

**STANDING
COMMITTEE ON
ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

**REVIEW REPORT OF THE SUGAR
INDUSTRY TRIBUNAL ANNUAL
REPORT 2021**

Appendices

ANNEX 1

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS



SUGAR INDUSTRY TRIBUNAL

Parliamentary Committee Presentation

2021 Annual Report + Current 2026 Operational & Financial Position

Prepared for the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Economic Affairs

Source materials supplied by the Sugar Industry Tribunal



Presentation Purpose

What this consolidated presentation is intended to provide

- Provide the Committee with a concise overview of the Tribunal's activities and performance.
- Explain the Tribunal's statutory functions, regulatory decisions, grower-registration work and dispute-resolution role.
- Present the 2021 financial position and Auditor-General's conclusion.
- Update the Committee on current 2026 growers, production and harvesting-limit processing.
- Set out current funding constraints and matters requiring Parliamentary oversight.

Source basis: 2021 Annual Report and current ministerial briefing material supplied with this request.



Executive Overview

A single view of the Tribunal's statutory role, 2021 performance and current 2026 position

Registered growers — 2021

16,913

Annual Report

Growers — 31 Aug 2026

13,771

Current supplied position

Harvest-limit forms

1,255

Received across 3 mills

Forms approved

1,176

93.7% of forms received

The figures above separates historical 2021 reporting from the current 2026 operational, harvesting-limit and funding position.

- Statutory mandate: dispute resolution, regulatory functions and the Register of Growers.
- 2021 Annual Report: registrations, crushing-season orders, grower profile, cane price, disputes and audited finances.
- 2026 position: growers, production, harvesting-limit processing and immediate funding pressures.



Harvesting-Limit Processing

Forms received and processed through the current reporting period

Forms received

1,255

Approved

1,176

93.7%

Rejected

14

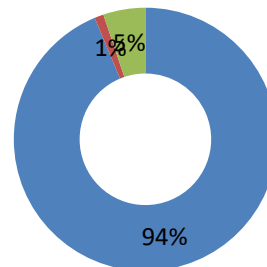
1.1%

Incomplete / wrongly filled

65

5.2%

Reconciliation: 1,176 approved + 14 rejected + 65 incomplete / wrongly filled = 1,255 forms received.



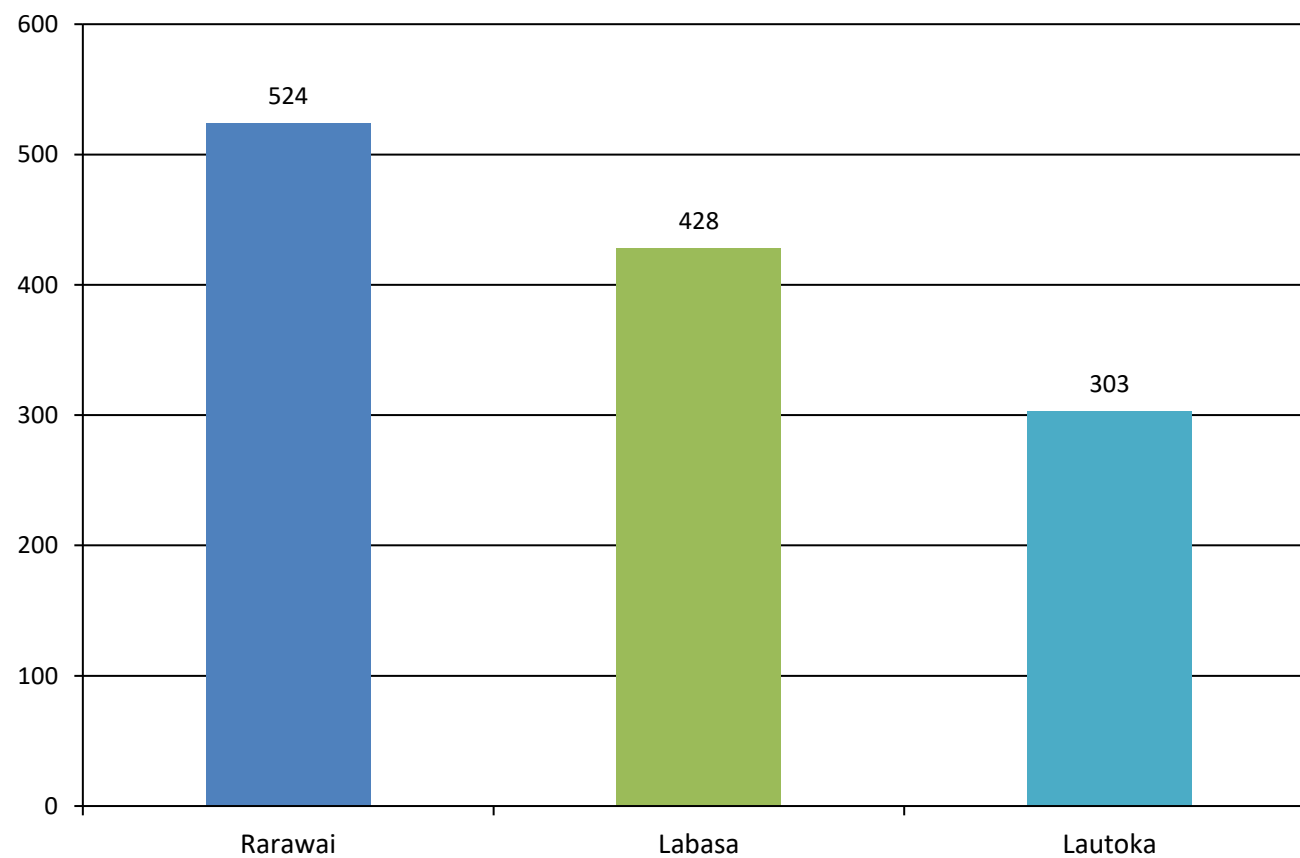
The processing categories reconcile to the full number of forms received.

■ Approved ■ Rejected ■ Incomplete / wrongly filled



Harvesting Limits Received by Mill

Clear mill-by-mill breakdown of forms received



Rarawai received the highest number of forms.

Rarawai

524

41.8%

Labasa

428

34.1%

Lautoka

303

24.1%



Cancelled Registrations Due to Non Production 2021-2023

Total Registered Growers

17077

Cancelled Registration

4750

New Registrations

90

Re-instatement

1325

2025: Tribunal reviewed non-producing growers for the period **2021–2023**.
Notices issued: Affected growers were formally notified before cancellation.
Registrations cancelled: Non-producing grower registrations were subsequently cancelled following the required process.
90 new growers were registered following the cancellation exercise.
1,325 growers were reinstated to the register.
By the end of 2025: Total registered growers increased to **13,742**.



