach.

The Ministry of Forestry is the lead agency for implementation while the Ministry of Economy is the lead financial agency.

The Ministry of Forestry since 2020 worked closely with WI-

HER and Marstel Day's project under the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded global grant challenge on Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Environments (RISE), to integrate Gender Based Violence (GBV) considerations within the initial Feedback, Grievance and Redress Mechanism (FGRM) for REDD+ established in 2018 after nation-

wide stakeholder engagement and consultation.

The FGRM was designed in 2018 taking into consideration both formal and informal networks for redress. The design process included strategic choices based on purpose and functionality of the FGRM, as well as integrating the mechanism into the National REDD+ Strategy.

The FGRM was designed to be used to respond to the concerns, complaints, disputes, and any other contentious issues that arise during the readiness and implementation phases of Fiji's National REDD+ Programme.

The mechanism promotes and facilitates a two-way communication process between landowners and Government and serves as an effective outreach process to local communities.

This FGRM will function to complement existing structures that serve to reduce conflict on issues related to land use, land tenure, and land management whilst promoting mutually constructive relationships and building trust. In support of this mechanism's purpose has been the design of standard feedback and grievance redress forms in close consultation with the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development, the National Disaster Management Office, REDD+ Steering Committee (RSC) members, and project beneficiaries.

The FGRM is a community-based mechanism that is user friendly amongst REDD+ stakeholders with flexible procedures bridging the formal and customary overlaps of rights and interests representation.

Gender empowerment and transformation into conservation

With funding from USAID's RISE Challenge, Marstel-Day and WI-HER in partnership with the University of the South Pacific, the Fiji Environmental Law Association, Live & Learn Environmental Education,

and Fiji's REDD+ Programme, the consortium has used WI-HER's proven approach to integrate gender (iDARE) to improve the FGRM so that it better addresses gender-based risks and GBV as a result of payment for ecosystem services programming, like REDD+.

The FGRM facilitates two-way communication between communities and national government agencies or companies to solve issues arising from REDD+ programming through formalized dialogue.

In Fiji, 64% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence (double the global average), with a higher prevalence in intimate partner violence (IPV) in rural areas, including among affected iTaukei women. REDD+ Communications Specialist Reama Naco acknowledged that while she knew GBV was an issue, she was not aware of how it related to conservation or REDD+ at the beginning.

"Now I see environmental conservation as one of the avenues we can leverage to respond or react or mitigate gender based violence. It was something new for me, but it has made me realize that if we can help this problem of GBV in Fiji through this sector, then we should."

Engaging the Government and local communities on FGRM+

As part of the project, the FGRM+ team were engaged in multi-stakeholder meetings with government representatives, civil society, statutory bodies, faith-based organizations, private sector, and local leaders and communities that for the first time included often-marginalized populations. Having all these actors engaged helped them update the FGRM harmoniously and with consensus and collaboration.

Permanent Secretary for Forestry Pene Baleinabuli explains that the support for the integration of GBV in the FGRM took time, but

both the Government officials and other stakeholders including the provincial officers and village leaders are accepting to having more open discussions and recognition of GBV and to help find ways to resolve it.

"Government's involvement in this activity is to only ensure that all voices are being heard and addressed and that no one is left behind. We understand very well the importance of a community-driven approach for successful conservation.

"Thanks to their involvement and the trust generated with communities, they have been able to take ownership of the process and identify solutions that really respond to their needs in terms of GBV prevention and response.

"The Ministry of Forestry's interest is to ensure that the grievance mechanism works and to make sure that there are processes in place and tools to help move the process forward and maintain the trust between all stakeholders involved.

"This is critical to the successful implementation of forest conservation.

"While the Ministry is no expert in gender, addressing GBV within conservation is an area that we will continue to explore to build collaboration and to advance progress.

"As a way forward, the Ministry is fully engaged with the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation in addressing gender equality issues and this should translate to addressing GBV as well." "The purpose of the FGRM+ is certainly not to replace existing GRMs, rather it is designed to complement and provide an alternative path towards resolving conflicts," Mr Baleinabuli said.

The Ministry of Forestry acknowledges the contributions towards the development of the FGRM+ by the many stakeholders including local consultants the late Mereseini Seniloli and legal expert, Mr Ulaisi Baya.

