



STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Review Report of the Ministry Forestry Annual Report 2022 - 2023



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
Parliamentary Paper No.14/25

Published and Printed by the Department of Legislature, Parliament House, SUVA
March 2025

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Chair's Foreword



As the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, it is my privilege to present the review of the Ministry of Forestry's Annual Report for the fiscal year 2022-2023. This report reflects the Ministry's unwavering commitment to sustainable forest management, conservation, and the promotion of biodiversity in Fiji.

Throughout the year, the Ministry has undertaken significant initiatives aimed at preserving our natural resources for future generations. These efforts include the implementation of reforestation programs, the enforcement of sustainable logging practices, and the enhancement of protected areas. The Ministry's dedication to these initiatives is commendable and aligns with our national goals of environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

The report also highlights the challenges faced by the Ministry, including the impacts of climate change, illegal logging activities, and the need for increased funding and resources. Despite these obstacles, the Ministry has made remarkable progress in addressing these issues through collaborative efforts with local communities, international partners, and other government agencies.

Here are a few major achievements of the Ministry of Forestry in Fiji for the 2022-2023 period, along with their respective percentage rates:

1. *Tree Planting Initiative:* - In the 2022-2023 financial year, approximately 4.8 million seedlings were planted, encompassing native species, pine, mahogany, teak, sandalwood, mangroves, and fruit trees. Since the program's initiation in January 2019, over 19.1 million trees have been planted across more than 17,200 hectares, achieving more than 60% of the 30 million tree target ahead of schedule.
2. *Budget Increase:* The Ministry received a 28% increase in its budget, rising from \$13.8 million in the revised 2021-2022 budget to \$17.7 million for 2022-2023.
3. *Export Revenue:* The Ministry facilitated the highest exports revenue in 10 years, contributing significantly to Fiji's economy.

These achievements highlight the Ministry's dedication to environmental sustainability and economic growth.

In conclusion, the Ministry of Forestry's Annual Report for 2022-2023 demonstrates a steadfast commitment to the preservation and sustainable use of Fiji's forest resources. The Standing Committee on Natural Resources acknowledges the Ministry's achievements and encourages continued efforts to ensure the long-term health and vitality of our forests.

I wish to extend my appreciation to the Executive and Staff of the Ministry of Forestry for their effort and dedication.

At this juncture, I would like to take the opportunity to extend my gratitude to the Honourable Members who contributed to the development of this bipartisan report. Special thanks go to Hon. Taito Rokomatu, former Deputy Chairperson, Hon. Sachida Nand, Deputy Chairperson, Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu, Hon. Kalaveti Ravu, Hon. Vijay Nath, Hon. Jovesa Vocea, and Hon. Alipate Tuicolo, alternate government Members, for their valuable input and dedication in producing this report.

I commend this Report to Parliament.



.....
Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna
Chairperson
Standing Committee on Natural Resources

ACRONYMS/GLOSSARY

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIS	Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System
MoF	Ministry of Forestry
MP	Member of Parliament
30MT15Y	30 million Trees 15 Year Initiative
NDP	National Development Plan
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SDP	Strategic Development Plan (SDP)
SO	Standing Order of Parliament

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION

The Standing Committee on Natural Resources has conducted the review of the Ministry of Forestry 2022 – 2023 Annual Report and recommends that Parliament take note of its recommendations as stated in the report.

1.0 Introduction

The following Standing Orders of Parliament specify the role of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

- SO, 109 (c) that the mandate of the Committee is to look into matters that relates to agriculture, forests, fisheries, land, minerals, environment, water and marine services.
- SO, 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.

The Ministry of Forestry's Annual Report for the 2022-2023 financial year provides a comprehensive overview of the Ministry's key activities, achievements, and challenges during the reporting period. This report outlines the Ministry's efforts to sustainably manage Fiji's forest resources, promote the conservation of biodiversity, and support climate change mitigation through responsible forestry practices. It highlights the Ministry's role in implementing government policies and programs aimed at enhancing forest conservation, promoting sustainable timber and non-timber forest product industries, and strengthening community engagement in forestry initiatives.

The report also provides an account of the Ministry's financial performance, operational progress, and the ongoing initiatives designed to improve the forestry sector's contribution to Fiji's national development goals. Through this Annual Report, the Ministry demonstrates its commitment to addressing critical issues such as deforestation, forest degradation, and the challenges posed by climate change, while also contributing to the well-being of local communities and the national economy.

As part of the oversight function, the Standing Committee on Natural Resources has reviewed the 2022-2023 Annual Report to assess the Ministry's performance, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that the Ministry's objectives align with national priorities. The Committee's discussions and findings based on this report will inform its recommendations to Parliament on the future direction of the Ministry's work in the coming years.

2.0 Background

The Ministry of Forestry in Fiji is responsible for the sustainable management and conservation of the nation's forest resources. In the 2022–2023 financial year, the Ministry continued its commitment to environmental sustainability through several key initiatives.

2.1 Annual Workplans and Budgeting

The Ministry developed and submitted its 2022–2023 Operational Plan to the Ministry of Economy, accompanied by the corresponding budget request. This plan outlines the Ministry's strategic objectives and financial requirements for the fiscal year.

2.2. 30 million Trees in 15 Years (30MT15Y) Programme

Launched in January 2019, the 30MT15Y programme aims to plant 30 million trees over 15 years to enhance Fiji's forest cover and combat climate change. In the 2022–2023 period, the Ministry successfully planted 4.8 million seedlings, including native species, pine, mahogany, teak, sandalwood, mangroves, and fruit trees.

2.3. Forest Sector Achievement

The Ministry's Annual report also provided valuable data and information of the performances of the Forest Sector. This included data and information of the programmes and projects that the rural population undertakes to achieve targeted outcomes that are linked to national and international targets and goals

2.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Ministry of Forestry's report also covered thoroughly its role in executing effective and efficient means of carrying out necessary monitoring and evaluations of projects, systems and processes and achievements

2.3 Standing Committee Review

In February 2025, as a requirement to the Standing Committee's procedure for the review, the Ministry presented its 2022–2023 Annual Report to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. This submission is part of the Committee's ongoing review process, which includes evaluating the Ministry's performance and financial statements. The Committee's findings and recommendations will be compiled into a draft report for Parliament's consideration.

These efforts reflect the Ministry's dedication to sustainable forestry practices and its proactive approach to environmental stewardship in Fiji.

3.0 Committee Remit and Composition:

3.1 Committee Membership:



Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna
Chairperson
Assistant Minister for Agriculture
Government MP



Hon. Sachida Nand
Deputy Chairperson
Opposition MP



Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Assistant Minister for i-Taukei Affairs
Government MP



Hon. Vijay Nath
Opposition MP



Hon. Kalaveti Ravu
Government MP

4.0 Procedure and Program

The Committee convened on Tuesday, January 14th, 2025, to finalize its work plan for the first quarter of 2025. As part of the plan, the Committee decided to invite the Ministry of Forestry to present their submissions on Tuesday, February 11th, 2025. During a prior meeting, the Committee reviewed the 2022-2023 Annual Report and developed a set of questions, which were subsequently submitted to the Ministry for their response.

After thoroughly reviewing all available information, the Committee drafted its report, which was finalized after receiving submissions from the Senior Officials of the Ministry of Forestry on Wednesday 19th February 2025 in Parliament. Additionally, the Committee was supported by the Parliament Research Unit, which provided detailed analysis to be included in the final report to Parliament.

The Committee undertook a one-day site visit to the Forestry Research Station in Colo – I Suva, the Colo - I - Suva Forest Park, the Nasinu Forestry Training Centre and the Nadera Food Forest project. Written and oral submissions were received from the Ministry of Forestry for the Committee’s review.

4.1 Evidence and Advice Received - Please Refer to Annexures 1 – 4

5.0 Committee Deliberations and Analysis

5.1 Committee Findings

Following a comprehensive review of all pertinent data, documents, and testimonies, the Committee has arrived at the following findings.

5.2 Ministry’s Report Presentation

The Committee noted that while the Ministry reported exclusively on its achievements, it failed to provide clear linkages of the progress against the set targets.

5.3 Financial Accountability:

The Committee noted that the report on the Fiji Ministry of Forestry financial statement for the period from August 2022 to July 2023 is incomplete, with several pages missing. This lack of essential documentation impedes a full and thorough review of the Ministry’s financial performance during the specified period.

5.4 Program Performance:

The Committee noted that the Ministry's Strategic Development Plan (SDP) identifies four strategic goals and six key priorities, as detailed in the table below. The SDP is aligned with the National Development Plan (NDP) and reflects Fiji’s international commitments.

Table 1: Ministry of Forestry Strategic Goals and Priorities

STRATEGIC GOALS
SG 1 Establish sustainable life cycle management of forest resources in Fiji
SG 2 Improved the Socio-Economic Impact of Forest
SG 3 Contribute positively to the Global Environment
SG 4 Substantially improve service delivery
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
SP 1 Cohesive Legislation, Regulation, Policy and Guideline and Compliance
SP1: Is geared towards articulating a consistent, long-term approach with regard to legislation, regulation, policy, and compliance mechanisms associated with Forest and Forestry
SP2 Enhance sustainable Forrest Management Frameworks and Implementation of Sustainable Forrest Management (SFM)
SP2 is about establishing precise, sustainable implementation mechanisms for Forrest strategies to be effective over a long period of time.
SP 3 – Capacity Building (Ministry and Stakeholders)
SP 3 Focuses on bringing theory into practice, The Ministry will lead the way in analyzing the capacity and capabilities necessary to achieve the desired outcomes of the sector and engage its personal, infrastructure, partners and communities in developing research and knowledge necessary to achieve the best outcomes for now and the distant future.
SP 4 – Stewardship
SP 4 is about commitment to stewardship of national resources and the moral obligations towards global environmental responsibilities and commitments.
SP 5 – Forest financing
SP 5 is all about looking at, developing, improving and/ or implementing financial strategies and mechanisms to support the sustainable management of forests.
SP 6 – Organisation effectiveness
SP 6 Focuses on the Ministry itself. It looks at the capacity and the capability of the Ministry to produce what it has set as its goals. It seems at efficiency in terms of personnel processes and includes information management. It ensures that the Ministry is positioned to attain what it has set out to achieve within the context of people, information and infrastructure.

5.5 Site Visitation to Colo-i-Suva Forestry Research Station, Colo-i-Suva Forest Park, Nasinu Forestry Training Centre and the Nadera Food Forest Project.

The Committee noted the aging infrastructure that houses the Ministry, highlighting the urgent need for an upgrade to enable the Ministry to effectively perform its duties. Additionally, the Committee noted a significant shortage of essential equipment required for the Ministry's research, including the identification of optimal propagation methods and management of forest tree species. Some of the laboratory equipment is outdated and irreparable.

The Committee noted the work done by the Ministry in licensing and monitoring the timber treatment operators and ensuring compliance with the standards set for the treatment of different hazard levels.

5.6 Coordinated Urban Food Forest Projects

The Committee noted the lack of progress in the Nadera Food Forest project, which was part of the urban forestry initiative. This project involved a collaboration between the Ministry of Forestry, the Nasinu Town Council, Tasty Kitchen Collective, the Ministry of Agriculture, and Nadera Rishikul Primary School. The failure was attributed to several issues, including but not limited to poor coordination, lack of awareness, unclear demarcation of responsibilities, and ownership challenges.

5.7 Sustainable Forest Management

The Fiji Ministry of Forestry made significant strides in 2022-2023, demonstrating commitment to sustainable forest management and environmental protection. Notable achievements include.

- *Budget Allocation* - The Ministry utilized \$14.8 million, which represents 84% of its total budget, to implement its programs and projects, and successfully achieved 72% of the deliverables outlined in its Annual Operational Plan.
- *30MT15Y* - A total of 4.8 million trees were planted as part of the 30MT15Y Initiative.
- *Reforestation* – The Ministry of Forestry's 2022-2023 Annual Report highlights significant advancements in reforestation efforts, notably through the "30 million Trees in 15 Years" (30MT15Y) program. In the 2022-2023 financial year, approximately 4.8 million seedlings were planted, encompassing native species, pine, mahogany, teak, sandalwood, mangroves, and fruit trees. Since the program's initiation in January 2019, over 19.1 million trees have been planted across more than 17,200 hectares, achieving more than 60% of the 30 million tree target ahead of schedule.
- *Economic sustainability*- The Ministry of Forestry's 2022-2023 Annual Report highlights a comprehensive approach to economic sustainability in the forestry sector.
- Through sustainable resource management, community engagement, and supportive policies, the Ministry contributes significantly to Fiji's economic growth and environmental conservation.
- *Forestry Practices in relation to global environment*- The Ministry of Forestry's 2022-2023 Annual Report highlights a comprehensive approach to sustainable forestry practices, demonstrating significant progress in environmental conservation and socioeconomic development. The Ministry's dedication to reforestation, community engagement, and sustainable resource management underscores its commitment to both national and global environmental objectives. Some of the initiatives and key achievements are.
 - To plant 30 million trees over 15 years, contributing to carbon sequestration and forest restoration.
 - To assist maritime communities in sustainably harvesting pine resources for housing and communal facilities.
 - To restore degraded forests, enhance carbon stocks, and support ecosystem services.

5.8 Mortality rate for newly Planted Trees

Upon discussions and submissions from the Ministry of Forestry, had highlighted the challenges faced by the in very low survival rate of planted trees. This had been due to a number of factors including

- Soil conditions
- Effects changing weather pattern
- Lack of research facilities to address emerging factors
- Insufficient funding for monitoring and replanting

5.9 Sector Performance - Export

According to the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, total domestic exports in 2022 were valued at \$1.1 billion. The forestry sector contributed around 6.8% of this total, which is approximately \$93.0 million. Woodchips were the main export, making up 53% (\$49.0 million) of the sector's revenue. The export data for 2022 was classified and compiled using the Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System (HIS).

