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CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD



I am pleased to present this consolidated report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources which covers the annual reports of the Ministry of Fisheries for 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

In accordance with the established Annual Report review process, the Committee examines Annual Reports of agencies to investigate, inquire into, and make recommendations relating to the agencies' administration, legislative or proposed legislative programme, budget, rationalisation, restructuring, functions, structure and policy formulation.

As part of this process, the Committee formulated questions and received the written responses from the Ministry of Fisheries for 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 Ministry's administration, structure; budgetary allocation; programs and activities; policies; challenges and achievements for the years under review.

First and foremost, the Committee commended the overall performance and achievements of the Ministry of Fisheries during the review period.

In addition to the achievements in the 2018 – 2021 years, one of the highlights of the Ministry was that it had cleared all its outstanding audit issues of previous years and obtained unqualified audits for its last two financial reports from the Auditor General.

The Review Committee noted that the Ministry of Fisheries had established the Coastal Fisheries Management Division with nine staff to assist in the inshore fisheries policy and inshore operation in compliance management. This new Division was funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (NZ/MFAT).

It was also noted that the Ministry of Fisheries undertook reforms in 2019 whereby it revised and improved its vision, mission, strategies and core values. It also identified its ten Critical Success Factors.

The Committee noted the diligent performance of the staff despite the challenges, and that the Ministry is working towards achieving goals for quick economic recovery.

I wish to extend my appreciation to the Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Atelaite Rokosuka and staff of the Ministry of Fisheries and the relevant stakeholders for their timely contributions in the final compilation of this report.

I also wish to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the Committee Members namely, Hon. Inia Seruiratu as Chairperson, Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu (Member), Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna (Member), Hon. Jone Usamate, Hon. Joseph Nand, Hon. Sakiusa Tubuna and Hon. Alitia Bainivalu (as Alternate Members).

I thank the Secretariat for their endless contributions.



.....
Hon. Isikeli Tuiwailevu
DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND DEFINITION

BPA	Benthic Protection Area
COP	Conference of Parties
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FADS	Fish Aggregating Devices
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUCN category VI MPA	International Union for Conservation of Nature and category 6 of the Marine Protected Area
IUU	Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NZ/MFAT	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
RGDP	Real Gross Domestic Product
SO	Standing Order of Parliament
WCPO	Western and Central Pacific Ocean

DEFINITION

Savusavu Blue Town Model - Specifically target's developing island and coastal communities that lie within these areas of acknowledged Tropical marine biodiversity. The Blue Town model showcases how the world can help protect this “genetic bunker”. The global community has a vested interest in protecting our island nations and the diverse genetic resources of our tropical reefs and ecosystems.

Savusavu with its incredible natural beauty and diverse community will highlight and showcase Fiji's whole-hearted commitment to COP initiatives to not only reduce carbon emissions, raise climate tangible solutions, to preserve and protect our tropical marine biodiversity.

RECOMMENDATION

The Standing Committee on Natural Resources has conducted a review of the Ministry of Fisheries 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Annual Reports and recommends that Parliament take note of its recommendations as stated in the report.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Fisheries Annual Report for 2018 -2019 was tabled in Parliament during the May 2020 Parliament sitting and referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources for scrutiny. It was reintroduced in Parliament early this year on Friday 17th March together with the Annual Reports for 2019 -2020 and 2020-2021.

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 authorizes the Standing Committee to *scrutinize 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, rationalization, restructuring, functioning, organization, structure, and policy formulation.*

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

1.1 Committee Remit and Composition



Hon. Inia Seruiratu
Chairperson



Hon. Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Deputy Chairperson



Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu
Government Member



Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna
Government Member



Hon. Jone Usamate
Opposition Member



Hon. Joseph Nand
Opposition Member



Hon. Alitia Bainivalu
Alternate Member



Hon. Sakiusa Tubuna
Alternate Member

1.2 Procedure and Program

The Committee scrutinised the Annual Reports and formulated written questions for the Ministry of Fisheries to respond to within a week's time frame. The written questions sought clarity on the contents of the Annual Reports and honed in on the challenges faced by the Ministry during the review period, the achievements, operational review, legislations in place, and progress on the Ministry's initiatives. The Committee incorporated the responses from the Ministry of Fisheries and from industry stakeholders into its final report for presentation to Parliament.