Statutory Mandate and Institutional Role

Sugar Industry Act (Cap. 206)

Core role

Dispute resolution

Sugar industry matters

Regulatory role

Orders & determinations

Including crushing season matters

Register

Grower administration

Registrations, Transfers & Amendments

- Resolve disputes in the sugar industry.
- Hear and determine questions relating to expenses incurred by Fiji Sugar Corporation and charges on proceeds of sugar, molasses and other by-products.
- Maintain the Register of Growers and support industry coordination, standards, conciliation and expeditious settlement.
- Section 30 requires reporting on Tribunal activities and the extent to which the objects of the Act have been achieved.



2021 Establishment, Governance and Resourcing

Position reported in the 2021 Annual Report

Tribunal appointment

28 Mar 2021

Three-year term

Registrar / Industrial Commissioner

3 years

Reappointment effective 1 Aug 2019

Staff positions listed

7

Operational and administrative roles

The 2021 report records the Tribunal appointment of Mr. Devanesh Sharma and the reappointment of Mr. Timothy Brown as Industrial Commissioner and Registrar. It also lists the office's administrative and operational positions.

Oversight focus: adequacy of staffing, information systems and administrative resources to meet statutory responsibilities.



2021 Operational Highlights — Registrations

High-volume Register of Growers administration

Total applications

6,841

2021

Amendment applications

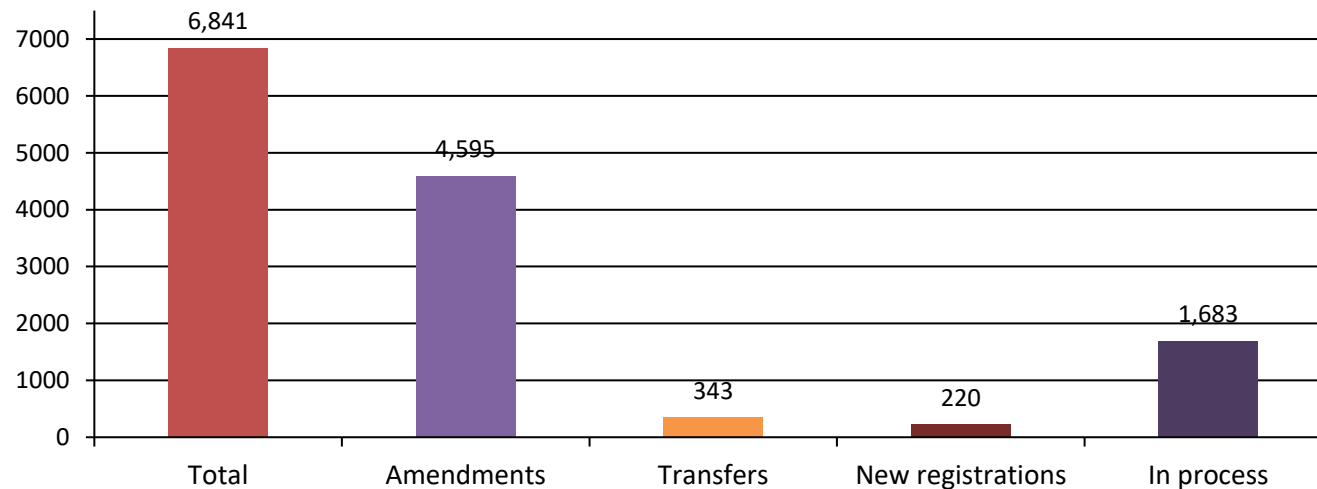
4,595

Transfer applications

343

New registration applications

220



- 5,158 applications were approved; 1,683 remained in process at year-end.
- Work covered estate matters, sector changes, method of delivery, Farm Basic Allotment, registered-area amendments, replacement certificates and cancellations.
- For new registrations: 73 approvals and 58 rejections were recorded.
- For transfers: 279 approvals and 64 matters remained in process.



2021 Crushing Season — Regulatory Decisions

Start and closure orders for the three mills

Mill	Start of crush	Closure / end	Key source note
Labasa	16 June	7 October	Tribunal order
Lautoka	30 June	3 November	Tribunal order
Rarawai	7 July	14 November	Tribunal order

- The Tribunal consulted the Sugar Cane Growers Council, Fiji Sugar Corporation and the Registrar before issuing orders.
- The report records changes to intended commencement dates for all three mills.
- “On Program Burning” was not approved in all mills for the 2021 season.

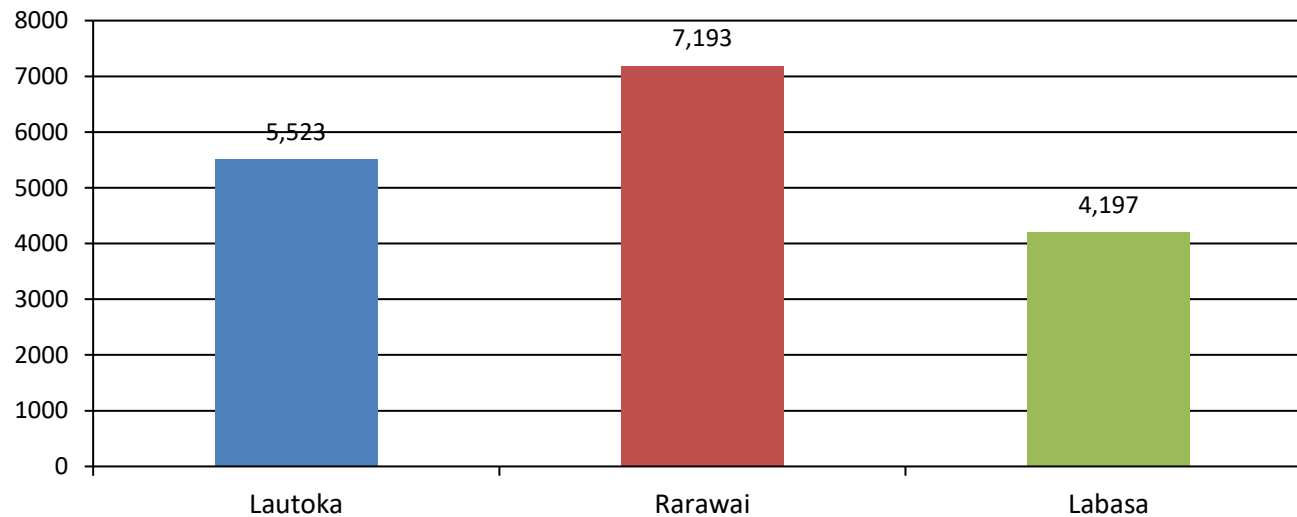


Register of Growers — 2021 Profile

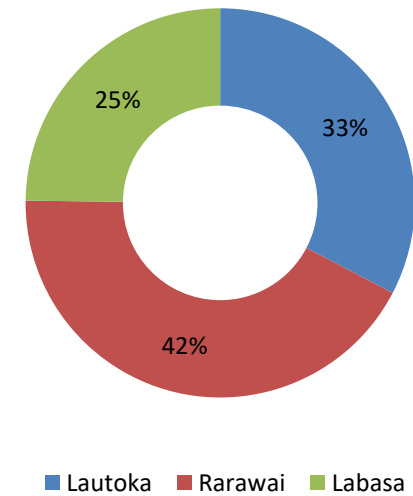
Registered growers by principal mill area

Total registered growers

16,913



The Register covered growers across the principal mill areas and districts.