5.10 Import of Wood Products, Years 2022 – 2023

The Ministry of Forestry Annual Report for 2022-2023 presents a detailed analysis of wood product imports during the specified period. It covers the volume and types of wood products brought into Fiji, identifies key trends, and addresses any regulatory changes or challenges impacting imports. The report also highlights the Ministry's efforts in overseeing and regulating the importation process, ensuring adherence to sustainability standards, and upholding quality control in alignment with environmental protection initiatives and national forestry policies.

5.11 Compliance with Laws and Regulations

In the Ministry of Forestry's annual report for 2022-2023, compliance with laws and regulations is typically a critical aspect of assessing the sector's performance. In the 2022-2023 Annual Report, it emphasizes how the Ministry of Forestry upheld legal standards, enforced regulations, and ensured compliance across various sectors such as conservation, sustainable forestry, and international trade. The Ministry faced challenges but had demonstrated progress in adhering to laws and fostering sustainable practices across forest management.

The Committee noted that the Ministry reviewed the Forest Act 1992, and a draft submission submitted to the office of the Solicitor General for vetting. Thus, once the Forest Act is endorsed, relevant regulations that the Ministry has reviewed and drafted will be finalized.

5.12 Public Policy Effectiveness:

The Committee noted that the Ministry had been raising awareness among the public about sustainable forest practices, the role of forests in mitigating climate change and encouraging ecofriendly businesses or favour.

5.13 Risk Management:

The Ministry of Forestry faced several key risks in 2022-2023, including the impacts of climate change, illegal logging activities, the need for increased funding and resources, and the threat of natural disasters. These factors posed significant challenges to the Ministry's ability to effectively manage and protect forest resources.

6.0 COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee has completed its review of the Ministry of Forestry's Annual Report for 2022–2023 and recommends the following for the Ministry to consider for improvement in future undertakings.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Committee recommends the Ministry improves its preparation and presentation of the Annual report and further recommends that the Ministry considers recommendation provided in previous reports and ensure that future reports are complete and accurate for proper accountability and transparency.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Committee strongly recommends that the Ministry be provided with for increased funding from government and international organizations for necessary funding for upgrading of the essential equipment and tools needed to effectively carry out its research and information dissemination duties.

This should also include government funded programmes carried out by the Ministry forestry including sustainable forest management and risk mitigation

RECOMMENDATION 3

While the Committee acknowledges that this was a commendable initiative, it recommends that such projects be thoroughly discussed and developed to ensure clear ownership and accountability, which are essential for maintaining responsibilities and achieving the desired outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Committee recommends that the Forestry Sector relooks at its output and comes up with strategies which can enhance its performance and improved its contribution to the National GDP.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Committee recommends that the Ministry improve monitoring of wood and wood products imports to ensure they meet the sustainability and quality standards required and to ensure Fiji does not become a dumping ground for substandard products. It also suggests working with stakeholders to address import challenges and addressing import substitution.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Review and Finalize Legislation: The Committee recommends that the Ministry expedite the finalization of the reviewed Forest Act 1992 and its related regulations to enhance legal compliance and support sustainable forest management practices across the country.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Climate Change: The committee recommends that the Ministry should prioritize climate-resilient forestry practices, enhance research on adaptive strategies, and collaborate with international partners to mitigate the impacts of climate change on forest ecosystems and also encourage more businesses to adopt eco-friendly approaches for greater environmental impact.

Furthermore, **Natural Disasters**, the Committee recommends that the Ministry coordinate and facilitate the development and implementation of a disaster response and recovery plans for forest areas. This will include sustainable harvesting, early warning systems, community preparedness, and post-disaster restoration efforts to protect forests from the impacts of natural disasters

RECOMMENDATION 8

Illegal Logging: The Committee recommends that the Ministry strengthen collaboration with communities to increase surveillance and strengthen enforcement measures.

Timber Treatment: The Committee recommends that the Ministry strengthen its collaboration in policing, monitoring and evaluating programmes and processes. This is including ensuring that the operators meet the established quality standards, thereby promoting durability and enhancing resistance to pests such as termites.

This will require review of the policy that governs operational issues like fines, penalties, fees and charges.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Coordinated Urban Food Forest Projects: The committee welcomes the initiative of Urban food forest projects; however, the committee recommends that proper consultation and awareness programme should be carried out especially to the local community so that they take responsibility and ownership for the projects.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Sustainable Forest Management: While the achievement of the Sustainable Forest Management is acknowledged, the committee strongly recommends that close monitoring of the project is required including close cooperation with communities and empowering resource owners to assist in sustenance of the project.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Mortality rate for newly Planted Trees: The Committee noted with concerns the high mortality of newly planted trees due to a number of reasons including some that are difficult

to control, however the Committee recommends that the Ministry should engage with the Ministry of Education to introduce tree planting programmes in school curriculum. Students should be provided with seedlings to be planted in their communities which will initiate interest of planting trees.

7.0 Gender Analysis

SO, 110 (2) states that *“Where a Committee conducts an activity listed in clause (1) the Committee shall ensure that full consideration will be given to the principle of gender equality to ensure all matters are considered with regard to the impact and benefit on both men and women equally”*.

The Ministry of Forestry has shown efforts towards promoting gender equality in the sector, particularly in rural communities and with stakeholders. These efforts usually focus on ensuring the inclusion of both men and women in sustainable forest management, policy development, and capacity-building programs. The Committee noted that the Ministry has addressed gender equality in other peripheral activities including but not limited to the cottage industries.

8.0 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In 2022-2023, the Ministry of Forestry made significant strides toward achieving several SDGs, particularly SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). By focusing on sustainable forest management, empowering local communities, fostering gender inclusivity, and strengthening international collaborations, the Ministry contributed to both national and global efforts towards sustainable development.

9.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Ministry of Forestry's efforts in the 2022-2023 period demonstrate its commitment to the sustainable management of Fiji's forest resources. While there have been significant achievements, it is important to continue working towards overcoming the challenges faced in forest conservation, climate change, and community engagement.

The Standing Committee acknowledges the Ministry's progress and efforts and encourages continued focus on enhancing its programs. The Committee also emphasizes the need for stronger collaboration with other stakeholders to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of our forests for future generations.

The Committee looks forward to seeing continued progress and improvements in the coming years.

Member's Signature:

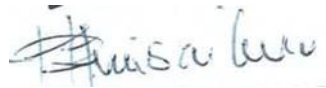
We, as Members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources do concur with the content of this report.



.....
Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna
Chairperson



.....
Hon. Sachida Nand
Deputy Chairperson
Opposition MP



.....
Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Government MP



.....
Hon. Kalaveti Vodo
Government MP
MP



.....
Hon. Vijay Nath
Opposition

APPENDICES

1) WRITTEN SUBMISSION BY MINISTRY OF FORESTRY

2) VERBATIM REPORT

3) RESEARCH PAPERS

4) PHOTOS

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Written Submission by the
Ministry of Forestry 2022-
2023 Annual Report



MINISTRY OF FORESTRY

HEADQUARTERS

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31st January 2025

File Ref : FO/G/1-56

The Chairperson
Standing Committee on Natural Resources
Parliament office
Government Buildings
Suva

Dear Sir,

Re: 2022-2023 MINISTRY OF FORESTRY ANNUAL REPORT SCRUTINY

1. In response to the request from the Standing Committee under Parliament Standing Order 112 (b) for a submission on the questions raised by the Standing Committee on Natural Resources regarding the Ministry of Forestry's Annual Report 2022-2023.
2. The Ministry would like to submit the following presentation containing responses to the questions raised by the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.
3. The Ministry will support the proceedings and deliberations on the process of scrutiny on our Annual Report through appearing before the Committee to present the responses to the questions raised on Tuesday 04th February, 2025 at 10.45 a.m.
4. The Ministry is looking forward for further collaborations and wish the Committee members well in their deliberations.

Thank you.

.....
Sanjana Lal (Ms.)

Acting Permanent Secretary for Fisheries & Forestry



Ministry of Forestry Responses to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources

Questions on the Ministry of Forestry's 2022 - 2023 Annual Reports

No.	Question	Ministry of Forestry's Response
1.	<p>P6 – Permanent Secretary's Foreword</p> <p>Can the Ministry please provide more information on the 30MT15Y program?</p> <p>a) Does the program include NGO's funded programs?</p> <p>b) Is the mangrove planting by advocacies included?</p> <p>c) Does fruit tree planting by other Ministries and organisations included?</p> <p>d) Is there any monitoring mechanism in place and how effective it has been?</p> <p>e) What is the survival percentage for planted trees?</p> <p>f) What strategies does the Ministry have to address the loss from fire or disasters?</p>	<p>a) Yes, the 30MT15Y program figures includes NGO funded projects in the total number of trees planted numbers.</p> <p>b) Yes, Mangrove planting by advocacies is included.</p> <p>c) Fruit tree planting by the Ministry of Forestry and other organisations is included.</p> <p>d) In the previous financial year, a new Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) Guideline was trialled during monitoring assessment. The new MRV is designed to complement the existing Seedling Production Manual. The new Guideline helps inform the National Monitoring & Survival Assessment conducted in the Central, Western and Northern Divisions through the Forest Resource Assessment & Conservation Division. The monitoring mechanism is effective in correctly tracking survival rates and mortality. It has</p> <div data-bbox="628 979 1441 1459" data-label="Diagram"> <pre> graph TD A[Seed Collection] --> B[Seed Treatment and Tests] B --> C[Germination test and Growth record in the Nursery from 1-11 months] C --> D[Aforestation/Reforestation using Seedling in Batches] D --> A E[Survival rate and mortality rate could be trace back to the seed collection and treatment steps] </pre> </div> <p>Figure 12: MRV Guideline Processes</p> <p>and will enable the Ministry to better focus its planting and beat up efforts.</p> <p>e) The National Monitoring & Survival Assessment conducted in Central, Western and Northern Division showed an average survival rate of 45% for the national Tree Planting initiative. We acknowledge that there are challenges that we continue to face, associated with activities aimed at reforesting degraded landscapes, particularly in relation to the relatively lower survival rates of indigenous tree species that we have been planting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Research Division has been tasked to initiate research studies focusing on native species to tackle their lower survival rates within the shortest time possible. Our Research Division has established permanent sample plots to monitor the growth of each species and their survival to help determine which species to plant at different sites in the future, and the actions required to ensure the survival of the planted trees. Moreover, our teams on the ground are also increasing their focus on beat up operations which involve the planting of new seedlings, in areas with low survival rate.

No.	Question	Ministry of Forestry's Response
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additionally, the Ministry continues to champion that communities take ownership of this tree-planting initiative ensuring better plantation management and improved survival rates, ultimately contributing to the restoration of degraded landscapes. <p>f) The Ministry is taking a lead role in developing the Rural Forest Fire Management strategy that will address losses from fire and disasters. The strategy is expected to be tabled in the next Cabinet meeting.</p>
2	<p>Page 14 – Budget Allocation and Expenditure</p> <p>a) Can the Ministry explain why there was less budget for its Capital Projects in the financial year, 2022 – 2023 than its operational funds?</p> <p>b) Can the Ministry explain whether it has future plans to increase capital budget to duplicate the programs currently undertaken in the Forestry Department (TFG) in nine miles?</p>	<p>a) The Ministry's Operational budget covers a wide range of SEG particulars, including the salaries of Established Staff, Government Wage Earners, Travel and Communications, Maintenance and Operations, the purchase of necessary goods and services, operating grants and transfers as well as additional special expenditures. It should also be noted that salaries for established staff can include staff who work on our capital projects, which then involve expenditure on capital construction and capital purchases.</p> <p>b) The Ministry of Forestry has planned to greatly increase capital expenditure. In 2022-2023 (the period covered by the Annual Report under scrutiny), total capital expenditure was \$4.5m. In 2024-2025, the Ministry has budgeted for \$10.7m of capital expenditure. This is more than a 100% increase from 2022-2023. Yes, plans are in place to increase the capital budget and duplicate the current programs. In terms of priority, the following two major activities/ projects will need to be implemented;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renovation and maintenance of the current facility or workshop Procurement or replacement of the 10years+ wood working machines. <p>The two major activities above are planned for the 2024/2025 FY with training of resource owners (engaged as cottage industries) to be an ongoing activity. After the completion of training engagement, cottage industries will have a one year commercial engagement period before being hived off. During this commercial engagement period, relocation activities will be executed along with relevant ministries and organisations.</p>
3	<p>Page 15 – Contribution to Fiji's Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP)</p> <p>Can the Ministry please clarify on the reasons for the decline in Real GDP contribution?</p>	<p>The contribution of the Ministry to Fiji's GDP is calculated on the log production only and not on the products produced through other secondary processes or value adding. The decline in log production will result in our low contribution to Fiji's GDP. Sawn timber, pine chips and any other product produced through manufacturing is recorded through the manufacturing sector.</p>
4	<p>Page 17 - Export of Wood Products</p> <p>a) Can the Ministry please explain more on table 7 since the figures don't tally?</p> <p>b) Can the Ministry please provide a breakdown of the different products that are exported?</p> <p>c) Page 17 (table 7) and Page 51 (narrative on export) Can the Ministry please clarify which export figures was accounted for?</p> <p>d) Page 17 (table 8) and Page 54 (table 43) Can the Ministry please explain the</p>	<p>a) 'Total Domestic Export' is a trade statistics term referring to all the Commodities grown, produced or manufactured in Fiji, including commodities imported from foreign countries that have been significantly changed or enhanced in value. This excludes commodities which have entered into Fiji which are then re-exported without being significantly changed or enhanced in value.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Wood and articles of wood' then refers to wood related exports. 'Wood in chips or particles' and 'Mahogany' are two sub-types (major contributors) of 'Wood and articles of wood' that the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBOS) provide. For example, this can include pine chips and sawn timber.