Copies of the Members' written questions and the Ministry of Fisheries' responses are made available on the Parliament website www.parliament.gov.fj under "Parliament Business".

1.3 Committee Site Visits

The Committee resolved that site visits be conducted to the three (3) geographic divisions of Fiji.

The Committee undertook a one (1) day site visit to the Central Division and a further one (1) week visit to the Central, Western and the Northern Divisions to verify its findings, and to gather valuable information from staff at the stations. The Committee consulted and visited several key stakeholders that are actively involved in the fishing industry, and those that are in partnership with the Ministry and the Government as a whole.

2.0 COMMITTEE DELIBERATIONS AND ANALYSIS

2.1 Background

The Ministry of Fisheries is mandated to manage and sustain fishing activities in the Fiji waters to ensure that Fiji's fisheries stock remain healthy.

The Ministry continued to coordinate Fiji's fishing and aquaculture programs to ensure food security and also to facilitate the growth of commercial activity that helps grow the economy.

The Ministry's vision as quoted in the Annual Reports for the years under review is *"To have the best Fisheries in the Pacific Region"*.

The Ministry has three (3) broad areas of focus;

- 1) Support National Economic Recovery
- 2) Food Security and Livelihood
- 3) Resource Sustainability.

The Ministry's 10-year Strategic Plan 2019 – 2029 highlighted four (4) strategies;

- 1) Offshore Fishery: Create Value,
- 2) Coastal Fishery: Sustain and diversify.
- 3) Aquaculture Fishery: Grow rapidly.
- 4) Quality Strategy: Deliver impact.

2.2 Committee Finding

2.2.1 FISHERIES AT THE MACRO LEVEL

2.2.1.1 Contribution Real Gross Domestic Product (RGDP)

The Committee noted that there was a decrease in Fisheries' total contribution to national RGDP from \$75.1m in 2018 to \$68.0 m in 2020.

2.2.1.2 Fish Exports by Standard International Trade Classification 2018- 2020-FJD (M)

Total Fish exports increased from \$234.2m in 2018 to \$241.2m in 2019 but then dramatically decreased in 2020 to \$187.0m.

2.2.1.3 Fish Imports by Standard International Trade Classification

Fish imports declined from \$82.2m in 2018 to \$73.6m in 2019 and then increased to \$95.8m in 2020.

2.2.1.4 Employment in the Fisheries Sector

Employment in the Fisheries sector increased to 1,349 in 2018 and decreased to 1,048 in 2019.

The Annual Employment Survey showed an estimate of 180, 106 employees for the registered establishments as of June 2019 in Fiji. 1,048 employees were directly employed in the fishing sector whilst 5,745 employees were employed within the Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing industries.

2.2.2 FISHERIES AT THE MICRO LEVEL

2.2.2.1 Ministry Achievements

In 2018 - 2019, the Ministry achieved 66% of its annual targets with 85% of staffing establishment and utilized 80 % of its budget.

In 2020 – 2021, the Ministry achieved 74% of its annual targets with 94.3 of staffing strength and utilized 89.11% of its budget.

The Ministry enhanced its performance against its annual targets over the period from 2018 to 2021 and was able to utilize more of its budget.

There is still room for improvement in its performance.

2.2.2.3 Financial Audit Report

The 2018 – 2019 had a Qualified Audit Opinion.

There were no qualifications for the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 reports. The Committee congratulates the Ministry for the above.

2.2.3 AQUACULTURE

2.2.3.1 The development of Aquaculture is a key thrust of the Ministry, and there is capacity for significant growth in this sector.

2.2.3.2 There are considerable challenges however for maintaining such subsistence aquaculture establishments such as access to fry and quality feed.

2.2.3.3 The Ministry is targeting Commercial aquaculture in a zone that extends from Sigatoka to Rakiraki, as this is the part of the country that has the appropriate climate, and which is also close to the hotels who provide a major market for shrimps and prawn.