Forest Certification Sets the Management Standard for Fiji



***Fiji Hardwood Corporation
Limited - Forest Certification
Preparatory Workshop.
Closing Statement by the
Permanent Secretary for
Forestry Pene Baleinabuli on
4th March 2022***

The General Manager and staff of the Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited (FHCL), representatives of the Fiji Mahogany Trust and representatives of the World Wide Fund for Nature.

Good afternoon and bula vinaka to you all.

As many of you would know, Government had been wanting the forest certification to be extended to Fiji's mahogany plantations for some time, and so it is extremely pleasing that we are able to make some progress with this endeavour.

The Ministry of Forestry is very pleased to have facilitated this workshop to prepare FHCL for Forest Certification, with WWF as one of

the UNDP Ridge to Reef Project outputs.

Our immense gratitude goes to WWF for organising and funding this workshop for the internal assessment of FHCL to identify its management gaps.

We also thank the FHCL staff for being open and forthcoming with all your forest management details so that we may collaborate on the best development of Fiji's mahogany resources, to reach the highest levels of forest benefits for the resource owners, the companies in the industry, our economy, and importantly our environment.

I also acknowledge the support of the Fiji Pine Group of Companies and especially its Chief Executive Officer for sharing their experiences with forest certification.

The Need for Forest Certification

This preparation of FHCL to target entry into the Forest Stewardship

Council Certification Scheme is vital for the premium market positioning of Fiji's mahogany products.

What used to be niche markets to recognise social equity and environmental safeguards is now the norm for all the high value international wood products markets.

The Ministry of Forestry has been working in the Forest Certification space for more than 15 years, and we have experienced the Certification benefits enjoyed by the Fiji Pine Group of Companies that has been FSC Certified for a number of years.

Not only access to the premium markets, but also the landowners represented by the Fiji Pine Trust and their environmental care.

The Fiji Forest Certification Standard

The national forest management standard used for this FHCL internal assessment has been adapted from the Forest Stewardship Council international standard.

It checks on compliance with all local laws and international conventions that Fiji is signatory to.

Landowner Benefits

This includes the appropriate lease payments to landowners.

It checks that lease agreements with the landowners are fair, and that the properly qualified landowners also have the opportunity participate in harvesting and planting operations via their Forest-Based Companies.

Forest Certification ensures that all the environmental safeguards to protect native biodiversity, soil and water will be key aspects of the Environmental Impact Assessment, and that these are further addressed in the FHCL Environment Management Plan.

Any chemicals used, for instance, will need to be environmentally friendly and any potential spillage of fuel and oil in forest machinery will be contained.

The High Conservation Value Forests are not only areas of key biodiversity, but also areas that are important to the landowner communities. Forest Certification makes sure that these areas are identified, mapped and their protection is actively managed with the communities.

Certification ensures that the forest management has the financial means to implement the required environmental protection protocols that the forest harvesting operations are efficient and that diversification options are considered to enhance local community economies via commercialising potential non-timber forest products.

Certification also makes sure that all the forest management practices are comprehensively documented and that even the design of plantation forest mirrors nature as much as possible so that it is more resilient to pests and diseases, as well as natural disasters such as cyclones.

The internal and external monitoring of the forest management practices are also extremely important in the Certification process, to ensure that the companies operating in the industry meet the environmental standards, thus facilitating continued environmental protection.

Forest Management Diversification for Fiji

Forest Certification will not only focus on the mahogany resources managed by the FHCL, but also the leased areas that are yet to be developed.

The 40 per cent of FHCL leased areas

provides the opportunity to diversity management regimes to enter other sustainable forest financing mechanisms.

FHCL will thus be able to diversify its income streams which will add more stability points. This diversification creates resilience models for catastrophic events, whether they are in the economic sector or they arrive in the form of climate change and cyclones.

This will also create examples of various forest management models for Fiji, the best of which will be used to develop the improved management of Fiji's native forests, thus empowering forest owning communities to enable them to also enjoy multiple layers of forest benefits.

Forest benefits are not only the financial gains, but also the intrinsic ecosystem services that are essential for the provision of clean water, fresh air, carbon sequestration and storage.

I thank you all again for your active participation in this initial process and we can all look forward to the eventual certification of Fiji's mahogany plantations for the greater benefit of our people, economy and environment.