No.	Question	Ministry of Forestry's Response														
	difference in the import figures?	<p>b) The following is a percentage breakdown of 2023 exports:</p> <p>Graph: 12:Exports by Commodities (%)</p> <table><thead><tr><th>Commodity</th><th>Percentage (%)</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Pine Chips</td><td>50%</td></tr><tr><td>Sawn timber</td><td>31%</td></tr><tr><td>Slabs</td><td>8%</td></tr><tr><td>Decking</td><td>7%</td></tr><tr><td>Plywood</td><td>1%</td></tr><tr><td>Others</td><td>3%</td></tr></tbody></table> <p>c) The total export values stated in Page 17 and Page 51 of the Annual Report are using two different data sources and timeframes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The export figures provided on Page 51 are for the financial year 2022-2023. This data is sourced from the Ministry's trade division in Nasinu.However, the export figures provided in Page 17 are for the calendar year 2022. This data is sourced from the Fiji Bureau of Statistics.Therefore the difference is as a result of slightly different calendar periods. <p>d) The total import values stated in Page 17 and Page 54 of the Annual Report are using two different data sources and timeframes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The import figures provided on Page 54 are for the financial year 2022-2023. This data is sourced from the Ministry's trade division in Nasinu.However, the import figures provided in Page 17 are for the calendar year 2022. This data is sourced from the Fiji Bureau of Statistics.Therefore the difference is as a result of slightly different calendar periods.	Commodity	Percentage (%)	Pine Chips	50%	Sawn timber	31%	Slabs	8%	Decking	7%	Plywood	1%	Others	3%
Commodity	Percentage (%)															
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Plywood	1%															
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5	<p>Page 19 – Summary of 2022 – 2023 Operational Plan Achievement</p> <p>Can the Ministry please elaborate further on the achievements shown on graph 2 of the Annual Report?</p>	<p>a) The Ministry's Strategic Development Plan defines six key Strategic Priorities which are highlighted in the graph of achievements. When the Ministry formulates its Annual Operational Plan, each Key Performance Indicator (KPI) is linked to a strategic Priority. Based on the performance of each KPI, an assessment can be made on the Ministry's overall progress against its Strategic Priorities.</p> <p>b) Some of the Ministry's key achievements in 2022-2023 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reviewing the Forest Act 1992 continued in the financial year, and a draft submission was made to the SG's office for vetting. Once the amendment to the Act is endorsed, relevant regulations that have been drafted and reviewed will also be finalised. These regulations include the Sawmill Regulation and Preservative Timber Treatment Regulation;The planting of 4.8 million trees and mangroves as part of Fiji's 30 Million Trees in 15 Years (30MT15Y) initiative;The International Climate Initiative (IKI) Forest and Landscape Restoration project in the Malolo and Naviti districts in collaboration with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Vinaka Fiji and Mamanuca Environment Society became fully operational;The development of the Nadera Food Forest site in collaboration with Nasinu Town Council and the Ministry of Agriculture, among others, as the Ministry's first step into urban forestry;The publication of two research pieces on <i>Agathis Macrophylla</i> and selected exotic timber species and their role in grassland restoration in Fiji;														

No.	Question	Ministry of Forestry's Response
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The establishment of a Climate Smart Agriculture demonstration ploy at Korotari Forestry Station, launched during the International Day of Forests on 21st March 2023; The development of the Ministry's nursery stock, now standing at over 10,000 seedlings comprising a wide variety of species, reflecting our commitment to biodiversity; Began consultations to establish a Sandalwood Grower's and Buyers Association to revive the Sandalwood industry in Fiji; Held inaugural carbon markets strategy roadmap consultation workshops in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister's Climate Change Division (CCD) and financially supported by the Australian Government with the assistance of the Carbon Market Institute (CMI); Achievement of an unqualified audit opinion from the Office of the Auditor-General for the fourth consecutive period.
6	<p>Page 20 – Development & Review of legislation, regulations, policies and plans</p> <p>a) Can the Ministry please provide an update to the Committee on how soon the Preservative Treatment Regulation and other relevant regulations be finalised and be implemented as embedded in the final Forest Act 1992.</p> <p>b) The Ministry was part of the consultation on the drafting of the Climate change Act. The Committee noted that the Act has not been enforced by the Ministry, can the Ministry explain the Act has not been enforced till today?</p>	<p>a) Preservative Timber Treatment Regulation and other relevant regulation such as the Sawmill Regulation are already drafted and reviewed. The Forest Bill 2024 is at its final stages and will be tabled in Parliament soon. Once endorsed, relevant regulations already drafted and reviewed will also be finalised.</p> <p>b) The Climate Change Act 2021 is under the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change. The Ministry of Forestry's key role is implementing Part 10 of the CC Act. The Ministry is awaiting the endorsement of the Part 10 Climate Change regulation in order to facilitate carbon trading in Fiji.</p>
7	<p>Page 21 – Table 11 - Forest Cover and Forest Type</p> <p>What does forest type, total area and percent relate to as shown on table 11. Can the Ministry please clarify?</p>	<p>The following explanations are provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest Type: This refers to the type of forest in Fiji, based on land elevation. Cloud Forests are forests in the highest elevations of Fiji, while Lowland Forest is in the lowest elevations of Fiji. Total area: This refers to the total hectares of land covered by each forest type respectively. Percent: Refers to the proportion of each Forest type out of all of Fiji's forested areas. For example, Lowland Forest represents 89.4% of all of Fiji's Forests.
8	<p>Page 22 – GIS & Mapping</p> <p>a) How does the Ministry monitor the mortality of the planted trees? Can the Ministry please elaborate?</p> <p>b) What is the possibility of achieving the Ministry's goal of 30MT15Y which falls due in 2030? Is the Ministry confident of</p>	<p>a) In the previous financial year, a new Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) Guideline was trialled during monitoring assessment. The new MRV is designed to complement the existing Seedling Production Manual. The new Guideline helps inform the National Monitoring & Survival Assessment conducted in the Central, Western and Northern Divisions through the Forest Resource & Assessment & Conservation Division. The monitoring mechanism is effective in correctly tracking survival rates and mortality. It has and will enable the Ministry to better focus its planting and beat up efforts.</p> <p>b) The Ministry is confident of achieving its goal of 30MT15Y. The Ministry has already planted more than 19 million trees in total, including 4.8 million in 2022-2023. The Ministry</p>

No.	Question	Ministry of Forestry's Response
	achieving this target or does the plan need to be extended to meet the 30MT15Y target bearing in mind that we have only achieved 61% in the last 9 (nine) years, leaving alone the mortality rate?	will continue to work diligently towards achieving the target by 2030 and ensuring high survival rate.
9	Page 22 – Harvest Area Report Can the Ministry please elaborate more on the data provided for on Table 12? How does the Ministry monitor its replanting trees in logged areas?	a) The Table provides the hectares of harvested area by quarter, by division. This refers to forested areas that have been harvested for logs and mostly refers to plantation forestry. b) The planting of trees in logged areas is monitored through the standard MRV process, in conjunction with Fiji Pine Ltd and Fiji Hardwood Corporation where their leaseholds are relevant.
10	Page 23 – Table 16 Harvesting Yield by Division Table 16 is the yield that represents the harvest Volume per hectare for different license types within the 3 divisions. Can the Ministry elaborate more on figures shown?	<p>The yield table presents the harvested volume per hectare for different license types in three divisions: Central/Eastern, Northern, and Western. The license types include Free-Issue, Mahogany Woodlot, Native, and Pine Woodlot. The table also provides a grand total of harvested volume per hectare for all license types in each division and for all divisions.</p> <p>In the Central/Eastern Division, there is no yield reported for Free-Issue and Pine Woodlot license types. However, Mahogany Woodlot and Native license types have produced 94.709 and 93.539 volumes per hectare, respectively. In the Northern Division, the Free-Issue and Native license type has yielded the volume of 44.768 and 44.550 per hectare respectively and both are more than the Mahogany Woodlots yield of 26.327. The Pine Woodlot license type has yielded the lowest volume of 10.465 per hectare resulting from 38 licence with only 3,881.428 volume. The Western Division has only reported yield for the Native license type, which has produced 15.373 volumes per hectare and with no volume records in the TRS for the 5 Pine licence.</p> <p>Overall, the yield for all license types are quite high except for pine which is certainly very low. In order to fully and accurately report the yield by Forest type, Operation division needs to correctly review how data is being captured and the timely submission of report and updating of all data.</p>
11	Page 24 - Table 17 Species Harvested in 2022-2023 Can the Ministry please explain whether there was any strategy in place for Vaivai planting?	Before 2023, the Ministry did not have a strategy related to Vaivai. However, due to its current demand in the market, the Ministry's research team is currently propagating Vaivai seeds with the objective of assessing growth dynamics and then establishing plantations.
12	Page 27 – Upgrading of CIS Forest Park a) Does the Ministry have programs for students to visit the Forest Parks and are these parks safe to visit? b) Are there provisions in these parks for camping in nature? c) What is the involvement of landowning units to ensure the continued success of these parks?	a) The Forest Parks team carry out educational programs for students upon request. These include educating them about the forest ecosystems and its biodiversity. These students range from primary to tertiary level students. Before every visit the team assesses the park facilities to ensure they are safe for students' use. b) There are currently no provisions for camping in the parks. This is something that the Ministry is looking at providing in the future in consultation with relevant stakeholders. c) The Ministry engages with landowners by providing employment opportunities in maintaining the park facilities, as tour guides for visitors and selling handicrafts at the forest park bure to tourists.

No.	Question	Ministry of Forestry's Response
13	Page 28 – Table 21: Right Licenses Issued by Divisions a) Can the Ministry explain the inconsistency in the royalty component shown in the table? b) Can the Ministry compare the two tables (table 17 page 24 and table 22 page 28) and explain the inconsistency?	(a) The 2022-2023 inconsistency in the royalty components especially in the Northern Division was mainly due to the license types issued and the types of species to be harvested. Free-Issue license, mahogany woodlot and pine woodlot are not subject to royalty payments. Table 13 on page 23 shows that a total of 76 license issued to all the divisions. Out the 76 license issued, the Northern Division was issued a total of 38 for pine woodlot and 3 for free-issue license. A majority of the total log productions from the Northern division was from pine woodlot which are not subject to royalty payments. (b) Table 17, the Harvested Area Report, is based on active licenses which may be issued at any time in the calendar year. Table 22 captures timber harvests in the calendar year based on cut. This explains why Table 17 is greater than the figures in Table 22.
14	Page 29 – 30 – Low Recovery Rate What are the options or plans within the Ministry, the loggers and the saw millers in improving the recovery percentage in the trees harvested and the logs milled? (Improving recovery efficiency)	The national average for sawmill recovery stands at 47% for the reporting period while the highest sawmill divisional recovery is at 56% for the Central division. Native and Fiji Pine logs are getting smaller so we expect lower recoveries. The bigger the logs the higher the recoveries and secondly, Sawmillers are not accounting for the shorts or fall downs because their main product is sawn timber. Therefore to improve recoveries we will need to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process bigger logs • Account for all the fall downs and shorts One way to account for fall downs and shorts are to add value by producing furniture so shorts can be utilized. Secondly, to reduce the number of sawmills so there is less competition and logs are allowed to grow bigger. Thirdly, full implementation of the diameter limit table so that only logs with diameters above 40cm are felled and processed.
15	Page 31- Graph 5: Total Productions in Financial Years a) The Committee noted the continuous decline in input into timber mills, Can the Ministry explain? b) Chips Production - Can the Ministry also elaborate on the continuous decline of chip production and what is the Ministry plan to increase?	a) The delay in the harvesting licensing process (processing of E.I.A for harvesting areas) and prolonged wet weather are two of the main contributing factors to the decline of log input to sawmills. Processing of harvesting license takes months and also logging is prohibited during wet weather. Sometimes sawmills operate on average for ten (10) to fifteen (15) days per month due to log shortage and inclement weather. For other plantation species (i.e. Pine & Mahogany), this will depend on the operational and harvesting plans or targets for FHCL and FPL. b) The availability of matured pine in Fiji continues to impact the overall production level of pine chips and will continue to do so in the next five years. However, due to large scale planting that the Ministry and stakeholders have been doing collaboratively, the Ministry expects chip production to increase in six years as pine trees mature. Additionally, pine from Maritime regions will support pine chip production.
16	Page 32- Treatment Plant Operations a) What are the measures in place to ensure the timber supplied to the consumers are treated to the optimal level to serve the purpose the timber is being used for? b) What are the measures in place to reprimand timber treatment plant operators that supply poorly treated timber?	a) Timber plant operations quality control is carried out through the analyses of charge sheets and timber samples collected from all treatment plants on a monthly basis. Charge sheets are validated, and the results are recorded. Timber samples are analysed at the laboratory in Nasinu on a "user-pay" basis, and reports are sent to plant operators confirming the results of the analyses. The total number of treated timber samples analysed during the year was 1,693, with 1,247 samples passing the analysis and penetration tests at an overall passing rate of 64%. Those who do not pass the test are given warning letters and the Ministry timber inspectors will review and check the timber treatment process of the operator. Additional measures include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and certification of treatment plant operators on the approved treatment processes. • Awareness through radio talk back shows, advertisement through the local dailies and through the media on placing treated timber orders and checks to conduct upon receiving the treated timbers.