2.2.3.4 Challenges faced include access to fry, quality and affordable feed, good research facilities.

2.2.3.5 There is still a failure to realise the impact of overfishing, climate change, fish migratory pattern, global sea warming, and ocean pollution on the supplies of fish to our economy. Aquaculture is the way to mitigate the impact of all these forces.

2.2.4 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R&D)

2.2.4.1 After visiting four (4) hatcheries in Fiji, the Committee noted the Naduruloulou station needs considerable improvements as it is the major supplier of fry in Fiji.

2.2.4.2 The Committee visited the Fisheries Research stations and noted the following;

- The Galoa Research Station needs the right personnel and proper equipment.
- The Caboni Research Station is an excellent research facility for developing fry. The attitude of staff was commendable however, the major challenge is to retain and develop local capacity to continue the important work carried out at the station. The station needs to increase the volume of seawater brought into the facility to allow for expansion.
- The Committee was impressed with the research undertaken by J Hunter Pearls, and they appear to be one of the best research facilities in Fiji.
- The Dreketi Hatchery in Vanua Levu needs upgrading to meet the demand from the fishermen in the North.

2.2.5 INSHORE FISHERIES

2.2.5.1 Fish supplies in inshore fisheries have declined and the Committee was informed that fishermen had to buy four (4) times more fuel, in order to catch the same amount of fish they used to catch in the past. There is a need to better measure and manage our fisheries stock and preserve these scarce resources.

2.2.5.2 There is a need to monitor and curb illegal fishing across the country and to upgrade surveillance. Fish wardens need to be supported in order to carry out their role.

2.2.5.3 Fishermen in the North highlighted a number of key challenges they faced. Firstly, they could not access fish markets to sell their produce. Secondly, a lot of these fishermen do not own fishing boats and are forced to sell their catch to the boat owners at low prices. They would get a better return if they owned their own boats.

2.2.5.4 There is a need therefore to review the Northern Development Program (NDP) provisions so that these fishermen are supported financially.

2.2.6. OFFSHORE FISHERIES

2.2.6.1 There has been a significant decline in offshore fisheries because of the changing migratory pattern of tuna. A number of companies have closed down and others are not using all their boats to fish and also foreign fishing boats have pulled out of Fiji waters.

2.2.6.2 Members of the Fiji Fishing Industry Association requested Government to step in to provide or facilitate assistance to the Tuna Industry through the FDB or local commercial banks.

2.2.6.3 The Committee has been subsequently informed that discussions are ongoing between the Ministry of Fisheries and FDB for financial assistance to Offshore Fisheries companies.

2.2.6.4 The turnaround time of obtaining test results from the University of the South Pacific Laboratory has been a major problem because it impacts the speed at which the Fisheries Companies can export their products. This needs to be resolved by upgrading other laboratories in Fiji.

2.2.6.5 The Committee noted some of the challenges faced by offshore fisheries and these are listed below:

- Obtaining a fisheries license takes far too much time as it involves a number of different agencies including the Ministry of Fisheries for the IUU Certificate, the Ministry of Health on the Health Certificate, and the University of the South Pacific for conducting lab tests. The delays have created substantial losses to the fishing companies and has prolonged the sale of fish to overseas markets.
- The process for obtaining clearance from the Customs Department to fish outside Fiji waters and as a result, Fishing Companies incur unnecessary costs.
- The unavailability of the right technology and expertise. There is also a need to purchase new vessels so that they are able to fish in the deeper and high seas.
- Inconsistency in data held by the Ministry of Fisheries and the Fishing Companies.
- The Fishing Companies no longer receive assistance through the tuna stabilization fund.

2.2.6.6 During the compilation of the report, the Committee had sought further clarification on Fiji's application towards the IUCN Category VI MPA. This will need to be clarified as the Ministry has established (4) four marine reserves and has a target of designating 30% of Fiji's EEZ as MPAs.

2.2.6.7 The industry feels that designating 30% of Fiji's EEZ as MPA will have a negative impact on Food Security.

2.2.7 CONSERVATION/ILLEGAL, UNREGULATED, UNREPORTED FISHING

2.2.7.1 The Committee is concerned with the high level of illegal fishing and lack of monitoring taking place in Fiji. There is a need to strengthen monitoring and partnership with the public and raise awareness with the Communities.