Dispute Resolution and Gang Disputes

2021 activity reported by the Tribunal

Gang disputes referred

77

All 77 decided

Method-of-delivery changes

7

All approved

Gang transfers

157

All approved

Other applications

36

Including individual harvesting

Industrial dispute: Sugar Research Institute of Fiji (SRIF) and Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC)

- The dispute concerned deduction of growers' one-third contribution to SRIF from sugar proceeds.
- The Tribunal found that the direction not to deduct the contribution was not permitted by law and that FSC had acted unlawfully in not complying with its statutory obligations.



SUMMARY OF GANGS

Sugar Industry Tribunal | Records as at 31 August 2026

1935

Total gangs recorded

621

Lautoka Mill

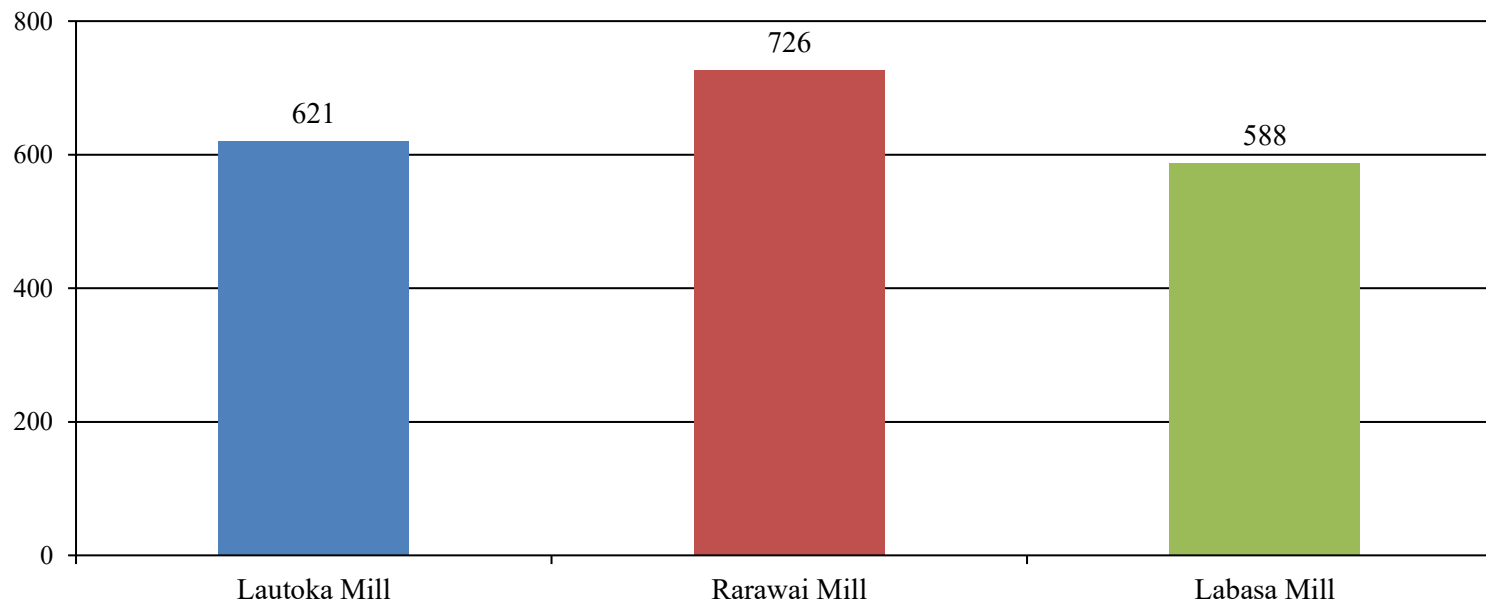
726

Rarawai Mill

588

Labasa Mill

Total Gangs by Mill



KEY FIGURES

Rarawai Mill has the highest recorded number of gangs: 726.

Lautoka Mill records 621 gangs.

Labasa Mill records 588 gangs.

Combined total across the three mills: 1935 gangs.



SECTOR-LEVEL GANG RECORDS

Breakdown of gangs by sector, with lorry and rail delivery records

Lautoka Mill					Rarawai Mill					Labasa Mill					Total # of Gangs			
Sector	Total Number of Gangs	Mode of Delivery Via Lorry	Mode of Delivery Via Rail		Sector	Total Number of Gangs	Mode of Delivery Via Lorry	Mode of Delivery Via Rail		Sector	Total Number of Gangs	Mode of Delivery Via Lorry	Mode of Delivery Via Rail		Total # of Gangs	Lautoka	Rarawai	Labasa
Drasa	111	63	37	26	Varoko	211	52	29	23	Waiqele	311	73	60	13	1935	621	726	588
Lovu	112	42	34	8	Mota	212	57	45	12	Wailevu	312	87	61	26				
Lautoka	113	28	26	2	Koronubu	213	71	39	32	Vunimoli	313	57	32	25				
Saweni	114	36	19	17	Rarawai	214	26	16	10	Labasa	314	46	37	9				
Natova	115	51	38	13	Veisaru	215	62	39	23	Bucaisau	315	59	16	43				
FSC est	119	3	1	2	Varavu	216	61	57	4	Wainikoro	316	54	4	50				
					Naloto	217	52	52	0	Daku	317	55	4	51				
Legalega	121	45	29	16	FSC est	219	3	2	1									
Meigunyah	123	53	30	23						Natua	321	50	49	1				
Qeleloa	124	36	8	28	Tagitagi	221	50	23	27	Solove	322	54	50	4				
Yako	125	38	15	23	Drumasi	222	53	24	29	Bulivou	323	51	46	5				
Malolo	126	55	24	31	Yaladro	223	41	19	22	FSC est	329	2	1	1				
Nawaicoba	127	51	34	17														
FSC est	129	3	2	1	Ellington 1	411	44	43	1									
					Malau	412	81	57	24									
Lomawai	131	47	6	41	Nanuku	413	36	23	13									
Cuvu	132	45	37	8	Ellington 2	414	37	35	2									
Olosara	133	25	3	22														



Nil Producers — 2021

2021 briefing baseline for lease area, SCA and FBA

Mill	Nil producers	Lease area	SCA	FBA
Lautoka	2818	19481.64	11653.2	381002
Rarawai	2828	25830.26	12134.91	376117
Labasa	1281	14395.64	4975.44	213399
Total	6927	59707.54	28763.55	970518

The supplied ministerial briefing presents these figures as the 31 December 2021 position.



Nil Producers — 31 December 2025

Current briefing baseline for lease area, SCA and FBA

Mill	Nil producers	Lease area	SCA	FBA
Lautoka	2451	17324.94	10023.37	364130.5
Rarawai	1708	11913.52	7050.74	266985
Labasa	492	5510.92	2249.86	98060
Total	4651	34749.38	19323.97	729175.5

The supplied ministerial briefing presents these figures as the 31 December 2025 position.