No.	Question	Ministry of Forestry's Response
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine monthly collection and analysis of treated timber samples (random selection by Timber Inspectors) and submission of charge sheets. • Monthly and quarterly monitoring of treatment plants. • Spot checks on branding and on the spot testing undertaken in timber yards, hard-ware etc. • Plant operators conduct treated timber spot checks and brand timber according to the hazard level being treated. <p>b) In accordance with the Forests (Preservative Treatment) Regulation 1992, the Ministry ensures that all license conditions are met before the treatment plant operators are issued with licenses on an annual basis. Additionally, the Ministry performs quarterly inspections on all operators to ensure compliance. There is nothing specific in the current regulation or act to reprimand operators supplying poorly treated timbers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The only measure the Ministry is following is to instruct operators to re-treat timbers (received through complaints) if not already installed or compensate the buyer if already installed. The supplier will bear all the costs of removal, labour etc. and this is reported to the Consumer Council (FCCC) by timber buyers. The FCCC then usually request our services for the analysis of treatment and reports on which they act on. • Continuous breach or sub-standard treatment will result in revocation of treatment plant license and this is the prerogative of the Conservator of Forests from reports received after confirmation of inspections by Timber Inspectors. • It must be emphasized that there is no law that mandates all timber be treated and that the wrong end use of treated timbers can also lead to deterioration.
17	<p>Page 33 – Monitoring, Compliance and Surveillance</p> <p>a) What is being done to the logging contractors who do not meet the compliance level required?</p> <p>b) What is the Ministry doing to enable landowners to fell trees for their lumber use? (In ensuring compliance with EIA and setting up precedence to remove bureaucracies and absurd expenses?)</p> <p>c) What is the Ministry's position in terms of research and monitoring of introduced plantations of high-value trees such as but not limited to sandalwood, agarwood and teak wood?</p>	<p>a) For any forest offenses, the logging contractor would be penalised according to the provisions in the Forest Act 1992. Two instances of illegal logging were uncovered within Central Division during the year. This led to significant fines for the responsible companies. Improvement notices can also be issued to contractors for manageable breaches.</p> <p>b) Under the provisions of the Forest Act 1992, landowners retain customary rights to fell trees on their land for their own use. However, if the trees are for commercial purposes, landowners will need to obtain licenses and follow all procedures.</p> <p>c) The following high value trees are being researched by the Ministry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandalwood: The Ministry is facilitating the establishment of a national Sandalwood Growers and Buyers Association with the aim of creating a forum to consult and inform sandalwood growers and stakeholders. Additionally, the Ministry has updated the National Sandalwood Database. To date, the Ministry has registered more than 500 sandalwood farmers through the Sandalwood Development Project and continues to engage in large scale planting of sandalwood to increase the stock. • Agarwood: The trial Agarwood plot was re-visited and assessed seven years after planting. The average survival rate exceeded 75% for all treatment types. Permanent Sample Plots (PSPs) are established within plantations as part of the Reforestation in Degraded Forest Monitoring Program. Monitoring will include assessment of growth dynamics, pest and disease infestation or resilience, as well as below ground impact in terms of soil microbial activity and nutrient composition and competition. Furthermore, the Ministry have established relationship with Mataqali Nacobicibici, Nasavusavu village, Ra to support agarwood research which includes monitoring of growth to its utilization. • Teak: Teak is one of the species identified for the Ministry's planting programs under the RDF project. Additionally, research has also been conducted on timber properties of Teak in Fiji.

No.	Question	Ministry of Forestry's Response
18	<p>Page 36 –Blue Carbon Projects</p> <p>a) The Committee took note of the blue carbon project mangrove restoration, however, the Committee would like to know whether the Ministry have data for its targets and achievements during this period?</p> <p>b) There were major concerns on the mangrove seedlings project in Navitilevu Bay Ra which is still awaiting the Ministry's input. Can the Ministry explain?</p>	<p>a) As part of the Ministry's contribution to the Blue Carbon initiative, the Ministry planted a total of 158,673 seedlings covering a total area of 11.23 hectares in 2022-2023. This is the achievement for the whole of Fiji.</p> <p>b) In partnership with Conservation International, the Ministry contributes to the Mangrove replanting in Navitilevu bay through the provision of mangrove seedlings and technical support.</p>
19	<p>Page 37 - Seed Collection 2022 - 2023</p> <p>The Committee noted there were 212.08 kg seeds collected and only 24. 001kg was processed, sowed, and germinated. Can the Ministry explain the low utilisation?</p>	<p>The 212.08kg figure provided in the report refers to the fruit weight, inclusive of seeds. Upon drying and processing of these fruits, 24.001kg of dry seeds were acquired and further processed through pre-treatment for sowing and germination. This explains the difference in the figures provided.</p>

Appendix 2

Verbatim Report

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

ANNUAL REPORT

MINISTRY OF FORESTRY 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

SUBMITTEE: Ministry of Forestry

VENUE: Big Committee Room, Parliament

DATE: Wednesday, 19th February, 2025

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST/WEST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS ON WEDNESDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY, 2025 AT 10.47 A.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: **Ministry of Forestry**

In Attendance:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1) Ms. Sanjana Lal | - | Permanent Secretary |
| 2) Mr. Tevita Bulai | - | Acting Conservator of Forests |
| 3) Mr. Maciu Waqa | - | Manager Finance |
| 4) Mr. Linaitasa Ragigia | - | Principal Executive Support Officer |
| 5) Mr. Ruari O'Donoghue | - | Senior Economic Planning Officer |

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, dear viewers, ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to you all and it is a pleasure welcoming you, especially the viewers who are watching this session. I am privileged to chair this fifth submission meeting of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, which is being aired live on Parliament's channel through the *Walesi* platform and livestreamed through Parliament's *Facebook* page.

At the outset, for information purposes, pursuant to Standing Order 111 of Parliament, all Committee meetings are to be open to the public, therefore, this submission is open to the public and media and will also be aired live, as I had earlier mentioned. However, for any sensitive information concerning this submission that cannot be disclosed in public, this can be provided to the Committee either in private or in writing, but do note that this will only be allowed in a very few specific circumstances which includes:

- 1) National security matters;
- 2) Third party confidential information;
- 3) Personnel or human resource matters; and
- 4) Meetings, whereby the Committee deliberates on issues before it and develops its recommendations and reports.

I wish to remind, honourable Members and our invited guests and submittees that all comments and questions to be asked, are to be addressed through the Chair. Also be mindful that only the invited submittees will be allowed to ask questions or give comments to the Committee. This is a Parliamentary meeting, and all information gathered is covered under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act and the Standing Orders of Parliament. Please note that this Committee does not condone libel or slander or any other allegations against any individual that is not present today to defend themselves.

In terms of protocols of this Committee meeting, please be advised that whilst the meeting is in progress, movements within the meeting room will be restricted. There should be minimal usage of mobile phones, whereby answering of phones should be done outside this room, and all mobile phones to be on silent mode.

(Introduction of Committee Members)

With us this morning, we have the representatives from the Ministry of Forestry who have been requested to provide a submission on the Ministry of Forestry 2022-2023 Annual Report. Now, I take this opportunity to invite our submission guests to introduce themselves.

(Introduction of representatives from the Ministry of Forestry)

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Please note that if there are any questions by Members of the Committee, they may interject, or we will wait until the end of the presentation to ask any questions which we have. And with this, please, you may start with your presentation.

MR. R. DONOGHUE.- Thank you very much everyone for the opportunity to address the questions to the Standing Committee for the submission on the questions raised by the Standing Committee on Natural Resources regarding the Ministry of Forestry's Annual Report for 2022 to 2023.

In response, I would like to submit the following presentation containing responses to your questions raised by the Standing Committee.

Without further ado, moving on to the first question regarding our 30 million trees in a 15-year programme. The figure includes NGO funded projects and the total number of trees planted. Mangrove planting by advocacies is also included, as well as fruit tree planting by the Ministry of Forestry and other organisations.

In the previous financial year, a new monitoring, reporting and verification guideline was trialled during the monitoring assessment. The new MRV guidelines are designed to complement the existing Seedling Production Manual, and the new guideline helps inform the National Monitoring and Survival Assessment conducted in the Central, Western and Northern Divisions through our Forest Resource Assessment and Conservation Division. The monitoring mechanism is effective in correctly tracking survival rates and mortality of our seedlings. It has and will enable the Ministry to better focus the planting and beat up efforts.

Furthermore, the National Monitoring and Survival Assessment conducted in the Central, Western and Northern Divisions showed an average survival rate of 45 percent for the National Tree Planting Initiative. We acknowledge that there are challenges that we continue to face associated with activities aimed at reforesting degraded landscapes, particularly in relation to the relatively low survival rates of indigenous tree species that we have been planting. To address this, the Research Division has been tasked to initiate research studies focusing on native species to tackle their low survival rates within the shortest possible time.

Additionally, our Research Division has established permanent sample plots to monitor the growth of each species and their survival to help determine which species to plant at different sites in the future and the actions required to ensure the survival of the planted trees.

Moreover, our teams on the ground are also increasing their focus on beat up operations which involve the planting of new seedlings in areas with lower survival rates.

The Ministry continues to champion that communities take ownership of this tree planting initiative, ensuring better plantation management and improved survival rates, possibly contributing to the reforestation of degraded landscapes.

Addressing the question on rural forest fire management, the Ministry is taking a lead role in developing the Rural Forest Fire Management Strategy that will address losses from fire and disasters. The strategy is expected to be tabled in the next Cabinet meeting.

Question 2 – Budget Allocation and Expenditure

The Ministry's operational budget covers a wide range of SEG particulars, including the salaries of established staff, government wage earners, travel and communications, maintenance and operations, the purchase of necessary goods and services, operating grants and transfers as well as additional special expenditures. It should be noted that salaries for established staff can include staff who work on capital projects, which then involves expenditure on capital construction and capital purchases.

The Ministry of Forestry has planned to greatly increase capital expenditure. In 2022-2023, a period covered by the Annual Report currently under scrutiny, total capital expenditure was \$4.5 million.

In 2024-2025, the Ministry has budgeted for \$10.7 million of capital expenditure. This is a more than 100 percent increase from 2022-2023. Plans are in place to increase the capital budget and duplicate the current programmes. In terms of priority, the following two major activities and projects will be implemented:

- (i) Renovation and maintenance of the current facility or workshops; and
- (ii) Procurement or replacement of the 10-year plus wood working machines.

The two major activities above are planned for the 2024 to 2025 Financial Year with training of resource owners currently engaged as cottage industries to be an ongoing activity. After the completion of training engagement, cottage industries will have a one-year commercial engagement period before being hived off. During this commercial engagement period, relocation activities will be executed along with relevant ministries and organisations.

Question 3 - Ministry's Contribution to Fiji's Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

The contribution of the Ministry to Fiji's Gross Domestic Product is calculated on the log production only and not on the products associated through other secondary processes such as manufacturing or value adding. The decline in log production will result in a low contribution to Fiji's GDP. Sawn timber, pine chips and any other product produced through manufacturing is recorded through the manufacturing literature. This explains the decline in real GDP contribution.

Question 4 - Export of Wood Products

Total domestic export is a trade statistic term referring to all the commodities grown, produced or manufactured in Fiji, including commodities imported from foreign countries that have been significantly changed or enhanced in value while in Fiji. This excludes commodities which have entered into Fiji which

are then re-exported without being significantly changed or enhanced in value while in Fiji. The ones relevant to the Ministry of Forestry are:

- (i) Wood and Articles of Wood, then refers to wood related exports; and
- (ii) Wood in Chips or particles and mahogany are two sub-types which are major contributors of Wood and Articles of Wood that the Fiji Bureau of Statistics provides. For example, this can include pine chips and sawn timber.

We have provided the following breakdown percentage of our 2023 exports. The major contributors are 50 percent from pine chips, 31 percent from sawn timber, 8 percent from slabs and 7 percent from decking.

Moving on to figures reported in the annual report, the total export values stated in the annual report are using two different data sources and timeframes. So in one figure, it is for the Financial Year 2022 to 2023, this data is sourced from the Ministry's trade division in Nasinu. However, the slightly different export figure provided on a different page of the calendar year 2022, and this figure is sourced from the Fiji Bureau of Statistics. This explains the slightly different figures because they come from slightly different calendar periods. This also applies to the slightly different import values provided in the Annual Report. So one import figure is for the Financial Year 2022 to 2023, this is also in the Ministry's Trade Division in Nasinu. And then the slightly different figure provided is for the calendar year 2022, which is also from the Fiji Bureau of Statistics.

Question 5 - Summary of 2022-2023 Operational Plan Achievement

The Ministry's Strategic Development Plan defines six key strategic priorities which are highlighted in the graph of achievements. When the Ministry formulates its annual operational plan, each key performance indicator is linked to a strategic priority. Based on the performance of each KPI, an assessment can then be made on the Ministry's overall progress against its strategic priorities.

We would like to highlight some of the Ministry's key achievements from 2022 to 2023. These include the:

- reviewing of the Forest Act 1992, which continued in the financial year, and a draft submission was made to the Solicitor-General's Office for vetting. Once the amendments to the Act is endorsed, relevant regulations that have been drafted and reviewed will also be finalised. These regulations include the Sawmill Regulation and Preservative Timber Treatment Regulation;
- planting of 4.8 million trees and mangroves as part of Fiji's 30 million trees in 15 years initiative;
- International Climate Initiative Forest and Landscape Restoration Project in the Malolo and Naviti districts, which was done in collaboration with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Vinaka Fiji and the Mamanuca Environment Society became fully operational;
- development of the Nadera Food Forest site in collaboration with the Nasinu Town Council and the Ministry of Agriculture, among others, as the Ministry's first steps into urban forestry;
- publication of two research pieces on *Agathis Macrophylla* and selected exotic timber species and their role in grassland restoration in Fiji;
- establishment of a Climate Smart Agricultural demonstration ploy at Korotari Forestry Station, launched during the International Day of Forests on 21st March 2023;

- development of the Ministry's nursery stock, which now stands at over 10,000 seedlings comprising a wide variety of species, reflecting our commitment to biodiversity;
- Began consultations to establish the Sandalwood Growers and Buyers Association to provide the sandalwood industry in Fiji;
- held the Inaugural Carbon Market Strategy Roadmap Consultation workshops in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister's Climate Change Division and financially supported by the Australian government with the assistance of the Carbon Market Institute;
- achievement of an unqualified audit opinion from the Office of the Auditor-General for the fourth consecutive period.