2.2.7.2 The Committee was impressed with the Savusavu blue town concept which encompasses EIA and Climate Resilience Practices and ensures environmental and economic sustainability.

3.0 COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee had conducted the review of the three (3) annual reports of the Ministry of Fisheries and also sought clarifications from the Ministry Officials. With the written responses received and the findings from the site visit conducted, the Committee recommends that the Ministry take heed of the Committee's recommendations and ensures timely implementation.

3.1 AQUACULTURE FISHERIES DIVISION

RECOMMENDATION 3.1.1

The Ministry must address and nullify the key challenges in Aquaculture which include: the need for the latest equipment, the right expertise and advancement of facilities, supply of fry and quality feed.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1.2

The Ministry to ensure that there is a marked improvement in the percentage of farmers that graduate from subsistence to semi and commercial farming.

3.2 INSHORE FISHERIES

RECOMMENDATION 3.2.1

The Ministry to ensure the assessment and management of fisheries stock, arrange financial assistance to fishermen, upgrade physical resources such as service centers and FADS, and strengthen Human Resources.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2.2

The Ministry to ensure expansion of inshore farming of oysters, seaweeds, pearls, beach-demer, clams, saltwater prawns and mud crabs.

3.3 OFFSHORE FISHERIES

RECOMMENDATION 3.3.1

The Committee recommends the review of Policies, Acts and Regulations that govern the Fisheries sector, to ensure that they are relevant and up to date.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3.3

The Ministry to prioritize the training and recruitment of qualified locals as crew and collaborate with the Fishing Industry to acquire modern fishing vessels.

of the South Pacific, through dialogue and stronger partnerships.

3.4 CONSERVATION

RECOMMENDATION 3.4.1

Ensure that there is proper collaboration with stakeholders and that there is consensus on the establishment of MPAs, and that this is respected by community at large after the MPA has been established.

3.5 MINISTRY RESOURCES

RECOMMENDATION 3.5.1

The Ministry should prioritize improving capacity building and retention of staff at all levels.

RECOMMENDATION 3.5.2

The Ministry should improve and renovate fisheries stations and research facilities to meet OHS and other requirements.

RECOMMENDATION 3.5.3

The Ministry to resolve the land issues at Wainikoro Fisheries station and relocate the Navua and Savusavu Fisheries Stations.

4.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

4.1 GENDER EQUALITY ANALYSIS (SDG 5)

The Committee noted that the Ministry of Fisheries had not provided data on Gender and the impact it had on the Ministry's whole operations. However, upon the Committee's request, the Ministry

provided the Gender breakdown stating that 34.12 % of all staff are female, and 23.46 % of the Senior Management are also female.

Currently, both the Permanent Secretary and the Director Fisheries are females.

4.2 LIFE BELOW WATER (SDG 14)

The implementation of the Recommendations made in this report will steer Fiji towards achieving SDG 14.

5.0 CONCLUSION

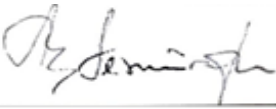
The Committee recognises the importance of the Fisheries Sector and the role the Ministry of Fisheries plays in managing and further growing the Sector not only for Food Security but also for economic growth.

Overall, the performance of the Ministry of Fisheries for the review period was satisfactory. The Committee noted that the Ministry utilized 89.11% of the budget, achieved 74% of the physical targets, and employed 93.4% of staffing strength despite the COVID 19 Pandemic.

The Ministry of Fisheries needs to implement the Recommendations highlighted in this report to enhance and improve the Fisheries Sector.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SIGNATURE

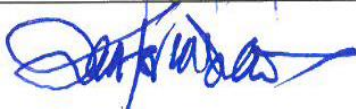
We, the Members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, hereby agree with the contents of this report:



.....
Hon. Inia Seruiratu



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Hon. Isikeli Tuiwailevu



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Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu



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Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna



.....
Hon. Jone Usamate



.....
Hon. Joseph Nand



.....
Hon. Sakiusa Tubuna



.....
Hon. Alitia Bainivalu

APPENDICES

Published written evidence.

Written evidence and supplementary information were received from the Ministry of Agriculture and can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link:
<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/Committees/standing-Committee-on-natural-resources/>