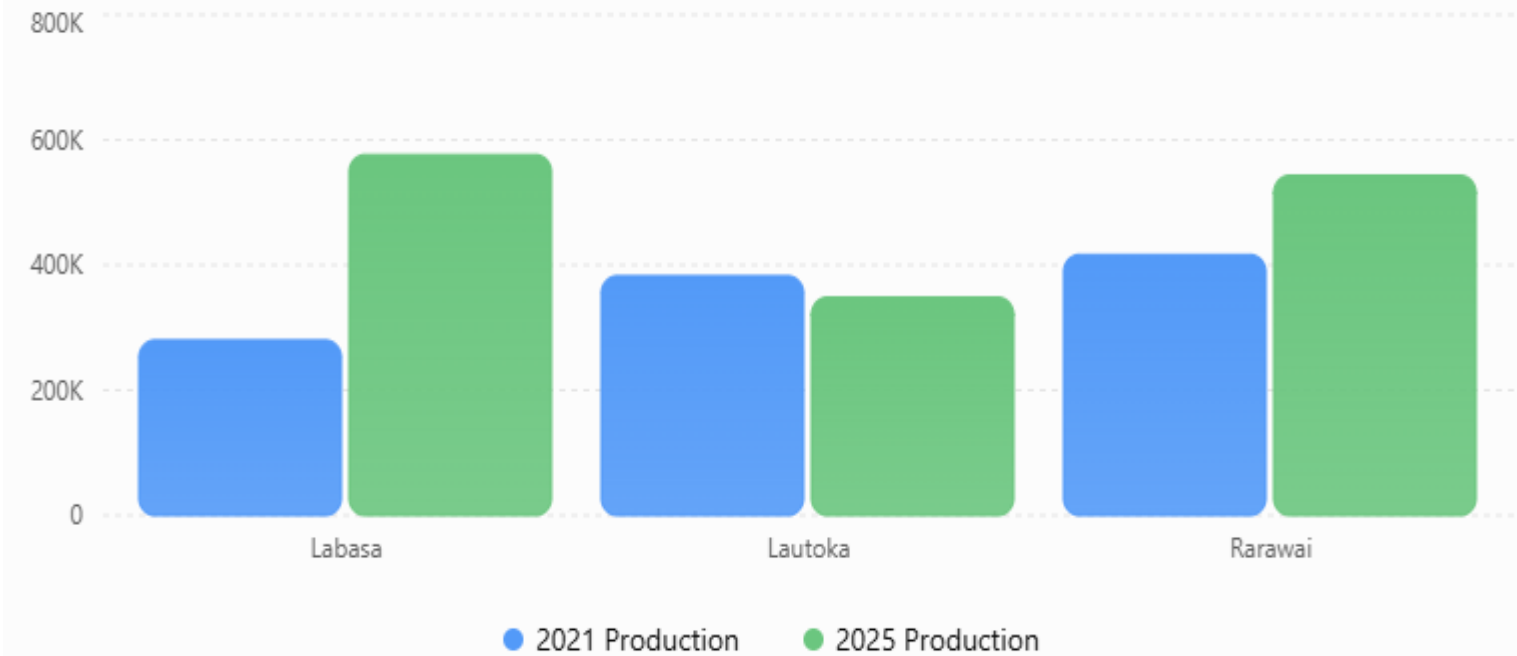
Production Comparison

Sugar Production 2021 vs 2025

Important context

Sugar Production: 2021 vs 2025

Comparison of total sugar cane production by mill for 2021 and 2025.



Production figures are summed by mill from the supplied Excel data.

Mill	2021 Production	2025 Production	Change
Labasa	280,020.98	576,225.86	+296,204.88
Lautoka	382,606.00	348,480.33	-34,125.67
Rarawai	416,581.97	543,252.21	+126,670.24
Total	1,079,208.95	1,467,958.40	+388,749.45



Current Budget Situation

Position and immediate obligations recorded in the supplied material

Balance as at 07 September 2026

\$912.34

Immediate expenses to be met

\$19,655.33

Resulting loss

(\$18,742.99)

Anticipated expenses to 20 September 2026

- Annual Report — Office of the Auditor General: \$8,900.
- Salary as at 16 Sep 2026: \$10,000.00.
- FNPF: \$3,400.
- Payment to PKF: \$4,500.
- Telecom, utilities, insurance, supplies and other listed obligations make up the balance.

Anticipated expenses

\$38,343.62

The Tribunal's office requires additional \$100,000.00 for it's operational expenses



Financial Performance — Year Ended 31 December 2021

Audited position reported in the Annual Report

2021 income

\$369,403

2021 expenditure

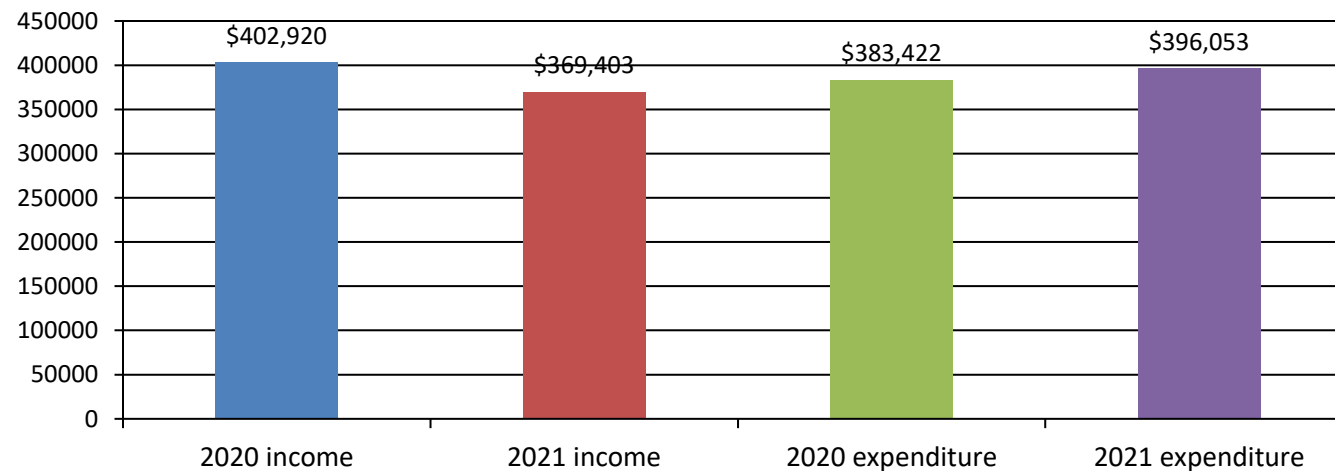
\$396,053

2021 deficit

(\$26,650)

Govt grant

\$364,553



- Personnel expenses: \$247,649.
- Administration expenses: \$108,577.
- Operating expenses: \$27,503.
- Other income: \$4,850.