Question 6 - Development and Review of Legislation, Regulations, Policies and Plans

The Preservative Timber Treatment Regulation and other relevant regulations, such as the Sawmill Regulation are already drafted and reviewed. The Forest Bill 2024, is at its final stages and will be tabled in Parliament soon. Once endorsed, relevant regulations already drafted and reviewed will be finalised.

Climate Change Act 2021 is under the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change. The Ministry of Forestry's key role is implementing Part 10 of the Climate Change Act. The Ministry is awaiting the endorsement of the Part 10 Climate Change Regulation in order to facilitate carbon trading in Fiji.

Question 7 - Forest Cover and Forest type.

The following explanations were provided by the Ministry:

- Forest type refers to the type of forest in Fiji based on land elevation. Cloud Forests are forests in the highest elevation in Fiji, while Lowland Forests are in the lowest elevations in Fiji;
- Total area refers to the total hectares of land covered by each forest type respectively. Percentage refers to the proportion of each forest type out of all of Fiji's forested areas. For example, Lowland Forest represent 89.4 percent of all of Fiji's forested areas.

Question 8 - GIS and Mapping

In the previous financial year, a new Monitoring Reporting and Verification Guideline was trialled during monitoring assessment as we have previously said. The new Guideline is designed to complement the existing Seedling Production Manual and will help inform our National Monitoring and Survival Assessment conducted in our Divisions. We think that the monitoring mechanism is effective in correctly tracking survival rates and mortality. It has and will enable the Ministry to better focus its planting and beat up efforts as we move into the new year.

The Ministry is confident of achieving its goal of 30 million trees in 15 years. So, far the Ministry has already planted more than 19 million trees in total, so we are well over halfway there. We planted 4.8 million trees in 2022 to 2023 alone. The Ministry will continue to work diligently towards achieving its target by 2030 and ensuring a high survival rate of our seedlings. Overall we are very confident that we are on track to meet that target.

Question 9 - Harvest Area Reports

The table provided in the report has hectares of harvested area by quarter, by division. This refers to forested areas that have been harvested for logs and mostly refers to plantation forestry so our pine and mahogany plantations. The planting of trees in logged areas is monitored through our standard MRV process in conjunction with the Fiji Pine Limited and Fiji Hardwood Corporation where their leaseholds are relevant.

Question 10 - Harvesting Yield by Division

The yield table presents the harvested volume per hectare for different licence types in these divisions - Central, Eastern, Northern and Western. The licence types include free-issue, mahogany woodlot, native and pine woodlot. The table also provides a grand total of harvested volume per hectare for all licence types in each division and for all divisions.

In the Central/Eastern Division, there is no yield reported for free-issue and pinewood lot licence types. However, mahogany woodlot and native licence types have produced 94.709 and 93.539 volumes per hectare respectively.

In the Northern Division, free-issue and native license types have yielded a volume of 44.768 and 44.55 per hectare respectively, and both are more than the mahogany woodlot's yield of 26.327. The pine woodlot license types have yielded the lowest volume of 10.465 per hectare, resulting from 38 licenses with only 3.881 volume.

The Western Division has reported yield for the native licence type which has produced 15.373 volumes per hectare and with no volume records in the TRS for the pine licences.

Overall, the yield for all licence types are quite high except for pine which is certainly quite low. In order to fully and accurately report the yield by forest type, operation division will correctly review how data is being captured and ensure the timely submissions of report and updating of all data.

Question 11 - Species Harvested in 2022-2023

This is a question specifically related to any strategy in place for the *vaivai* planting. So, before 2023 the Ministry did not have a strategy related to *vaivai*. However, due to its current demand in the market, the Ministry's research team is currently propagating *vaivai* seeds with the objective of assessing growth dynamics and then establishing plantations potentially.

Question 12 - Upgrading of Colo-i-Suva Forest Park

The Forest Parks team do carry out educational programmes for students upon request. These include educating them about forest ecosystems and its biodiversity. These students range from primary to tertiary level students. Before every visit, the team assesses the park facilities to ensure that they are safe for students' use.

There are currently no provisions for camping in the parks, with the exception of Nadarivatu Forest Park which was only opened last Friday. We hope that we can include camping going forward there. But it is something that the Ministry will be looking at, featuring consultation with relevant stakeholders and landowners.

The Ministry currently engages with landowners for providing employment opportunities and maintaining the park facilities, as tour guides for visitors and selling handicrafts at the forest park bure to tourists.

Question 13 - Right Licences Issued by Divisions

There is a slight inconsistency in the Royalty Component Table and this inconsistency in the table especially in the Northern Division, is mainly due to the license type issued and the type of species to be harvested.

Free-Issue license, mahogany woodlot and pine woodlot are not subject to royalty payments. Table 13 on Page 23 of the Annual Report shows that a total of 76 licenses were issued to all the Divisions. Out of the 76 licenses issued, the Northern Division was issued a total of 38 for pine woodlot and 3 for free-issue licence. A majority of the total log productions from the Northern Division was from pine woodlot, which are not subject to royalty payments.

Table 17, the Harvested Area Report, is based on active licences which may be issued at any time in the calendar year.

Table 22, captures timber harvesters in the calendar year based on cut. This explains why Table 17 is greater than the figures in Table 22.

Question 14 - Low Recovery Rates

The national average of sawmill recovery currently stands at 47 percent for the reporting period while the highest sawmill division recovery is at 56 percent for the Central Division. Native and Fiji Pine logs are getting smaller so we expect its lower recovery rates. The bigger the logs, the higher the recoveries.

And secondly, sawmillers are not currently accounting for the short fall downs because their main product is sawn timber. Therefore, to improve recovery rates, we will need to:

- Process bigger logs; and
- Account for all the fall downs and shorts.

One way to account for fall downs and shorts are to add value by producing furniture so shorts can be utilised. Secondly, to reduce the number of sawmills so there is less competition and logs are allowed to grow bigger which will then help to improve the recovery rate. Thirdly, full implementation of the diameter limit table so that only logs with diameters above 40 centimetres are felled and processed and the bigger logs will be felled and processed.

Question 15 - Total Productions in Financial Years

The delay in the harvesting licence process, including the processing of the Environment Impact Assessment for harvesting areas, and prolonged wet weather are two of the main contributing factors for the decline of logging input to sawmills. Processing of harvesting licence takes months and also logging is prohibited during wet weather. Sometimes sawmills operate on average for 10 to 15 days per month due to log shortage and inclement weather. For other plantation species, that is, pine and mahogany, this will depend

on the operational and harvesting plans or targets for Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited and Fiji Pine Limited.

The availability of matured pine in Fiji continues to impact the overall production level of pine chips and will continue to do so over the next five years. However, due to large scale planting that the Ministry and stakeholders have been engaged in collaboratively, the Ministry expects pine chip production to increase in six years as matured pine trees are ready. Additionally, pine from our maritime regions through our maritime pine scheme will support pine chip production.

Question 16 - Treatment Plant Operations

Timber Plant Operations Quality Control is carried out through the analyses of charge sheets and timber samples collected from all treatment plants on a monthly basis. Charge sheets are validated and the results are recorded. Timber samples are analysed at the laboratory in Nasinu on a user-pay basis and reports are sent to plant operators confirming the results of the analyses. The total number of treated timber samples analysed during the year was 1,693 with 1,247 samples passing the analysis and penetration tests. This gives an overall passing rate of 64 percent. Those who do not pass the test are given warning letters and the Ministry timber inspectors will review and check the timber treatment process of the operator. Additional measures include the following:

- Training and certification of treatment plant operators on the approved treatment process;
- Awareness through radio talk back shows, advertisement through the local dailies and through the media on placing treated timber orders and checks to conduct upon receiving the treated timbers;
- Routine monthly collection and analysis of treated timber samples (random selection by Timber Inspectors) and submission of charge sheets;
- Monthly and quarterly monitoring of treatment plants;
- Spot checks on branding and on the spot testing undertaken in timber yards, hardwares, et cetera; and
- Plant operators conduct treated timber spot checks and brand timber according to the hazard level being treated.

In accordance with the Forest (Preservative Treatment) Regulations 1992, the Ministry ensures that all license conditions are met before the treatment plant operators are issued with licenses on an annual basis. Additionally, the Ministry performs quarterly inspections on all operators to ensure compliance. However, there is nothing specific in the current regulation or Act to reprimand operators supplying poorly treated timbers.

The only measure the Ministry is currently following is to instruct operators to re-treat timbers (received through complaints) if not already installed or compensate the buyer if already installed. The supplier will bear all the costs of removal, labour, et cetera, and this is reported to the Consumer Council by timber buyers. The Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission (FCCC) will then usually request our services for the analysis of treatment and reports on which they act on.

Continuous breach or sub-standard treatment will result in the revocation of treatment plant licenses and this is the prerogative of the Conservator of Forests from reports received after confirmation of inspections by Timber Inspectors.

It must be emphasised that there is no law that mandates that all timber must be treated and that the

wrong end use of treated timbers can also lead to deterioration.

Question 17 - Monitoring, Compliance and Surveillance

For any forest offenses, the logging contractor would be penalised according to the provisions in the Forest Act 1992. Two instances of illegal logging were uncovered within Central Division during the year. This led to significant fines for the responsible companies. Improvement notices can also be issued to contractors for manageable breaches.

Under the provisions of the Forest Act 1992, landowners retain customary rights to fell trees on their land for their own use. However, if the trees are for commercial purposes, landowners will need to obtain licences and follow all procedures.

The following high values trees are being researched by the Ministry:

- Sandalwood

The Ministry is facilitating the establishment of a national Sandalwood Growers and Buyers Association with the aim of creating a forum to consult and inform sandalwood growers and stakeholders.

Additionally, the Ministry has updated the National Sandalwood Database. To date, the Ministry has registered more than 500 sandalwood farmers through the Sandalwood Development Project and continues to engage in large scale planting of sandalwood to increase the stock.

- Agarwood

The trial Agarwood plot was re-visited and assessed seven years after planting. The average survival rate exceeded 75 percent for all treatment types. Permanent Sample Plots (PSPs) are established within plantations as part of the Reforestation in Degraded Forest Monitoring Programme. Monitoring will include assessment of growth dynamics, pest and disease infestation or resilience, as well as below ground impact in terms of soil microbial activity and nutrient composition and competition. Furthermore, the Ministry have established relationship with Mataqali Nacobicibici, Nasavusavu Village, Ra to support agarwood research which includes monitoring of growth to its utilisation.

- Teak

Teak is one of the species identified for the Ministry's Planting Programmes under the RDF project. Additionally, research has also been conducted on timber properties of Teak in Fiji.

Question 18 - Blue Carbon Projects

As part of the Ministry's contribution to the Blue Carbon initiative, the Ministry planted a total of 158,673 seedlings covering a total area of 11.23 hectares in 2022-2023. This is the achievement for the whole of Fiji.

In partnership with Conservation International, the Ministry contributes to the mangrove replanting in Navitilevu Bay through the provision of mangrove seedlings and technical support.

Question 19 - Seed Collection 2022-2023

The discrepancy in the figure provided is because the 212.08 kilogrammes figure provided in the report refers to the fruit weight, inclusive of seeds. Upon drying and processing of these fruits, 24.001 kilogrammes of dry seeds were acquired and further processed through pre-treatment for sowing and germination. This explains the difference in the figures provided.

That concludes the questions based on the submission. Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond and I handover back to the honourable Deputy Chairman.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you for the submission and the presentation. Quite a lot of information for us to digest. Now we will start with the question session. To start things off, in the budget allocation and expenditure section, you mentioned that a major activity planned for 2024-2025 is the training of resource owners engaged in the cottage industry. The Committee would like to know what are all the activities that are involved in the cottage industry? What are the things that you are providing the resource owners or LOUs in terms of training?

MS. S. LAL.- Mr. Deputy Chairman, through you, I will let the Acting Conservator of Forest provide clarification on that question. We have cottage industries at the Nasinu Forestry Training Centre and we have

been assisting them for the past 10 years and the number has increased. I will let the Conservator of Forest explain in detail to the Committee Members.

MR. T. BULAI.- Mr. Deputy Chairman, if I may through you, the cottage industry is part of the utilization of waste wood project. To make it basically it aims at the mahogany resource owners, the 14 stations that are currently managed by the Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited. The Ministry is basically targeting the waste or wood residues that are left in the forest after a logging operation for this mahogany plantation. The programme for the cottage industry is, they go through a six months training period; go through all the wood processing aspects from sawmilling, drying, timber treatment and also timber machine. And then they move on to our Timber Industry Training Centre (TITC) to be trained in furniture making. Right now we have four community cottages. One is already being registered as a co-operative while we are working on the other three. So, basically after that six months training, then they stay with us for a period of one year where we train them and continue to train them and connect them to the market. Right now we have established a major market with Courts Fiji Limited where they supply beds and other small furniture. We are actually building on that and the aim now is to try and get them registered as a cooperative and also get branded as a Fijian made brand.

The plan is, after one year, they should be ready to be hived off to work on their own. We have subsidies with a total of \$200,000 which can help them buy small portable machines (furniture making machinery) where they can start off with. The only issue that we have now is, we do not have funding in place to establish their workshop. That is where we are stuck at the moment. But if we recall, I think earlier this year or late last year, one of them was hived off from the Ministry, the Kabara Cottage. Now they are based in one of the old Ministry of Youth workshops in Valelevu. I think they are currently renting that workshop at the moment. So to us, that is an achievement for the Ministry and we are working with other ministries, especially the Ministry for Rural trying to get them to assist us in terms of funding to assist in terms of the construction of workshops for the three remaining community cottage industries that we currently have in the Ministry at the moment.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Now I will open the floor to the Committee Members.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- *Vinaka*, through you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I have a few questions to ask this morning. First of all, PS, reading through your report before putting our questions together, what I have seen in the report is the focus of the Ministry, industry levels and the output of industries and the in-house programme that were initiated through the Ministry. My question is, what about the 1.1 million hectares of land out there? What is the programme? What is the plan? Can we do a budget? Can we prepare a budget for the 1.1 million to assist those landowners out there with replanting? From your report, the woodlots are depleting; sawn timbers are depleting. How do we go about this - 1.1 million hectares of land out there?

