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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **REVIEW REPORT OF THE CONSOLIDATED 2014 AND 2015 DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY ANNUAL REPORTS**



**PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**  
**Parliamentary Paper No.177 of 2020**

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## CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD



I am pleased to present the report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources on the consolidated annual review of the Department of Forestry 2014 and 2015 Annual Reports. In accordance with its established Annual Report review process, the Committee examines Annual Reports of Ministries and Departments in order to investigate, inquire into, and make recommendations relating to the administration, legislative or proposed legislative programme, budget, rationalisation, restructuring, functions, structure and policy formulation. As part of this process, the Committee raised questions and received written responses from the Ministry of Forestry to gather additional information.

This review was made in accordance with Standing Order 109(2) (c) which mandates the committee to look into issues related to forestry, agriculture, mining, environment, fisheries, water and marine services.

The review looked at the Department's administration, structure; budgetary allocation; programs and activities; policies; challenges and achievements for the year 2014 and 2015 and its implementation.

It was noted that the Department of Forestry strategic priorities was aligned to the Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio – Economic Development (RDSSED), Government's manifesto and the 2013 Constitution.

The Committee noted the Vision of the Department of Forestry which states and I quote "*Our Future Generation will inherit a Prosperous and Enhanced Forestry Sector Leader in forest sustainability and innovation for small island economies*".

In support of the above, the Committee noted that the Department of Forestry successfully implemented the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in 2014, now practised by the Fiji Pine and Tropic Woods to assist the SME's to practise sustainable forest management in their plantations.

One of the major achievements of the Department of Forestry as noted by the committee in the 2014 annual report, was the introduction of the Maritime Pine Package assistance for Cicia and Gau to improve livelihoods and this project would be extended to other maritime islands in the

future. Simultaneously, 2015 also marked an achievement for the Department of Forestry whereby Fiji signed an agreement with the World Bank valued at 3.8 million USD for Fiji's readiness process for REDD Plus.

Furthermore, another highlight of the Department of Forestry during the period under review was its commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This initiative was to reduce carbon emissions from the removal of forests through the Fiji National REDD Plus Program.

At this juncture, I wish to thank the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Pene Baleinabuli and his staff for their assistance in this review process. I also extend my gratitude to my Committee colleagues namely: Hon. Jale Sigarara (Deputy Chairperson) and Hon. Alexander O'Connor and the Secretariat staff for their support.

I, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, commend the Review of the Consolidated Annual Reports for the Department of Forestry 2014 and 2015 to Parliament.



Hon. Sanjay Kirpal  
Chairperson.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The substantive members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources are as follows:



Hon. Sanjay Kirpal, Chairperson,  
Government Member



Hon. Jale Sigarara, Deputy Chairperson  
Government Member



Hon. Alexander O'Connor,  
Government Member

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>Phrases</b>
<b>COC</b>	Certificate of Conformity
<b>FFHCP</b>	Fiji Forest Harvesting Code of Practice
<b>FHCL</b>	Fiji Harwood Corporation Limited
<b>FPL</b>	Fiji Pine Limited
<b>FSC</b>	Forest Stewardship Council
<b>REDD PLUS</b>	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation
<b>RDSSD</b>	Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio – Economic Development
<b>SFM</b>	Sustainable Forest Management
<b>SME</b>	Small & Medium Enterprise
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>VAT</b>	Value Added Tax

# RECOMMENDATION

The Standing Committee on Natural Resources has conducted a review of the Department of Forestry 2014 and 2015 Annual Reports and recommends that Parliament take note of its report.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Department of Forestry 2014 and 2015 Annual Report was tabled in Parliament during the July 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 Parliament sitting and referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources for scrutiny.

The Committee proceeded with its mandatory function legislated under Standing Order 109(2) (c) which allows the Standing Committee on Natural Resources to examine matters related to forestry, agriculture, mining, environment, fisheries, water and marine services.

Standing Orders 110(1)(c) further authorises the Standing Committee to *scrutinise the government departments with responsibility within the Committee's subject area, including by investigating, inquiring into, and making recommendations relating to any aspect of such a department's administration, legislation or proposed legislative program, budget, rationalisation, restructuring, functioning, organisation, structure and policy formulation.*

A standing committee must report to parliament any other matter referred to or initiated by the committee, as soon as it has completed its considerations and deliberations as stipulated under SO 121 (1) (b).

## 1.1 PROCEDURE AND PROGRAM

The Committee met in Parliament and proceeded with its scrutiny and formulated questions which were sent to the Department of Forestry for their responses. The questions were basically on the challenges faced by the Department during the period under review, achievements, operational review, legislations in place, progress on the Department's initiatives. The Ministry's responses were received by the members and was incorporated into the committees report for final presentation to Parliament.

## **2.0 ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY**

The Committee noted for the period under review, the Department of Forestry was headed by the Permanent Secretary and the Conservator of Forests with a total staff of 184 out of which 100 established, 58 wage earners and 26 project staff to facilitate the timely delivery of project outputs. As stated in the 2014 annual report and in terms of the allocation of budget, the Department of Forestry was allocated a total budget of \$8.7 million of which \$5.57 million was for Operating Expenditure, \$2.54 million for Capital Expenditure and \$0.60 million was for VAT.

Likewise as also noted in 2015, the Department was allocated a total budget of \$9.2 million of which \$6.2 million was for operating expenditure, \$ 2.4 was for Capital Expenditure and \$0.60 million was for VAT.