Audit and Financial Accountability

Auditor-General's conclusion for 2021

Auditor's opinion

UNQUALIFIED

2021 financial statements

Total assets

\$102,353

Total liabilities

\$40,159

Net assets: \$62,194

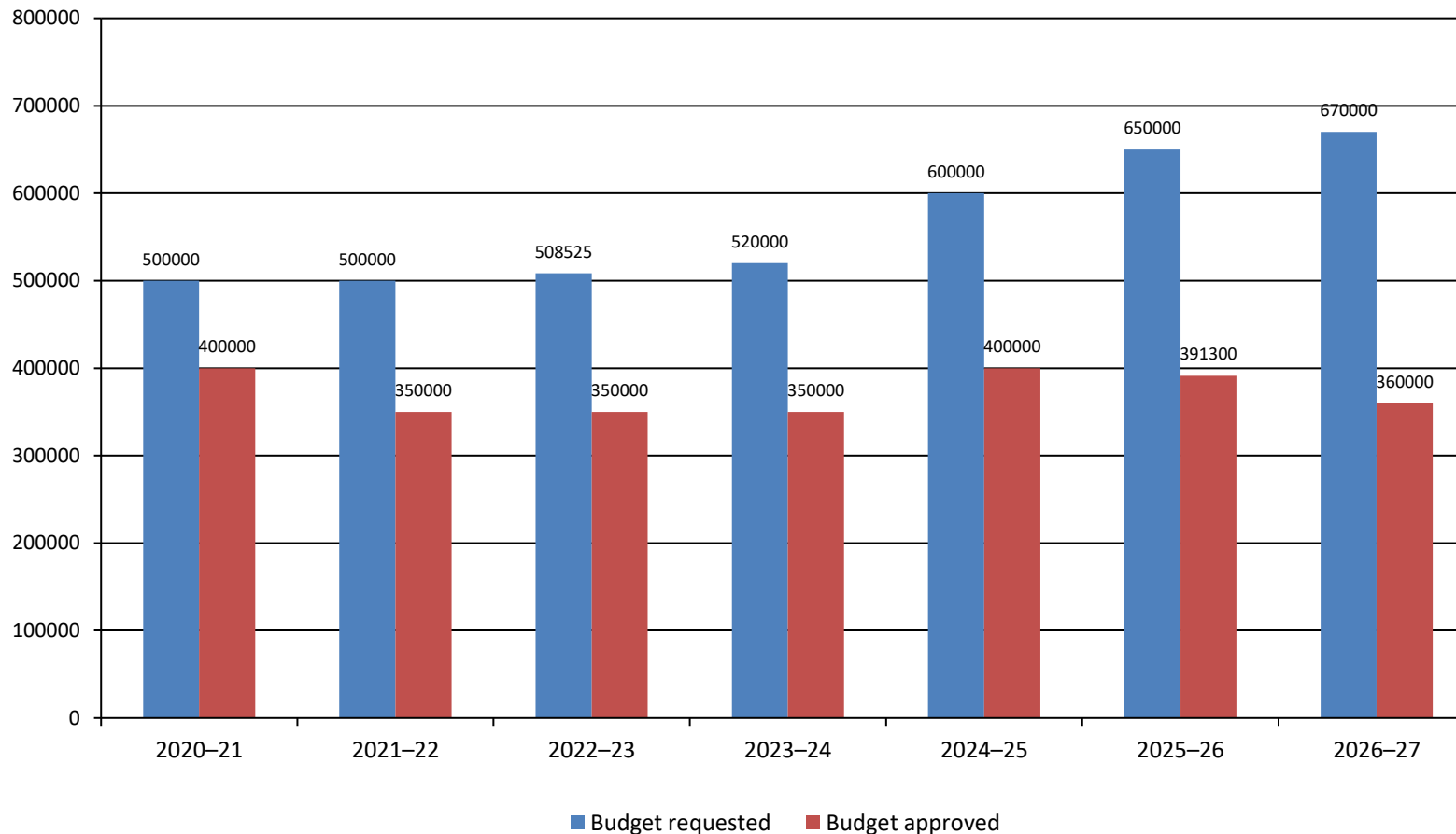
- The Auditor-General reported that the financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the Tribunal's financial position and performance.
- The audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing.
- The report states that the financial statements were prepared in accordance with the Sugar Industry Act 1984 in all material respects.
- The Auditor-General was provided the information, explanations and assistance necessary for the audit.



Budget Allocation and Funding Challenges

Historical requested versus approved budget

Budget allocation from FY 2021 has always been well below our request to current



FY	Requested	Approved
2020-21	\$500,000	\$400,000
2021-22	\$500,000	\$350,000
2022-23	\$508,525	\$350,000
2023-24	\$520,000	\$350,000
2024-25	\$600,000	\$400,000
2025-26	\$650,000	\$391,300
2026-27	\$670,000	\$360,000

**2026-27: \$670,000
requested; \$360,000
approved.**

Committee Question 1 — Crushing Season

Measures in place to minimise delays to commencement and completion

What measures are in place to minimise delays to the commencement and completion of the crushing season?

The Master Award Section 4.1 sets out when the crushing season starts.

The FSC will advise the Tribunal no later than the 30th of April in each year the intended date that the Mills are likely to start crushing. This shall be no later than the 3rd Tuesday of June.

The Tribunal will then get a response from the Council on its recommendation.

The Registrar will meet the CEO SCGC and the CEO FSC to finalize and agree on the Date the Mill starts Crushing and the date the Growers and Gags are to begin harvesting. Once an agreement is reached the Tribunal is advised to issue an Order.

Some of the issues that are taken into account to decide that start of crush:

- Mill readiness
- Volume of Matured Cane for harvest
- Gangs and Grower readiness. - MOGA

Key factors: Mill readiness • Volume of matured cane • Gangs & grower readiness / MOGA



Committee Question 2 — Forecast Cane Price

Why did the forecast cane price reduce from \$54.36 to \$32.61 per tonne?

The forecast price is estimate-driven and can change when the underlying production assumptions change.

Why did the forecast price reduce from \$54.36 to \$32.61 per tonne?

Earlier forecast

\$54.36

Revised forecast

\$32.61

The source material explains that the forecast is estimate-driven and can change when underlying production assumptions change.

- The Forecast Price is based on Estimates such as the Tonnage of Cane, Expected Cane Price, Estimated TCTS (Tonnes of Cane per tonnes of Sugar)
- In the Year 2025 these are the Estimated figures given by FSC: We request that these figures be kept confidential as it could affect our position in the Sugar Market against our Coopetitors.