*Mangrove restoration in Waicoka
Certification Workshop*

Mangrove Rehabilitation a Triple Win

Fiji has over 46,600 hectares of mangrove forests. Mangroves are state-owned resources that are invaluable as nature's shield against cyclones, ecological disasters and as the protectors of shorelines. Mangrove systems also provide breeding and nursery grounds for a variety of marine animals, harbour a variety of life forms like invertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and even mammals. The mangroves also purify the water by absorbing impurities and harmful heavy metals and absorb pollutants from the air.

About the Mangrove Rehabilitation Project

A joint mangrove rehabilitation project between the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) and the Fijian Government sought to address the problem associated with overpopulation and pressure on resource exploitation within the coastal and mangrove wetlands in the provinces of Rewa and Tailevu.

This 6-year project focused on building community capacity to apply Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) practices, revive and strengthen the use of traditional knowledge, rehabilitate degraded areas and support policy and the legal framework to better manage coastal forests and restore not less than 100ha of degraded mangrove areas.

Pilot Villages

The villages of Muanaira and Narocake in the Rewa Province and Natila, Waicoka, Naivakacau and Nasilai Village in the Tailevu Province were identified as pilot sites for the mangrove rehabilitation project.

From the outset, expected outputs included community empowerment to undertake sustainable management at the community level, improvement of the quality of the existing ecosystem, strengthening the up-keep of traditional knowledge and skills among community members to support sustainable resource use.

Alternative Livelihoods

To ease the pressure on the coastal and mangrove wetland resources, alternative livelihood community projects were established within the 6 villages and managed by community members.

Aquaculture

With technical advice and assistance from the Ministry of Fisheries, aquaculture ponds for prawn and tilapia production were established on non-arable swamp communal land in Waicoka, Naivakacau, Natila

and Narocake villages. Each pond was stocked with either 10,000 prawn post larvae or tilapia. Narocake had its first harvest of prawns and tilapia in March 2020 and has been restocked with 10,000 prawn post larvae for their second cycle of Prawn farming.

Pig-Rearing

In Nasilai, a community Piggery Farm Project was set up with 3 different breeds of piglets (Large White, Land Race and Duroc). The village Project Management Committee is responsible for overseeing the management of the piggery including cleaning, feeding and purchasing of pig feed.

Apiculture (Beekeeping Project)

A beekeeping farm was set up with 20 double-storey boxes in Muanaira in November 2020. At the second training on 19th November, the village committee were delighted to note that one week after the installation, five boxes were already filled with honey. Income generated from the farm will be invested in community infrastructure, social services and meeting the collective needs of the Vanua and church.

Sewing Machine Training and Financial Literacy

At the completion of their sewing machine training at the Fiji National University (FNU) in November 2020, the 30 member women's group each received FNU Accredited Certificates and 5 sewing machines for each village. The women learnt to sew Sulu Jaba for women and Bula shirts for men as well as pillow case, bed sheets, door mats.

Project Impact

Since October 2015, the protection of mangrove forests from illegal fuelwood harvesting and targeted mangrove reforestation and rehabilitation work from this ITTO-Fijian Government project has resulted in the return to the area of more fish such as Damu and Yawa and birds like Belo Dravu.

Apart from the rehabilitation of the mangrove forests in the Rewa Delta, project staff engaged with individuals, corporate organisations, youth and church groups to also rehabilitate mangrove forests at the Nasese Foreshore and at the Tikaram Park in Lami.

The total number of mangrove seedlings planted under the project is 457,250 covering 137.25 ha and thus surpassing the 100ha target. Mangrove seedlings that were planted in the villages in the two provinces including the Suva and Lami foreshores since January 2019 contributed towards Fiji's 30 Million Trees in 15 Years (30MT15Y) tree-planting campaign.

In addition to mangrove rehabilitation, a Mangrove Management Guideline has been developed to support the communities to better manage their mangrove forests.

The management guideline is aligned to the 2007 National Forest Policy, which aims to introduce an effective mangrove management framework for the Rewa Delta, which could be emulated in other mangrove areas around the country.

The restoration and improved management of mangrove forests in the Rewa and Tailevu provinces is triple win for the people and economy in terms of food security and financial needs, and the environment from a climate change and sustainable resource management perspective



Nabavatu Expresses Interest in Fiji's ER-Program

The community of Nabavatu, Dreketi in Macuata have expressed their interest to participate in Fiji's Emission Reductions (ER) Program in two specific areas – forest conservation and sustainable forest harvesting.