MS. S. LAL.- Mr. Deputy Chairman, through you, I just wish to explain the question that honourable Ravu has asked the team. This issue on the planting of trees, we have always had a challenge where it is the prerogative of the landowners. Mostly, the landowners are interested in short-term crops. A lot of the areas that have been cleared are normally used for *kava* plantations, dalo or crops crops that are on short-term, the return on investments is faster. We have done a lot of awareness on integrated farming and we are working with agriculture as well. There is a project in the pipeline which is the GCF project. It is a project for over eight years and it is about US\$31 million. We will be working with the Ministry for Agriculture to assist landowners to do integrated farming. So, they will continue with their *kava* plantations. We agree that there is a lot of land area in Fiji. Grasslands, as you know, from our 30 million trees, the productivity of native

plants or native trees growing on grasslands is quite low. Pine and mahogany thrive. Their survival percentage is 70 percent to 80 percent. Native timbers are slower. We have high mortality. Some are not growing well in grasslands. However, we take your point, Sir, and we will actually try and strategize better in the next budget year on how we can aggressively address that issue.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Thank you, Madam PS. Through you, Deputy Chairman, I have a supplementary question for Question 1. Thank you for the presentation. You never mentioned what type of fruit trees, just a broad base. Whilst targeting the focus to achieve planting 30 million trees within the period of 15 years, did the Ministry include fruit trees such as lime, mangoes, coconut, guavas, et cetera? These fruit trees can establish a million dollar industry if we work in collaboration with the Ministry for Agriculture to prepare a budget because this is a big industry. When you see a coconut tree, you see an industry. When you see a breadfruit tree, you see an industry of itself. Do you have a plan in place to work in collaboration with the Ministry for Agriculture?

MS. S. LAL.- Deputy Chairman, through you, I just wish to respond to that question. Thank you, Sir, for asking that question again. I recall very well that this idea was born when honourable Ravu was our Minister. He actually made us think in that direction as well. Since his terms with us, we have started working closely with the Ministry for Agriculture to develop these integrated cropping systems. I absolutely agree that forest on their own will have returns but long term, but integrated farming is the approach that the Ministry needs to take. We agree that we need to work closer with Ministry for Agriculture. We need to identify pilot sites that we can actually show large scale, commercial level, the idea that was initially born from our former Minister Ravu was to have this integrated farming in place. In some communities they have started it, but we wish to see it as a commercial operation, a big industry. I agree, guavas are quite expensive in the market and it grows well with sandalwood, it is a good host for sandalwood. So integrated cropping is the way forward for the future. Absolutely agree, Sir.

HON. K.V. RAVU. Deputy Chairman, my last question. In regards to the budget allocation utilization, what I have seen in the Report that you have \$10 million for operations and \$5 million for capital projects. I am sorry to mention this, I spoke with the PO at that time to increase the budget to \$100 million and your budget now should be a \$300 million budget. Agriculture, fisheries and forestry should be exceeding \$300 million budget. The natural resources budget should be in the range of \$300 million to \$500 million. Your utilization rate is low, and \$10 million from the last previous year to \$10 million operational budget and \$5 million, I think that is matching. The more budget we give, the more return on investments we want. That means we give you \$10 million, we want \$30 million back to the government.

MS. S. LAL.- Deputy Chairman, through you, Sir, comments are noted.

HON. V. NATH.- Deputy Chairman, through you, a supplementary questions to honourable Ravu's question. Thank you, PS, for your comprehensive presentation. You just mentioned that the survival level of native trees is very low. Would you be able to elaborate more on that? Is it the pH of the soil or what is the reason why the survival level is very low?

MS. S. LAL.- Deputy Chairman, through you, actually based on science, just 100 percent science, if you see the forestry started in the 1930s and that time under the British government we were still planting native trees and the survival rates were still low. So, what we have found out is that where you plant it outside their natural range, survival is very low. As you know the Ministry does not use fertilizer (any type of fertilizer) to add into the soil to enrich it. We believe that if you plant trees that will produce those fertilizers

that are required, that would be a better way nitrogen fixing trees. So, grasslands, I guess mostly because they are exposed and if you look in a natural forest, you will see that the wildlings are thriving under the bigger trees, whereas on bare land, it is exposed to extremes. And you know that in Fiji recently there has been a lot of rainy weather. The difference between the past and now is that the volumes of water has increased. That is why there is more impact on the soil, more soil erosion because there is more volumes actually falling down onto bare land. That also affects the survival.

The other thing is grassland fires. Grassland fires actually wipes out all our seedlings that we have planted. So it is a combination. The site is not suitable to that particular species. Some species will survive on bare land, on grassland and some probably not. We have started assessing the trees that are best suited for grasslands, so we only invest in those seedlings to grow on grassland whereas those that thrive well under the forestry, we just keep managing them, do enrichment planting so that they continue to take up the space that is supposed to be forest land. We are having a research in place trying to determine what are the causes of high mortality and how do we address that issue.

HON. V. NATH.- Deputy Chairman, a supplementary question, through you, I believe the 30 million trees in 15 years is also outsourced to the contractors. Like you just mentioned, the mortality rate is high, do you have any monitoring plans which you just mentioned, when you send your team to monitor after plantation, like which environment is most suitable for these native trees. If it is planted in those areas, have you ever checked with the type of soil and tried to monitor on how the plantation can be improved?

MS. S. LAL.- Yes, we have been doing that. We have been doing soil tests and we are doing that with the Ministry for Agriculture as they have the facility. We have tried doing some soil tests for the last three years for those areas.

HON. J.R. VOCEA.- Deputy Chairman, through you, there is so much shared about carbon trading in the Annual Report. Just my interest having served in the Northern Division, I know that there was a project in Drawa that looks after carbon trading.

My question, is the Ministry highly recommending or supporting these carbon trading initiatives and whether there are sufficient economic returns to the resource owners and the Government as well?

MR. T. BULAI.- Deputy Chairman, regarding carbon trading, just to let the Committee Members be aware that the Ministry of Forestry fully supports the Carbon Trading Initiative. currently, as you are all aware, we have completed the REDD+ Programme which is the readiness phase. And now we are into the Emission Reduction Programme, the agreement was signed in 2021. That programme is where we are at the moment. We are trying to progress work under that programme. As you can see, in one of the questions we mentioned about Part 10 under the Climate Change Act which is yet to be implemented, which is currently shelved by the Ministry of Environment. That is a crucial provision for us. The provision regarding the trading of carbon is covered under Part 10 of the Climate Change Act. We have not stopped there. We have written to the Solicitor-General's Office. We have offered other alternatives so that we can go ahead with this carbon trading. We have proposed the use of the lease title as a legal document where we can go ahead with the trading of carbon rather than waiting for Part 10 of the Climate Change Act. Right now as we speak, we are still waiting for a legal decision on that from the Solicitor-General's Office. We have received verbal confirmation but yet to receive a formal confirmation in that regard. So, that is where we are at the moment but now we are working very closely with Fiji Pine Limited and Fiji Hardwood Corporation. Since, they already have their lease land, we are working closely with them. We have also completed the assessment of

their emission reduction units which has already been done and we have already written to them formally inviting them to come in and be part of this programme. As we speak, we are still waiting for their formal confirmation to the Permanent Secretary so that we can go ahead with that process.

MS. S. LAL.- Deputy Chairman, through you, if I may just add to the same question, the Drawa Live and Learn, that is also a carbon market mechanism which is a voluntary market. The one that the Ministry is doing under REDD+ is a compliance market. There are a lot of legal issues that need to be addressed before we are able to trade carbon.

Voluntary markets have different criteria and compliance market have additional things that we need to put in place like a registry. The whole nation can see the transparency and accountability in how much has been traded and the benefits that go back to the communities. So, that is the difference and we should be able to get something rolling out this year for sure.

HON. I. TUIWAILEVU.- Madam PS, my concern is the presence of infested timber in the market. Is there a way in the Ministry where they closely monitor the treatment of timber before they go out to the market?

MS. S. LAL.- Deputy Chairman, through you, I will just generally answer that question and specifically will request the Conservator to address that question because he has been working closely with the industry in that area.

Sir, just to answer that question, recently Ministry of Works has also addressed and directed a question to the Ministry of Forestry where if all timber that comes to the market are treated against termites? But the issue here is that we will only test the timbers that are treated. All the sawmillers do not have treatment plants. They can also sell their timber green and it is up to the contractor who buys them to have it treated. But if it is treated then we have a grading rule. We are able to see hazard levels that they are treated too.

Under the Preservative Treatment Regulations, it is clearly stated the requirements of treated timbers. But the question is on whether you treat it or you do not treat it. The law does not make it mandatory that all trees that are harvested have to be treated. Perhaps I can ask the Conservator of Forests to elaborate more on your question.

MR. T. BULAI.- Deputy Chairman, if I may, through you, just to add on to PS's response. For the information of the Committee Members, the Ministry of Forestry only regulates the timber plant operators. We do not regulate the timber retailers. It is only the timber plant operators. That is why we conduct quarterly monitoring. Every quarter we undertake monitoring of this Timber Treatment Plant where we collect timber samples and its sent to our laboratory in Nasinu for analysis and then we test the penetration of chemicals through that analysis to confirm the hazard level where those timbers are being treated on.

However, in terms of retailers, we have gone out of our way. We try and work closely with them, advising them on the different levels of timber and its particular end-users. We advise them, we send them posters and also pamphlets. I believe the onus is on them to educate the consumers. We try our best to be there at times to assist. Also, what we have realized, to be honest with the Committee Members, is that we still have that culture of people trying to negotiate the cheap product culture. When it comes to timber, you cannot compromise. You need to look at where you are going to use and you have to make sure that that level of chemical is there for that particular end-use. So that is what we have realized despite our consistent effort,

working very closely with retailers, we tend to realize that people tend to just go according to what they have in their budget. As mentioned by, Madam PS, that there are some timbers which we can use as untreated. Not all timbers are supposed to be treated. It depends on where it is going to be used.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Just relating to that question, this is a particular area which is of great concern to us - the influx of termite infections. Do you not think that all timbers that are used in the structure should be treated so that at least the investment of that person is protected for said number of years?

Do you not think that the answer is on the timber sellers that they provide the best possible timber to the consumers? If you give them an option of untreated timber, it is natural that people will try and save cost and go for untreated timber but later on it will cost them more. But if you take that option away, apart from the hardwood which normally does not get treated, all other timber should be treated to maintain the structural integrity of the building. Do you not think providing that option to the people would be a better solution and ensuring that these timbers are treated and then only made available to the consumers?

MR. T. BULAI.- Deputy Chairman, I totally agree with what you have mentioned considering the impact of termite infestation that we are currently experiencing at the moment. The Ministry is actually looking at two things at the moment. When it comes to treatment, we know that treatment of timber is a solution to protect timber from termite infestation. We have to make sure that it is treated to the right hazard level. For example, if it is H3, it should only be used for internal use not for inground content. If it is going to be used in the ground content, then you have to buy treated timber at H5, which is for post-housing piles and also for EFL posts.

The other option that we are now looking at is the design of the house that we are going to construct. That is an area that we are also considering the need to look at; to design our homes in such a way that it is protected from termites. Maybe we will need to raise the floors of our house, especially for damp areas or areas that are well known where termites are identified to be available. That is something that we are looking at. But, right now, I think we will need to explore how we can regulate that so that it is a must for people to use only treated timber.

In terms of cost, one of the major costs now is the chemical. We were discussing if there can be some subsidy in place to subsidize the cost of chemicals to the industry, maybe something that the Government can consider to assist in that regard.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Just another comment. The pine posts that are used in farming areas especially in the livestock sector, there have been some complaints from the farmers that the quality of the posts supplied to them is that they are posts not treated properly. Within a few years time, the posts falls down and their whole investment, the investment is not only in the cost of the posts, the investment is labour, the investment is in the barbed wire and other fencing materials that goes into it. Then if the fence fails then the crops are damaged, and livestock are lost. All these materialized due to untreated or poorly treated posts that are supplied to the farmers in the agriculture sector. What can the Ministry do to ensure that these suppliers who supply posts to the livestock sector have the post properly treated and then supplied. I know the Ministry has mentioned that they can go to FCCC and Consumer Council but that is a little bit too late. What preventative measures can the Ministry take to ensure that these suppliers of posts in the livestock sector are adhering to the right treatment method and the right treatment procedure to ensure that the investment of farmers are upheld?

MR. T. BULAI.- Deputy Chairman, just to respond to your supplementary question. Like I mentioned, we are trying very hard to strengthen our monitoring and surveillance by doing quarterly monitoring and collection of samples.

On the same note we are also undertaking awareness to the general public. We are also doing Radio Talk Back Shows where we are informing the public that when they buy timber or post, we are here to assist them. They can come to us and we can check the treatment of the posts and also the timber before purchase. That is something we do free of charge because we come with two types of chemicals and do spot tests on the site. We cut the end of the post and do spot test to confirm the treatment whether it has been treated or not. That is something that we are doing at the moment.

We are also working closely with the companies that are the major suppliers of posts and poles. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture is also one of the major buyers assisting the farmers so we are also working closely with them. Before the Ministry of Agriculture purchases posts, they always come to us asking for our Timber Inspectors to check the treatment of their posts.

In regards to complaints, you mentioned rightly because there are other investments involved in those kinds of projects. However, in all the cases that we have dealt with so far with the involvement of FCCC, we have been successful in getting the companies to replace all the timber that are not treated well and also the posts. But like you said, other costs like installation costs, et cetera, that is something that are being negotiated between FCCC and the complainant. But, on our part, we have managed to get that replaced in almost all of the cases that we have dealt with.