Estimated Forecast Price

Cane (m/t)	\$1,496.000
Sugar (m/t)	\$136,000
Molasses (m/t)	\$67,320
TCTS	11.00

Sugar & Molasses Income

Total Sugar Income	\$134,663,442
Total Molasses Income	\$17,947,840
Total Sugar & Molasses Income	\$152,611,282

Less: Certified Deductions

Less Certified Deductions
\$5,309,936

Revenue for Distribution

Total Sugar & Molasses Income – Less Certified Deductions
\$152,611,282 - \$5,309,936
Revenue for Distribution
\$147,301,346.18

Payable to growers

Payable to growers 70%	\$103,110,942
Less: contribution to SRIF	\$1,538,415
Less: growers Bundled Insurance	\$548,280
NET PAYABLE TO GROWERS	\$101,024,247

Cane (M/T)	\$1,496.000
Price of cane -\$	\$67.53
Forecast price (15%	
Margin of error	\$57.40
Delivery Payment (60%)	\$34.44
2 nd Cane Payment	\$11.48



Committee Question 3 — ALTA-Expired Leases

Why were no registrations on ALTA-expired leases issued to sitting tenants in 2021?

Tribunal response — source limitation

- **4,595 amendments** were recorded in 2021, including **ALTA renewals to Sitting Tenants**.
- During the transition from the **VAX System (Sugar 3) to the web-based Field Information System**, these ALTA renewals were recorded as amendments rather than as separate expiry and renewal records.
- **From 2022 onwards**, ALTA expiry and renewal to Sitting Tenant records were maintained **manually due to budget constraints and the cost of system modifications**.



Committee Question 4 — SRIF Contributions

Actions following the Tribunal's ruling concerning FSC's handling of SRIF contributions

What the 2021 Annual Report establishes

SRIF in a letter dated 8th March 2022 advised the Tribunal that they had not received the Growers SRIF deductions for the years 2015 and 2016 from FSC as mandated by Law.

The Tribunal ruled on 21st July 2022 that:

“Given the above, it is my decision that I do not have the power to grant a waiver or dispensation in this matter.

The Fiji Sugar Corporation made a decision to pay out all the monies when they would have known that they were under a statutory duty to keep monies aside for SRIF. In not making a provision for payment to SRIF the Corporation cannot claim that it acted in good faith.

The Corporation must understand that the deduction for SRIF is a statutory requirement and this contribution must be put aside immediately when the SRIF Board submits their annual budget. The Tribunal's certification is only a statutory formality. The Corporation cannot avoid its statutory obligation just because certification has not been received.

Given that the deduction has not been made it would not be fair to have the deductions made from the cane proceeds of the growers in the year 2022.

I therefore advise that the parties SRIF, FSC and Council discuss this issue and see how best it can be resolved. They should seek the Tribunal's assistance if required.”



FSC in a letter dated 28th Jan 2022 advised the Tribunal that the parties SRIF/FSC have agreed to on a monthly payment of \$20,000 per month until the sum of \$900,000 was paid off.

SRIF in a letter dated 30th May 2025 advise the Tribunal that FSC had failed to honour this agreement.

The Tribunal on 18th Dec 2025 ruled that:

“Having taken all evidence before me in consideration I order that the FSC Board make a fresh proposal of settlement for the outstanding amounts due to SRIF within 6 months from today. The Parties are at liberty to seek the Tribunal’s assistance should they wish.”

FSC has advised today 4th Sept 2026 that:

“FSC has written to the SRIF providing 3 options to be considered between the parties. The settlement terms are in discussion and the Tribunal will be advised once we have reached a amicable solution.”



Committee Question 5 — Delays in Determinations

Pending decisions, including rail-related matters

Why are some decisions taking a long time to be determined, and what is being done to address delays?

There are two issues in relation to this:

1. The Closure of the Tramline from Lausa Loop to Tawatawa Point in Rarawai Mill;

FSC in a letter dated 18th Sept 2024 proposed that the tramline from Lausa Loop to Tawatawa Point in Rarawai Mill be closed.

- The SCGC in a letter dated 27th Oct 2024 opposed the FSC's Proposal.
- The Tribunal on 2nd July 2025 ruled that:

“The FSC is allowed to temporarily close the tramline from Lausa Loop to Tawatawa Point in the Rarawai Mill Area.

The 88 registered Farmers who are directly affected by this closure will be offered the conversion rate as follows:

Parties are at liberty to apply to have this temporary closure order reviewed after one year from today.”