Their immediate priority is to harvest part of their native forests to support their plans for housing as the community now needs to be relocated from their current village site as a consequence of a climate-induced disaster.

The villagers had to be temporarily relocated in early January 2020 after the onslaught of Tropical Cyclone Ana caused heavy rain and flooding resulting in large land cracks within their houses and the village church building. They were relocated temporarily to the Savadrua Assemblies of God Church compound and the Maramarua District School. A geological survey finding by the Department of Mineral Resources at Nabavatu village after this unfortunate disaster, found that it was unsafe to reoccupy the village.

Nabavatu village spokesman and former Fijian Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, Filimoni Kau said that the 13 Mataqalis have been interested in participating in Fiji's ER Program despite the current situation they are facing.

"We are hopeful that participating in Fiji's ER Program and also getting assistance from the Ministry of Forestry will benefit both ways.

We will be able to contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions and we will also not have to look far to source building materials for our new homes," he said.

In terms of the relocation, Mr Kau said his village has been working closely with the Divisional Commissioner and the Forestry Director in the North.

"We believe that participating in Fiji's ER Program and in particular in forest conservation and the sustainable management of forests will be beneficial to us as landowners in the medium and long term. We will be providing a balanced approach to how we utilize our natural resources so that the biodiversity within our forests are protected and our children will be able to utilize the same forests in years to come."

Permanent Secretary for Forestry, Pene Baleinabuli said that the Ministry is currently carrying out an inventory of the Nabavatu forest area to provide real time information and guide the decisions to be taken, moving forward.

"For Nabavatu, the harvesting of their forest to support their housing project is also supported under the ER-Program. A sustainable approach to harvesting will be adopted, which means lower volume removal.

However, this information and the decision to take will be clearer when the inventory is completed in the next two months," he said.

Mr. Baleinabuli said it is encouraging that communities who have forests on their lands are aware of and are consciously choosing to engage in forest conservation, protection and carbon trade.

ER Program

The ER-Program does not prevent nor restrict the forest owners in the use of the land and forest resources to support their immediate and future needs and community-level development plans. The program is merely championing the concept of sustainable development, which means improving the "business as usual" methods to standards that ensure that forests are able to perform its natural ecological function of providing clean water and clean air.

In each of the ER-Program activities, trees will either be reintroduced into degraded land systems or retained in its natural state to support the ecological function of the forest.

The benefit for landowners, apart from the ecological services, is that the ER-Program provides an alternative income stream, through the carbon payments, if they so wish to participate.

Participation in Fiji's ER Program

The Fijian Government signed an agreement, Emission Reduction Payment Agreement (ERPA), with the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) for Fiji to participate in carbon trading

for five years, i.e. from 11th July 2019 – 31st December 2024. The Fiji ER-Program has five activities, which are expected to improve the manner in which Fiji's forest and land resources are managed and utilized, whilst establishing and dedicating forest areas as carbon sinks that will sequester carbon and other greenhouse gases (GHG), as per below.

- Forest Conservation
- Sustainable Forest Management
- Climate Smart Agriculture
- Tree Planting (afforestation and reforestation) on barren and degraded land systems, including the rehabilitation of riparian systems to protect major and artery water-ways.
- Within these activities will be the element of alternative livelihoods as a means of encouraging communities to reduce the use of the forests.

The following steps for engagement are:

a) An expression of interest is submitted to the Conservator of Forests, upon which, an awareness raising and information sharing

session with the village community will be carried out. The awareness raising team will include key agencies like the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, the iTaukei Lands Trust Board and the Ministry of Forestry. The outcomes of this participatory session are:

1. The collective consensus of the community members to participate in the ER-Program – consequently, the signing of the iTLTB Consent Form (55% of registered members of legal age), if land is under communal ownership.
2. Development of a village-level land use plan, agreed and mapped, and the identification of the ER-Program activity or mix of activities, which they wish to implement.

b) The issuance of lease by iTLTB, for communal land

c) The development of a Forest Management Plan at the village level and subsequently, the issuance of a license by the Ministry of Forestry. The Forest Management Plan will guide the implementation of the

agreed activities, timeline and standards.

d) On the completion of the implementation ER-Program activities, the Ministry of Forestry will conduct its internal monitoring and verification process to ascertain if the agreed activities have been completed to the set standards, and are in a position to be considered for trade.

e) The lease title is then registered with the Registrar of Titles Office, upon which a Carbon Sequestration Property Right (CSPR) certificate will be issued. The certificate is an indication that the associated land has established forest carbon sinks and has been dedicated and/or set aside for the sole purpose of reducing emission and consequently, carbon trade. Apart from landowning communities the Ministry of Forestry also encourages the participation of farmers, freehold landowners and in particular the participation of women and youth groups in Fiji's ER Program that will contribute to building climate resilient communities.