HON. V. NATH.- Deputy Chairman, a supplementary question. Though this is not in the report but it is a very valid topic which you have just mentioned. The National Building Code for Fiji (NBCF), due to Category 5 Tropical Cyclones, the minor structures are used by timbers where you can use either H7 or H11. Did you do any submission to NBCF?

MR. T. BULAI.- Sir, with regards to NBCF, our submission was solely on the species and also the treatment. The treatment is on H2 to H6 but for engineering purposes, we are not commenting on those because the grading rules that we currently use is on visual grading rule. So when it comes to engineering, they use machine stress-grading rules. It is a totally different field from us. We are just inputting on treatment and also the species that we recommend for those particular end-users.

HON. V. NATH.- I am sorry, Deputy Chairman, I just thought of asking this question because I know viewers are watching this live, so I thought through your Ministry, we can educate the people in Fiji so that whenever they build houses, they can use the treated timber. As you mentioned, H7 should be used when they come into contact with soil. And when you go to rafters and purlins, it has to be a treated timber which, I believe, you just mentioned. Sir, H7 and above that is H11 which people can use. That is the whole purpose of my question, Deputy Chair.

HON. J.R. VOCEA.- The question is perhaps on TMA accounts. We heard from the Permanent Secretary for Finance last week during our deliberation with the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that all TMA accounts are roped in. Now with some of the works that you are doing in the Ministry, with some of the products that you are doing out of this forestry proceeds with the TMA account being closed, are you are still carrying on with selling of those products that you used to do before?

MS. S. LAL.- Deputy Chairman, through you, what we have done now is just passed that role to the cottage industries. We train them so that they can take over that function that the Ministry used to produce its own furniture and sell them and have a revolving fund. That is the purpose of the cottage industries so that they become commercial.

HON. V. NATH.- PS, I congratulate your team for forming what you call, you have said you have registered more than 500 sandalwood farmers. These are the high-value trees which you have just mentioned in your presentation. When you move around Fiji, along the King's Road or in the maritime islands, you will see a lot of sandalwood trees being planted. Would you want to elaborate more on that so that people choose to plant these high-value trees, they use the right species, not the hybrid one which I believe is not of a high value. Which normal species you would recommend and what would be your suggestion to the people? I know there are places which you have already allocated for planting sandalwood, but for our villages, for our people who do not have much land, what advice would you give them?

MS. S. LAL.- Deputy Chairman, through you, I just wish to respond to that question. Sandalwood is the third largest commodity, that is from the Ministry. Pine and mahogany were done first and we decided to start developing sandalwood once we had done about 10 years of research. There is a lot of work done on sandalwood. There are publications that are out there in *English* and in *iTaukei* language for all communities to use on how they can raise sandalwood. Over the past two decades, we have done large-scale awareness on sandalwood as well as assisting farmers, establishing nurseries and buying from those nurseries. You mentioned the species to be used, actually it is known to be the Bua and Ra areas. These are the original sandalwood areas. So, the *Yasi dina* or *yasi ni Viti* or *santalum yasi* are the Fijian sandalwood, and grows well in dry areas. The other one that we are promoting is *santalum album* which is *yasi ni Idia* that was brought in through Lakeba from India, that grows well in wetter areas, whereas the hybrid between those two actually grows faster and it grows in other areas. It is well suited to dry and wet areas. We have a lot of sandalwood data with us but the planters do not want to release. We do not put up those areas on our GPS maps because a lot of thefts are occurring. There is a large scale sandalwood and I am sure that in the next seven to eight years, that will be a booming industry.

We have established the Sandalwood Farmers Association. It all set up. When the sandalwood is mature, we have the strategy and the regulation in place to be able to sell that instead of having middlemen. We should be able to either add value by extracting oil and then looking for markets rather than selling through a third party, so there will higher returns on landowners. It is non-destructive and good for the environment. You do not need big machines to harvest it and it grows well on farms. It grows well with *moli*, *guava* and a lot of other crop species. I think for integrated farming that is one of the species that we would recommend all landowners, farmers to go into, even sugarcane farmers for their medium term crop. So trees are large term, sandalwood is sort of a medium and then you have the crops on short term.

As mentioned by honourable Ravu, integrated farming is actually the best approach to go and do both agriculture and forestry. It will also be good for livelihoods, food security, as well as long-term investment. And also it will protect our soils and we can also do carbon trading. So there is a lot of plus in having integrated farming. There are a lot of sandalwood around the corridors. There is a lot inside as well, but a lot of people have planted it.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- I have just got two parting issues that I need to discuss. One is the survival rate, as you have said 46 percent. So, your 30 million trees in 15 years, by the end of the project,

am I correct in assuming that we will only have less than 15 million trees left of the 30 million trees that you have planted? Am I correct in assuming it or less than 15 million trees at the survival rate of 46 percent?

MS. S. LAL.- Deputy Chairman, currently we have planted 63 percent of the 30 million within five years. So, 63 percent of our target has been undertaken in five years and in that five years, there were a lot of lessons learnt. What we are doing is, we are building on that lesson. We are trying to invest more into pine and mahogany plantations as our future timber sources. The Ministry is going to be investing like subsidizing Fiji Hardwood and Fiji Pine Limited in their replanting effort because the pine and mahogany survival rates is quite high, 70 percent to 80 percent.

On the native species, our strategy is to do more enrichment planting within forest areas, and then the integrated farming with the fruit trees. There are some strategies that we will be discussing as well this Thursday and Friday in a two-day workshop with our staff on what would be the best way to tackle these mortality issues, as well as what Fiji needs. Fiji needs a lot of timber going into the future. The price of timber is quite high. We still need to keep investing into pine and mahogany but for biodiversity for conservation purposes, we will still do native plantations as well as sandalwood and fruit trees. Like I said, five years lessons learnt and we will try to do better in the next five years.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. The last one is when the Annual Reports are done, does someone read through it to ensure that it is well presented and everything is correct before it is published because your annual report financials is in a mess. The odd number pages are missing in the finance, only the even numbers are there and there are a few typos within the Report that needs to be rectified. The Committee's recommendation is, please get someone to proofread it before it is published because that is not only circulated within the Ministry but outside the Ministry too.

MS. S. LAL.- Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Your comments are noted and we will try and improve in the next financial report that we will be presenting.

HON. I. TUIWAILEVU.- Deputy Chairman, my last my question, how does the Ministry measure and report its contribution to GDP and what specific data and metrics are used to demonstrate this impact?

MR. R. DONOGHUE.- Deputy Chairman, the figures provided in the annual report come from the Fiji Bureau of Statistics who are responsible for calculating our contribution to Fiji's GDP. In terms of our direct contribution, they are just calculated based on the forestry and logging industry, but we feel that does not quite capture the full scope of forestry's contribution to Fiji's GDP because it also goes beyond just logging. It also includes some manufacturing industries and other value-added.

On that basis, on Table 6, Page 16, we provide a list of different industries by economic activity and the size of their contribution to GDP and percentage, but it is Fiji Bureau of Statistics who calculates it. This year, we will currently be going through rebasing process with the Fiji Bureau of Statistics to better capture forestry's contribution to GDP.

HON. V. NATH.- PS, you mentioned the logging of pine trees and mahogany. Pine trees are well managed, the wastage is minimum. However, in terms of mahogany, if you visit Nukurua, you will see a lot of wastage there. Is the team monitoring?

MS. S. LAL.- Deputy Chairman, through you, as you know that the honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forestry is now the Chairman of the Mahogany Industry Council. The mahogany legislation is being reviewed. The Fiji Forest Act was not enforced in the mahogany plantations because of the disapplication of the Act on the mahogany plantations. So we are trying to correct that so that we have the powers to be able to inspect mahogany plantations and the operations so that these sort of issues do not arise. Currently the legislation is under review and we hope that the amendment that was done to the Forest Act which says that this Act does not apply to any mahogany lease land, once we remove that clause from the Forest Act, then we can legally go and enforce the Forest Act into those mahogany plantations. It should all happen this year after being tabled in Parliament.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, honourable Members. Team from the Ministry for Forestry, any final comments before we conclude?

MS. S. LAL.- Deputy Chairman, through you, and on behalf of the team from the Ministry of Forestry, I just want to take this opportunity to thank you as well as the Members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. Having these interactions gives us a different perspective on the work that we do and we appreciate it. We appreciate the questions and any deliberations or suggestions that have been raised or recommended. We will try and improve on the areas that has been raised as well as correct the reports moving on.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- I wish to sincerely thank you all for availing yourselves for this submission meeting today. We thank you for your time and hope that you will avail yourselves if the Committee has any further queries on the matter. Thank you all for your participation. You have a wonderful day, *vinaka vakalevu*.

The Committee adjourned at 12.07 p.m.

Appendix 3

Research Papers



Annual Report Summary – Standing Committee on Natural Resources

Ministry of Forestry 2022-2023 Annual Report

1.0 Introduction

This brief is provided to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources (“SC-NR” or “Committee”) as requested through its Secretariat. This comparative analysis is a summary of some of the key issues in the Ministry’s Annual Reports (“AR”) for the financial year 2022-2023. The summary is designed to assist Members of Committee undertake their analysis of the Ministry’s performance as discussed in the Annual Report. The narrative provided here is only intended to assist the Committee with its appraisal of the reports and does not aim to provide in-depth oversight on the Ministry’s performance.

2.0 Review of the Ministry of Forestry 2022-2023 Annual Report

Activities	Ministry of Forestry 2022-2023 AR ¹ Summary
Vision	Sustainable Forests, Our Future
Mission	To be a leader in sustainable forestry
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <u>Responsible</u> - We will discharge our duties with accountability.○ <u>Resolute</u> - We will discharge our duties with determination and be firm and fair in our decisions.○ <u>Respectful</u> - We will be sensitive to individual needs and the diversity of views.○ <u>Resourceful</u> - We will be practical, creative, effective and efficient and maintain uncompromising integrity in our daily work.○ <u>Reliable</u> - We will do and deliver what we have committed and promised to our customers.
Legislation	<p>The Ministry of Forestry is guided in its daily operations by the following legislations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Constitution of the Republic of Fiji 2013○ Financial Management Act 2004○ Tax Administration Decree 2009○ Fiji Health & Safety at Work Act 1996○ Civil Service Act 1999○ Act 2 of 2016 – Amendment to PSC Act○ Employment Relations Promulgations 2007 & Employment Relations (Amendment) Act 2016

¹ AR – Annual Report

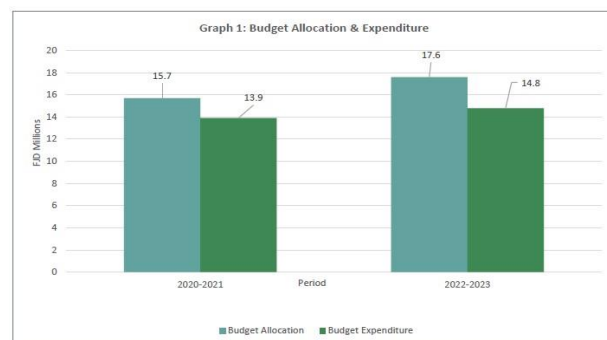


Core Business	<p>The Ministry is a regulatory and service organisation responsible for the national forestry sector through the following functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Formulate and implement forest strategies and policies;○ Provide and administer the regulatory function under the Ministry's respective legislation and regulations;○ Monitor and evaluate current strategies, policies and deliverables; ○ Develop and promote effective training, communication and awareness and extension advisory services
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Strengthen community and industry networks and support frameworks;○ Maintain international bilateral and multilateral commitments, and Undertake applied research for sustainable forest resource management practices and product development.
Forestry Programmes/Projects	The Ministry of Forestry Programmes and Projects for this financial year can be seen on page 11-12 of the Annual Report.
2022-2023 Key Highlights	
Budget Allocation	○ Budgeted - \$17.7 million ; Utilised - \$14.8 million (84%)
30MT15Y Initiative	○ 4.8 million trees planted
Log production	○ 516,795m ³
Export and Import Online Licensing System Timber/Wood product Export:	○ \$93.0 million
Community Development Assistance	○ Over 57 housing structures produced
Partnership	○ Vision Group, ACIAR, USP
2022-2023 OP Implementation	○ 72%
Budget Allocation & Expenditure	

Table 1: 2022-2023 Budget Allocation

SEG	Particulars	2021-2022 [FJD 000]	2022-2023 [FJD 000]	Variance [FJD000]
1	Established Staff	3,950.2	4,106.0	155.8
2	Government Wage Earners	1,331.7	1,304.0	-27.7
3	Travel and Communication	286.5	306.1	19.6
4	Maintenance and Operations	944.3	1,130.0	185.7
5	Purchase of Goods and Services	581.2	787.0	205.8
6	Operating Grants and Transfers	796.3	948.1	151.8
7	Special expenditures	2,306.4	2,350.5	44.1
	TOTAL OPERATING	10,196.4	10,931.7	735.3
8	Capital Construction	2,659.9	5,190.0	2,530.1
9	Capital Purchase	500.0	800.0	300.0
	TOTAL CAPITAL	3,159.9	5,990.0	2,830.1
13	Value Added Tax	469.3	770.7	301.4
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	13,825.8	17,692.4	3,866.6

Graph 1: Budget Allocation vs. Budget Expenditure

For the 2022-2023 financial year, the Ministry was allocated a budget of **\$17.6**

million, of which **\$14.8 million** (84%) was utilised on implementing its programmes and projects, leaving a remaining balance of **\$2.8 million** as of the end of July 2023.