CARTAGE RATE						CALCULATIONS								
Sector	Gang No	Farm No.	Rail	Lorry Direct	FSC to pay difference (Conversion rate)	RAIL(\$/TONNE)					LORRY(\$/TONNE)			
						TRACTOR TRAILER	BULLOCK or TRACTOR	HEAD MAN	LINE MEN	TOTAL	LORRY	BULLOCK or TRACTOR	ROAD MAN	TOTAL
Drumasi	222-0002	222-19896	10.00	21.00	\$ 11.00	10	0	0	0	10.00	21	0	0	21.00
Drumasi	222-0010	222-04100	17.00	23.00	\$ 6.00	10	3	2	2	17.00	20	3	0	23.00
Drumasi	222-0010	222-19748	17.00	23.00	\$ 6.00	10	3	2	2	17.00	20	3	0	23.00
Drumasi	222-0010	222-19854	17.00	23.00	\$ 6.00	10	3	2	2	17.00	20	3	0	23.00
Drumasi	222-0010	222-03979	17.00	23.00	\$ 6.00	10	3	2	2	17.00	20	3	0	23.00
Drumasi	222-0014	222-04355	13.00	23.00	\$ 10.00	7	4.6	0.9	0.5	13.00	20	3	0	23.00
Drumasi	222-0014	222-04356	13.00	23.00	\$ 10.00	7	4.6	0.9	0.5	13.00	20	3	0	23.00
Drumasi	222-0015	222-19803	11.65	22.00	\$ 10.35	8.15	2	0	1.5	11.65	20	2	0	22.00
Drumasi	222-0015	222-19982	11.65	22.00	\$ 10.35	8.15	2	0	1.5	11.65	20	2	0	22.00
Drumasi	222-0017	222-04350	11.50	22.50	\$ 11.00	8.5	3	0	0	11.50	19.5	3	0	22.50
Drumasi	222-0017	222-19693	11.50	22.50	\$ 11.00	8.5	3	0	0	11.50	19.5	3	0	22.50
Drumasi	222-0019	222-03792	18.00	23.50	\$ 5.50	14	1.5	1	1.5	18.00	22	1.5	0	23.50
Drumasi	222-0019	222-19728	18.00	23.50	\$ 5.50	14	1.5	1	1.5	18.00	22	1.5	0	23.50
Drumasi	222-0019	222-03785	18.00	23.50	\$ 5.50	14	1.5	1	1.5	18.00	22	1.5	0	23.50
Drumasi	222-0024	222-19861	20.00	26.00	\$ 6.00	14	3	0	3	20.00	23	3	0	26.00
Drumasi	222-0024	222-04193	20.00	26.00	\$ 6.00	14	3	0	3	20.00	23	3	0	26.00
Drumasi	222-0026	222-19794	16.50	28.00	\$ 11.50	8.5	6	1	1	16.50	22	6	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0026	222-04119	16.50	28.00	\$ 11.50	8.5	6	1	1	16.50	22	6	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0026	222-04122	16.50	28.00	\$ 11.50	8.5	6	1	1	16.50	22	6	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0026	222-19927	16.50	28.00	\$ 11.50	8.5	6	1	1	16.50	22	6	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0026	222-04116	16.50	28.00	\$ 11.50	8.5	6	1	1	16.50	22	6	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0027	222-19999	16.00	29.00	\$ 13.00	10	4	1	1	16.00	25	4	0	29.00
Drumasi	222-0027	222-19986	16.00	29.00	\$ 13.00	10	4	1	1	16.00	25	4	0	29.00
Drumasi	222-0027	222-19924	16.00	29.00	\$ 13.00	10	4	1	1	16.00	25	4	0	29.00
Drumasi	222-0027	222-19987	16.00	29.00	\$ 13.00	10	4	1	1	16.00	25	4	0	29.00
Drumasi	222-0027	222-19922	16.00	29.00	\$ 13.00	10	4	1	1	16.00	25	4	0	29.00
Drumasi	222-0029	222-04132	15.00	24.00	\$ 9.00	10	4	0	1	15.00	20	4	0	24.00
Drumasi	222-0029	222-04133	15.00	24.00	\$ 9.00	10	4	0	1	15.00	20	4	0	24.00
Drumasi	222-0031	222-19979	21.00	23.00	\$ 2.00	15	2	2	2	21.00	21	2	0	23.00
Drumasi	222-0031	222-19964	21.00	23.00	\$ 2.00	15	2	2	2	21.00	21	2	0	23.00
Drumasi	222-0031	222-19928	21.00	23.00	\$ 2.00	15	2	2	2	21.00	21	2	0	23.00
Drumasi	222-0031	222-19940	21.00	23.00	\$ 2.00	15	2	2	2	21.00	21	2	0	23.00
Drumasi	222-0031	222-19935	21.00	23.00	\$ 2.00	15	2	2	2	21.00	21	2	0	23.00
Drumasi	222-0032	222-19996	18.00	28.00	\$ 10.00	15	2	0.5	0.5	18.00	26	2	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0032	222-19933	18.00	28.00	\$ 10.00	15	2	0.5	0.5	18.00	26	2	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0032	222-04165	18.00	28.00	\$ 10.00	15	2	0.5	0.5	18.00	26	2	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0032	222-19941	18.00	28.00	\$ 10.00	15	2	0.5	0.5	18.00	26	2	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0032	222-19916	18.00	28.00	\$ 10.00	15	2	0.5	0.5	18.00	26	2	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0033	222-19930	21.00	28.00	\$ 7.00	17	2	1.5	0.5	21.00	26	2	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0033	222-19923	21.00	28.00	\$ 7.00	17	2	1.5	0.5	21.00	26	2	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0033	222-19984	21.00	28.00	\$ 7.00	17	2	1.5	0.5	21.00	26	2	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0033	222-19918	21.00	28.00	\$ 7.00	17	2	1.5	0.5	21.00	26	2	0	28.00
Drumasi	222-0053	222-19919	27.00	30.00	\$ 3.00	15	10	1	1	27.00	20	10	0	30.00
Drumasi	222-0053	222-19921	27.00	30.00	\$ 3.00	15	10	1	1	27.00	20	10	0	30.00
Drumasi	222-0053	222-19965	27.00	30.00	\$ 3.00	15	10	1	1	27.00	20	10	0	30.00
Drumasi	222-0054	222-19877	21.00	29.00	\$ 8.00	15	3	1.5	1.5	21.00	26	3	0	29.00
Drumasi	222-0055	222-04270	18.00	27.00	\$ 9.00	12	3	2	1	18.00	22	5	0	27.00
Drumasi	222-0055	222-04137	18.00	27.00	\$ 9.00	12	3	2	1	18.00	22	5	0	27.00
Drumasi	222-0055	222-04135	18.00	27.00	\$ 9.00	12	3	2	1	18.00	22	5	0	27.00
Drumasi	222-0056	222-19607	10.00	22.00	\$ 12.00	6	2	0	2	10.00	20	2	0	22.00
Drumasi	222-0056	222-19603	10.00	22.00	\$ 12.00	6	2	0	2	10.00	20	2	0	22.00
Drumasi	222-0058	222-04283	24.00	35.00	\$ 11.00	12	10	1	1	24.00	25	10	0	35.00
Drumasi	222-0058	222-04145	24.00	35.00	\$ 11.00	12	10	1	1	24.00	25	10	0	35.00



- FSC in their letter dated 09th July 2025 advise that the Minister for Sugar Industry, in consultation with the Minister for Finance and following detailed consultations with farmers in the Tavua District, has directed the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) to immediately reinstate and undertake the necessary maintenance of the tramline from Lausa Loop to Tawatawa Point.
- On the 18th August 2025 Tribunal advise FSC that the Tribunal's Order does not prevent FSC from doing any repair works on the tramline or other supporting equipment.
- On 26th April 2026 the Council advised the Tribunal to deny FSC's application for a Permanent Closure of the tramline
- On 27th April 2026 FSC responded to the Council's proposal
- FSC advised that they had spent money to repair the tramlines however, but Government has not refunded FSC for the funds spent. When the Rarawai closed due to a fire in the Mill boiler;
- **The Tribunal's Ruling in this matter in fact compensates each of the 88 growers in full for delivering their cane to the Mill by Lorry Mode. The Tribunal had to consider the cost of maintaining and operating the Tramlines against the number of Growers using the tramline and tonnes of cane that were being delivered via the tramline. This is the very reason the Tribunal ruled that the Tramline is Temporary Closed. This give each party to come back to the Tribunal if circumstances change.**



2. closure of Lautoka Tramline Network

FSC in their letter dated 09th March 2026 to the Tribunal proposed to cease all railway operations for the Lautoka Mill from the 2026 crushing season. The Council in their dated 13th April 2026 and in an email dated 22nd June 2026 opposed FSC's proposal to close the Lautoka Railway Network.

The Tribunal has not made a Ruling in this case for the very same reasons as for the Tramline network in Rarawai Mill. The fact that the Tribunal has not made a Ruling the Parties have been advised that Status Quo remains.



Committee Question — Delays in Determinations

Rail-related matters: Rarawai and Lautoka tramline networks

Rarawai — Lausa Loop to Tawatawa Point

- FSC proposed closure on 18 September 2024; SCGC opposed on 27 October 2024.
- Tribunal ruling on 2 July 2025 allowed temporary closure.
- 88 registered farmers directly affected were to be offered the stated conversion rate.
- Parties could apply for review after one year.
- In July 2025 the Minister for Sugar Industry, in consultation with the Minister for Finance and following farmer consultations, directed FSC to reinstate and maintain the tramline.
- In April 2026 the Council advised the Tribunal to deny FSC's application for permanent closure.
- FSC later advised that repair expenditure had occurred, but the Rarawai boiler fire resulted in mill closure.

Lautoka — Railway Network

- FSC proposed on 9 March 2026 to cease all railway operations for the Lautoka Mill from the 2026 crushing season.
- The Council opposed the proposal in April 2026 and again in June 2026.
- The supplied material identifies the matter as a pending issue before the Tribunal.