TOTOKA ISLANDS Invests in Greener Solutions for Fiji and Her People



Beautiful is the only way to describe the partnership Toralf Dittmann has with nature. Originally from Germany, Mr. Dittmann has invested more than FJD 50 million in developing commercial agroforestry operations in remote areas of Fiji.

Beautiful which translates to Totoka in the iTaukei language “characterises our vision that commercial value generation and natural beauty should not contradict but instead support each other and is also the name of our company”.

TOTOKA ISLANDS started its Agroforestry initiative in 2012. The initiative was inspired by a holistic and integrated approach to property development that works with nature instead of against it. This approach allows for diverse types of land use that support and reinforce each other instead of being exclusive.

According to Mr. Dittmann, “the decision to invest in Fiji was based on favourable economic conditions, a reliable legal framework, and the availability of freehold land. I would like to thank the Fijian Government for the support over the years. We have also received valuable advice from the Ministry of Forestry which helped to start our reforestation efforts. In particular we have benefitted from being able to purchase large quantities of high-quality seeds from the Ministry that has in-turn accelerated our reforestation initiative”.

This investment supports the Fijian Government’s 30 Million Trees in 15 Years Initiative (30MT15Y), adds value to forest landscape restoration, provides employment and green recovery with long term nature-based solutions which improves the environment and envisages economic growth.

TOTOKA ISLANDS

Agroforestry

TOTOKA ISLANDS has to date planted 170,000 trees on its 65 hectares of property in Viti Levu of which 85,000 are Mahogany, 50,000 Teak and 35,000 mixed indigenous trees. The properties in Viti Levu are now fully planted. TOTOKA ISLANDS’ properties in Vanua Levu have some deforested patches which will be reforested in the coming years.

All the trees planted by TOTOKA ISLANDS is added to Fiji’s national tally for the 30MT15Y initiative.

Mr. Dittmann further added that “because of the fact that we are able to attract highly talented and ambitious employees, we operate with 100% Fijian staff including management. For us as investors, the Fijian culture with its high ethical standards and positive mind-set, creates ideal conditions for our sustainable integrated developments”.

TOTOKA ISLANDS employs 30 people.

The key component of reforestation and agroforestry is grass control by grazing animals. TOTOKA ISLANDS keeps around 50 horses divided into several herds on its plantations.

Solar Power Plants

In keeping with the vision to work sustainably with nature, except for transport TOTOKA ISLANDS runs all of its operations on 100% solar energy. Currently, 110kW of solar

power are being generated by 5 solar power plants. As soon as fully electric utility vehicles become available in Fiji, the company will convert its entire fleet.

Ministry promotes

Agroforestry

Agroforestry’s main goal is to combine both modern and traditional land-use systems where trees are managed together with crops or animal production. Agroforestry, therefore, is defined as an agricultural system that involves the interaction of trees, shrubs, and agriculture where they are designed and managed as a whole unit.

In other words, it is the land use management practice of combining both forestry and agriculture, with the objective of not only improving crop productivity but also increasing biodiversity and soil fertility while reducing soil erosion.

Permanent Secretary for Forestry, Pene Baleinabuli said “Agroforestry bridges the gap that often separates agriculture and forestry by building integrated systems that address both environment and socio-economic objectives. Agroforestry can also improve the resiliency of agriculture systems and mitigate the impacts of Climate Change”.

In agroforestry, the ecological function of trees, crops, and animals can increase food production while at the same time reducing the impact of agriculture on the environment.

Agroforestry therefore is a sustainable farming method that is Totoka Dina, beautiful indeed.



Protect our Future, Plant a Tree

And support the 30 million trees in 15 years initiative

Your contribution counts
- every time you plant a tree,
scan this QR code to let us know -
Link: bit.ly/30MT15Y



Follow us on and help us trend #30MT15Y

For more information contact the Ministry of Forestry on 330 1611 or email forestrycomms@gmail.com