Forestry Sector Contribution

Tabel 2: Forestry Sector Contribution, years 2022-2023

Industry by economic activity	2020		2021r		2022p	
	FJD [Millions]	% Contribution to Real GDP	FJD [Millions]	% Contribution to Real GDP	FJD [Millions]	% Contribution to Real GDP
Forestry and logging industry	25.5	0.3	34.2	0.4	31.1	0.3
Manufacturing industry						
Sawmilling and planing of wood	60.0	0.7	55.3	0.7	49.9	0.5
Manufacture of products of wood, cork, straw and plaiting material	22.1	0.2	21.5	0.3	21.4	0.2
Manufacture of pulp, paper and paperboard	2.3	0.0	2.2	0.0	2.0	0.0
Manufacture of corrugated paper and paperboard and of containers of paper and paperboard	11.6	0.1	11.6	0.1	10.7	0.1
Manufacture of other articles of paper and paperboard	24.0	0.3	22.0	0.3	19.4	0.2
Manufacture of Furniture	6.4	0.1	6.2	0.1	5.9	0.1
Total	151.9	1.4	153.0	1.9	140.4	1.4

Source: Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2023

Notes: r - revised; p - provisional

Exports

Table 3: Domestic Exports of Wood Products, Years 2020-2022

Domestic Exports of Wood Products			
Product	2020	2021p	2022p
	Value FJ\$ Million		
Total Domestic Export	1,146.2	1,251.5	1,373.8
Wood and articles of wood	76.6	118.5	93.0
<i>Of which</i>			
- Wood in chips or particles	55.4	74.8	49.0
- Mahogany	9.2	14.8	22.4

Source: Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2023

p - provisional

According to the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, total domestic exports for 2022 were estimated at \$1.1 billion. The forestry sector contributed approximately 6.8% of total export revenue, amounting to \$93.0 million. Woodchips remained a significant export commodity, accounting for 53% (\$49.0 million) of the sector's earnings. The classification and compilation of export data for 2022 were conducted using the Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System (H.S.1).

Imports

Table 4: Imports of Wood Products, Years 2020-2022

Imports of Wood Products			
Product	2020	2021p	2022p
	Value FJ\$ Million		
Total Imports	3,754.3	4,484.9	6,598.6
Wood and articles of wood	19.4	18.4	36.3

Source: Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2022

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics reported that in 2022, wood and wood-related articles worth \$36.3 million were imported. During the same period, the national import bill was estimated at \$6.6 billion, with the forestry sector accounting for 0.6% of the total import value. The H.S. classification serves as an international standard utilized by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics for product classification and data compilation.

Report on Performance

The Ministry's Strategic Development Plan (SDP) outlines four strategic goals and six key priorities, as presented in the table below. It is aligned with the National Development Plan (NDP) and Fiji's global commitments. The

Ministry's performance is subsequently detailed under each strategic priority.

Table 5: MoF Strategic Goals and Priorities

STRATEGIC GOALS (S.G.)	
S.G. 1	Establish sustainable life cycle management of forest resources in Fiji.
S.G. 2	Improve the socio-economic impact of forests.
S.G. 3	Contribute positively to the global environment.
S.G. 4	Substantially improve service delivery.
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (S.P.)	
S.P. 1	Cohesive legislation, regulation, policy, guidelines and compliance <i>SP1 is geared towards articulating a consistent, long-term approach with regard to legislation, regulation, policy, and compliance mechanisms associated with forests and forestry.</i>
S.P. 2	Enhance sustainable forest management frameworks and implementation of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) <i>SP2 is about establishing precise, sustainable implementation mechanisms for forest strategies to be effective over a long period of time.</i>
S.P. 3	Capacity building (Ministry & Stakeholders) <i>SP3 focuses on bringing theory into practice. The Ministry will lead the way in analysing the capacity and capabilities necessary to achieve the desired outcomes of the sector and engage its personnel, infrastructure, partners and communities in developing research and knowledge necessary to achieve the best outcomes for now and the distant future.</i>
S.P. 4	Stewardship <i>S.P. 4 is about commitment to stewardship of national resources and the moral obligation towards global environmental responsibilities and commitments.</i>
S.P. 5	Forest financing <i>SP5 is all about looking at, developing, improving and/or implementing financial strategies and mechanisms to support the sustainable management of forests.</i>
S.P. 6	Organisation effectiveness <i>SP6 focuses on the Ministry itself. It looks at the capacity and the capability of the Ministry to produce what it has set as its goals. It seems at efficiency in terms of personnel processes and includes information management. It ensures that the Ministry is positioned to attain what it has set out to achieve within the context of people, information and infrastructure.</i>

Operational Plan Achievement

The Ministry successfully achieved a 72.0% completion rate for the initiatives outlined in the 2022-2023 Annual Operational Plan at the start of the financial year. The accomplishments across the six strategic priorities are illustrated in Graph 2.



Harvested Area Report (HAR)	<p>A total of 952.53 hectares was reported as harvested for forest produce. The table below shows the harvested areas by Divisions for this financial year.</p> <p>Table 6: <u>Harvested Area per Divisions</u></p>
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Division	Quarterly Harvested Area by Division (Ha)				
	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	Grand Total
Central/Eastern Division	9.24	2.01	10.78	18.36	40.39
Northern Division	179.27	49.5	61.65	212.42	502.84
Western Division	70.82	206.82	85.51	46.15	409.3
Total Areas	259.33	258.33	157.94	276.93	952.53

License Type	Table 7: <u>License Type by Divisions</u>					
	Division	Free-Issue	Mahogany Woodlot	Native	Pine Woodlot	Grand Total
	Central/Eastern Division		1	6		7
	Northern Division	3	2	6	38	49
	Western Division			15	5	20
	Grand Total	3	2	27	44	76

Annual Harvested Area	Table 8: <u>Annual Harvested Area by Reported by license Type</u>

Volume Licence Type

Table 9: Volume License Type

Division	TRS Volume By Licence Type (m³)				
	Free-Issue	Mahogany Woodlot	Native	Pine Woodlot	Grand Total
Central/Eastern Division	-	238.668	3,542.350	-	3,781.018
Northern Division	696.596	736.127	4,060.341	3,881.428	9,374.492
Western Division	-		5,489.304	-	5,489.304
Grand Total	696.596	974.795	13,091.995	3,881.428	18,644.814

Note: exclude some of the volume Pine Woodlot that are not captured in the TRS

Harvesting Yield

Table 10: Harvesting Yield by Divisions

Division	Yield by Licence Type (Vol/Ha)				
	Free-Issue	Mahogany Woodlot	Native	Pine Woodlot	Grand Total
Central/Eastern Division	-	94.709	93.539	-	93.612
Northern Division	44.768	26.327	44.550	10.465	18.543
Western Division	-	-	15.373	-	13.500
Grand Total	44.768	121.037	153.464	10.465	125.657

Top 10 Species Harvested	<p>Table 11: <u>Top Ten Species Harvested, Years 2022-2023</u></p> <table><tr><th>Species</th><th>Total Volume (m³)</th></tr><tr><td>Vaivai</td><td>6,188.272</td></tr><tr><td>Pine</td><td>3,881.428</td></tr><tr><td>Dakua Makadre</td><td>1,480.155</td></tr><tr><td>Kaudamu</td><td>1,329.355</td></tr><tr><td>Kauvula</td><td>1,174.125</td></tr><tr><td>Damanu</td><td>1,032.455</td></tr><tr><td>Mahogany</td><td>974.795</td></tr><tr><td>Yasiyasi A</td><td>354.658</td></tr><tr><td>Vesi</td><td>313.946</td></tr><tr><td>Dakua Salusalu</td><td>271.71</td></tr></table>	Species	Total Volume (m³)	Vaivai	6,188.272	Pine	3,881.428	Dakua Makadre	1,480.155	Kaudamu	1,329.355	Kauvula	1,174.125	Damanu	1,032.455	Mahogany	974.795	Yasiyasi A	354.658	Vesi	313.946	Dakua Salusalu	271.71			
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Forest Parks & Reserves	<p>The maintenance of nature and forest reserve boundaries is one of the two key outputs of the Parks and Reserves Unit. This process ensures the clear demarcation of reserve boundaries, particularly in areas with lease agreements with the Government. It involves marking all forest and nature reserve boundaries that fall within designated categories.</p>																									
	<p>For more details on Forest Reserve / Nature Reserve Listing, please see page 26 of the Annual Report.</p>																									
Law Enforcement	<p><u>Right licenses issued:</u> A total of 25 Right Licenses (R.L.) was issued during this financial year, as tabulated below, declined by 77% when compared with the last financial year.</p> <p>Table 12: <u>Right Licenses Issued by Divisions</u></p> <table><tr><th>Divisions</th><th>No. of R.L. issued</th><th>Total Log Productions</th><th>Total Royalty (\$)</th><th>Total Fees (\$)</th></tr><tr><td>Northern</td><td>11</td><td>4,795.779</td><td>67,962.44</td><td>\$91,941.31</td></tr><tr><td>Central/Eastern</td><td>1</td><td>3,419.535</td><td>147,937.27</td><td>\$17,097.69</td></tr><tr><td>Western</td><td>13</td><td>4,147.297</td><td>144,466.90</td><td>\$10,305.24</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>25</td><td>12,362.611</td><td>360,366.61</td><td>119,344.24</td></tr></table>	Divisions	No. of R.L. issued	Total Log Productions	Total Royalty (\$)	Total Fees (\$)	Northern	11	4,795.779	67,962.44	\$91,941.31	Central/Eastern	1	3,419.535	147,937.27	\$17,097.69	Western	13	4,147.297	144,466.90	\$10,305.24	Total	25	12,362.611	360,366.61	119,344.24
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Total	25	12,362.611	360,366.61	119,344.24																						
Harvesting Operations	<p>In the 2022-2023 financial year, the total recorded log volume was 516,795.0m³, reflecting a 5% decrease (28,413.36m³) compared to 2021/2022. Indigenous species accounted for approximately 3% of the total volume, mahogany contributed 6%, and pine made up 91%. Compared to the previous financial year, native and mahogany production declined by 55% and 28%, respectively, while pine production increased by 1% during the same period.</p> <p>For detailed breakdown, please see page 28 of the Annual Report.</p>																									



Sawmill Operations	<p>38 licenses were issued during the year, which declined by 10% compared to the last financial year, with a national recovery rate benchmark at 48%. Table 13: <u>Sawmill Production by Divisions</u></p> <table><tr><th></th><th>Northern</th><th>Western</th><th>Central Eastern</th><th>Total</th></tr><tr><td>License static</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>5</td><td>22</td></tr><tr><td>License portable</td><td>7</td><td>3</td><td>6</td><td>16</td></tr><tr><td>Input</td><td>13,632.53</td><td>100,569.62</td><td>14,637.018</td><td>128,839.16</td></tr><tr><td>Output</td><td>6,467.85</td><td>45,479.20</td><td>8,163.421</td><td>60,110.47</td></tr><tr><td>Recovery</td><td>48%</td><td>45%</td><td>56%</td><td>47%</td></tr></table> <p><u>Note:</u> Detailed Log Production by Species can be seen on page 29 and detailed Divisional Log Productions by Species on page 30 of the Annual Report.</p>		Northern	Western	Central Eastern	Total	License static	8	9	5	22	License portable	7	3	6	16	Input	13,632.53	100,569.62	14,637.018	128,839.16	Output	6,467.85	45,479.20	8,163.421	60,110.47	Recovery	48%	45%	56%	47%
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Recovery	48%	45%	56%	47%																											
Finance Unit	Table 14: Activities undertaken by the Finance Unit																														

No.	Subject	Remarks
1.	Public finance and accounts management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Responded to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), Internal Audit and External Audit Queries and resolved all previous year's audit queries. ✓ Received an unqualified audit report from Office of Auditor General for the last 3 financial years 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021 - 2022. ✓ All reconciliations submitted to Min of Economy by the 15th of each month. ✓ All quarterly Arrears of Revenue Return for 2022-2023 was submitted to Ministry Finance before the due date on a quarterly basis. ✓ Payment of the Fringe Benefit Tax was submitted to FRCS on a quarterly basis. ✓ Ministry yearly cash flow forecast was submitted to FMIS for Budget loading before 10th July 2023.
2.	Assets management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All capital purchases and projects that required tender processes were fully completed. ✓ BOS 2022-2023 was successfully carried out by the BOS team before 31st July 2023. Approval was obtained from Ministry of Finance for the disposal and write off non-serviceable assets. ✓ All quarterly vehicle returns, and reconciliation were submitted to Ministry of Finance before the 15th of each month. ✓ Annual Procurement Plan for 2022-2023 was developed in accordance with the Procurement Regulation 2010 and submitted to Ministry of Finance before 31st July 2023. ✓ Assets Management Register 2022-2023 was developed and submitted to the Ministry of Finance Asset Management Unit. ✓ Asset Management Plan 2022-2023 developed and submitted to Ministry of Finance. ✓ Asset Management Framework 2021-2022 developed and submitted to the Asset Management Unit at Ministry of Finance. ✓ Fixed Assets Register 2021-2022 developed and submitted to the Ministry of Finance. ✓ Disaster Management Recovery Plan and Risk management Policy 2022-2023 endorsed by the Permanent Secretary for Forestry for implementation in the Ministry.
3.	Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ministry Financial Management Plan 2022-2023 was submitted to Planning Unit as a guideline.
4.	Finance Manual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Ministry Finance Manual was reviewed and developed for implementation in the Ministry during the financial year 2022-2023.

3.0 Sources

1. Ministry of Forestry 2022-2023 Annual Report



20 January 2025

Disclaimer

This Annual Report Summary was prepared to assist the Standing Committee on **Natural Resources** in its review of the **Ministry of Forestry 2022-2023 Annual Report**. This summary should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. Other sources and information should be consulted. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate, the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji will not accept any liability for any loss or damage which may be incurred by any person acting in reliance upon the information. The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. For further information please email: Siteri Gaunalomani on email siteri.gaunalomani@parliament.gov.fj or siteri.gaunalomani@legislature.gov.fj

Appendix 4 Photos