The Committee noted that there was an increase of budget for the Operating Expenditure in 2015 hence the funds were for the implementation of its programs for the period under review.

It was worthy to note that the Ministry has undergone a restructure and is now in a better position to produce pending reports immediately and by January 2021.

## **3.0 FINDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE**

### **3.1 AREAS OF SUCCESS FOR 2014**

**3.1.1** Successful SFM implementation in the Forestry Sector – Fiji Pine Limited was certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) for practicing Sustainable Forest Management in plantations and Tropik Woods being certified under Chain of Custody. The Forestry Department was instrumental in providing support letters to FSC to support the FPL's application for FSC and COC certificates. The Department also assisted in providing financial support for the certification process and undertaking awareness. Forest certification is a key component of Sustainable Forest Management.

**3.1.2** The Maritime Pine Package project was introduced in 2014 which will ensure the sustainable utilisation and management of maritime pine resources. This work started off with Cicia and Gau Islands.



- 3.1.3** Assisting of SMEs to sustainably utilise waste wood from the forests (after log harvesting process) to produce wood products that would sell at a higher value.

## **3.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 3.2.1** The 2007 Forestry Policy is still a guiding document for the Ministry to date and most of the objectives are embedded in the Ministry's 13 year Strategic Development Plan and the National Development Plan for implementation.
- 3.2.2** A challenge for the Ministry is fully implementing the Policy as the 2016 Forest Bill, which was proposed to implement the Policy, is still not finalised to date. The 2016 Forest Bill had been tabled in Parliament in 2016 and had undergone 2 readings in Parliament.
- 3.2.3** The Ministry has been advised to make a fresh submission on the said Bill; therefore the Ministry is reviewing the Bill to also address current needs. The Bill is envisioned to be completed in the next few weeks before it is resubmitted to the Solicitor General's office for vetting.
- 3.2.4** Furthermore, the Forest Policy will also be reviewed in 2021 to ensure inclusion of Emission Reduction Policy direction, Climate Change, Environment Policies and the relevant SDG's.

## **3.3 FOREST PRODUCTION**

- 3.3.1** There was a decline of 1,856m<sup>3</sup> in mahogany production between 2014 and 2015.
- 3.3.2** Decline in production is due to many factors such as the weather conditions, natural disasters, access to markets, and viability of harvesting machineries. Logging companies cannot operate if it is raining as this is against the Fiji Forest Harvesting Code of Practice (FFHCP), an instrumental component of the licensing condition.

## **3.4 AREAS OF SUCCESS IN 2015**

### **3.4.1 Monitoring, Compliance and Surveillance**

Monitoring compliance and surveillance on Mahogany plantations was undertaken by the Ministry since the implementation of the Fiji Forest Harvesting Code of Practice in 1990.

With the finalisation of the Protocol for the Fijian mahogany brand, and the issuance of a separate and distinct Fiji Plantation Grown Mahogany Harvesting Code of Practice (FPGMHCP) (“Code”), the FHCL took over the monitoring of all its mahogany plantations in Fiji. The Code applies specifically to the harvesting of plantation grown mahogany trees in all FHCL mahogany plantation in Fiji.

The Ministry of Forestry was later mandated to monitor mahogany woodlots outside the FHCL plantation, and which it continues to do to date.

Currently, FHCL undertakes enforcement of the Harvesting Code in Mahogany plantations while the Ministry does it for mahogany woodlots outside FHCL leased areas. Ideally, companies should ensure taking up this role as part of their process. FHCL is currently preparing for Certification of their Forests and operations and MCS plays a large part in determining their compliance to FSC standards.

## **4.0 COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

Phenology of Indigenous Tree Species and Establishment:

The Ministry of Forestry should ensure that all indigenous tree species must be supported to avoid extinction.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2**

The Committee recommends that Acronyms page be embedded in the Department’s future annual reports.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

The Department to report on the SDG's challenges faced during its implementation; and To consider incorporating all its activities and programs in line with the National Development Program in future.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

The Ministry staff to undergo training on the SDG's to enable a better understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals and its linkages to the Ministry of Forestry.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5**

That future Annual Reports should include gender participation in the positions held within the Ministry of Forestry.

### **RECOMMENDATION 6**

The Committee recommends that the Ministry ensures that its organization structure is provided in all its future annual reports.

### **RECOMMENDATION 7**

The Committee strongly recommends replanting of indigenous hard wood species such as Vesi, Dakua, Damanu, Kouvula, Kaudamu, Rosarosa, Sacau and others.

## **5.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)**

### **5.1 GENDER EQUALITY ANALYSIS – SDG 5**

The Committee noted that there was no information on Gender provided by the Department of Forestry in its Annual Report for 2014 & 2015.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

The Committee looked forward to receiving better results in the early submission of the Department of Forestry's future annual reports to Parliament. In summary, the Committee noted the Departments successful achievements of key performance outputs for the period under review.

## 7.0 COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SIGNATURE

We, the Members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, hereby agree with the contents of this report:



Hon. Sanjay Kirpal

**(Chairperson)**



Hon. Jale Sigarara

**(Deputy Chairperson)**



Hon. Alexander O'Connor

**(Member)**

# APPENDICES

## Published written evidence

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Written evidence and supplementary information was received from the Ministry of Forestry and can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link:

<http://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-natural-resources/>