The source material presents these matters as examples of determinations requiring continued monitoring and stakeholder engagement.



SRIF Contributions — Subsequent Actions

Status recorded in the supplied parliamentary material

- 8 March 2022: SRIF advised the Tribunal that growers' SRIF deductions for 2015 and 2016 had not been received from FSC as mandated by law.
- 21 July 2022: Tribunal ruled that it did not have power to grant a waiver or dispensation and advised SRIF, FSC and the Council to discuss resolution.
- 28 January 2022: FSC advised that SRIF/FSC had agreed to monthly payments of \$20,000 until \$900,000 was paid.
- 30 May 2025: SRIF advised that FSC had failed to honour the agreement.
- 18 December 2025: Tribunal ordered FSC's Board to make a fresh settlement proposal within six months.
- 4 September 2026: FSC advised that three settlement options had been provided to SRIF and discussions were continuing.

Current source position: settlement terms remain under discussion; the Tribunal is to be advised once an amicable solution is reached.



Growers consistently reported delays in the resolution of disputes involving cane contracts, harvesting arrangements, land tenure issues, and industry grievances. What are the key causes of these delays, and what measures are being implemented to improve turnaround times?

- Delays were mainly due to incomplete documentation which affected the scheduling and hearing of disputes.
- The Tribunal Office has since introduced measures to fast-track hearings, resolutions, and other outstanding matters by having a checklist for growers submission.



Many farmers questioned whether the Tribunal remains fit for purpose under its current structure. Does the Tribunal consider that any legislative, administrative, or institutional reforms are necessary to enhance its effectiveness and relevance?

- Following the removal of the Sugar Commission of Fiji and the sugar marketing function, there was no central body coordinating concerns between growers and millers.
- The Tribunal Office has since played an important coordinating role, within its mandate, in addressing industry concerns.
- There is no law that has a coordinating body like the Sugar Commission had.
- The Tribunal suggests that there is a legislative passed for it to be the coordinating body.



Farmers have raised concerns regarding the accessibility of Tribunal services, particularly for growers residing in remote and rural areas. What initiatives is the Tribunal undertaking to improve accessibility, outreach, and awareness amongst stakeholders?

Growers may submit applications through the SCGC for processing by the Tribunal.

The Tribunal attends to disputes directly and engages with growers as required.

The Tribunal has also chaired a stakeholder committee to strengthen coordination, outreach, and stakeholder awareness.



Several growers expressed concerns regarding transparency in matters relating to cane payment deductions, harvesting rates, and decisions affecting their interests. What role does the Tribunal play in ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability in these areas?

- Under the law the Accountant to the Tribunal, A Growers Accountant and FSC Accountant have to audit the cost related to Cane Pay and agree on the Audit findings before the Tribunal is advised for his final approval.
- The Tribunal is responsible for improving the increases in harvesting rates, whereby the growers and gangs submit their rates through FSC Field officers, if the rate application is too high it is sent back to FSC and SCGC for their final recommendation inline with the current year rates



Farmers have repeatedly called for stronger communication and consultation before major industry decisions are made. How does the Tribunal engage with growers and ensure that their views and concerns are adequately considered in industry-related processes and decisions?

- Growers are represented by the Sugar Cane Growers Council (SCGC), which is responsible for conveying growers' concerns and proposed changes to the Tribunal.
- The Tribunal engages with the SCGC and other stakeholders through committees and consultations within its statutory role.
- These engagements provide a formal channel for growers' views to be raised, considered, and addressed.



THANK YOU

Questions and Committee Discussion

Sugar Industry Tribunal

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Economic Affairs

ANNEX 2

RESEARCH BRIEF

Information Brief for Standing Committee

Standing Committee on Economic Affairs

Information Brief on Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Report 2021

1.0. Overview

This brief is provided to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs (“SC-EA” or “Committee”) as requested through its secretariat. This Information Brief is a summary of some of the key highlights in the Sugar Industry Tribunal (“SIT”) Annual Report (“AR”) for financial year 2021¹. The summary is designed to assist Honourable Members of Committee undertake their comparisons and related analysis of the organisation’s performance as discussed in the ARs. 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 SIT.

2.0. Introduction

The Sugar Industry Tribunal is an entity domiciled in the Fiji Islands and was established under the *Sugar Industry Amendment Act* (No 10 of 2015). The objective of the Sugar Industry Tribunal (SIT) is to resolve disputes in the Sugar Industry. In carrying out its statutory functions, Sugar Industry Tribunal is empowered under section 69 of the *Sugar Industry Act*, subject to the Minister's directive, to make and prepare any master award. The Sugar Industry Tribunal also hears and determines any question as to whether all or any of the expenses incurred by Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) in providing and maintaining facilities for the storage of sugar should be paid out of and be a charge on the proceeds of sale of sugar, molasses and other by-products of sugar.

2.1. The Registrar of the Tribunal

National Harvest Quota

- The FSC did not officially notify the Tribunal that it planned to buy the full national cane harvest quota for 2021.

Purchase of All Cane 2021

- The FSC did not formally inform the Tribunal that it intended to purchase all cane produced in 2021.

Forecast Price 2021

- The Corporation estimated the cane price at **\$54.36 per tonne**, but after applying a 10% adjustment for possible risks, the official forecast price was set at **\$32.61 per tonne**.

2.2. Commencement of Crushing (2021 Sugar Season)

The FSC is required under the Master Award to notify the Tribunal each year about the planned start of crushing operations at each mill. For the 2021 season, the Corporation proposed crushing dates for Lautoka, Rarawai, and Labasa mills, which were approved by the Tribunal after consultation with industry stakeholders. However, the Corporation later requested delays for Lautoka and Rarawai mills, and the Tribunal subsequently approved the revised commencement dates. Overall, the crushing season started later than originally planned for some mills due to approved postponements.

¹ Sugar Industry Tribunal (2021) Annual Report 2021. Fiji: Sugar Industry Tribunal. Available at: <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/57Sugar-Industry-Tribunal-Annual-Report-2021.pdf> (Accessed: 22 July 2026).

The Fiji Sugar Corporation requested delays to the commencement of crushing operations for both Rarawai and Labasa Mills during the 2021 season. After consulting the Sugar Cane Growers Council, the Fiji Sugar Corporation, and the Industrial Commissioner, the Tribunal approved the revised start dates. Rarawai Mill was authorised to begin crushing on **7 July 2021**, while Labasa Mill was authorised to begin crushing on **16 June 2021**. The changes were formally approved through Tribunal orders following consultation with key industry stakeholders.

2.3. Actual Dates for Termination of Crush (2021)

Summary

- The Master Award requires the Tribunal to announce the dates for the end of crushing operations at each sugar mill.

Labasa Mill

- Fiji Sugar Corporation requested termination of crushing on **2 October 2021**.
- After consultation, the Tribunal approved termination on **7 October 2021**.

Lautoka Mill

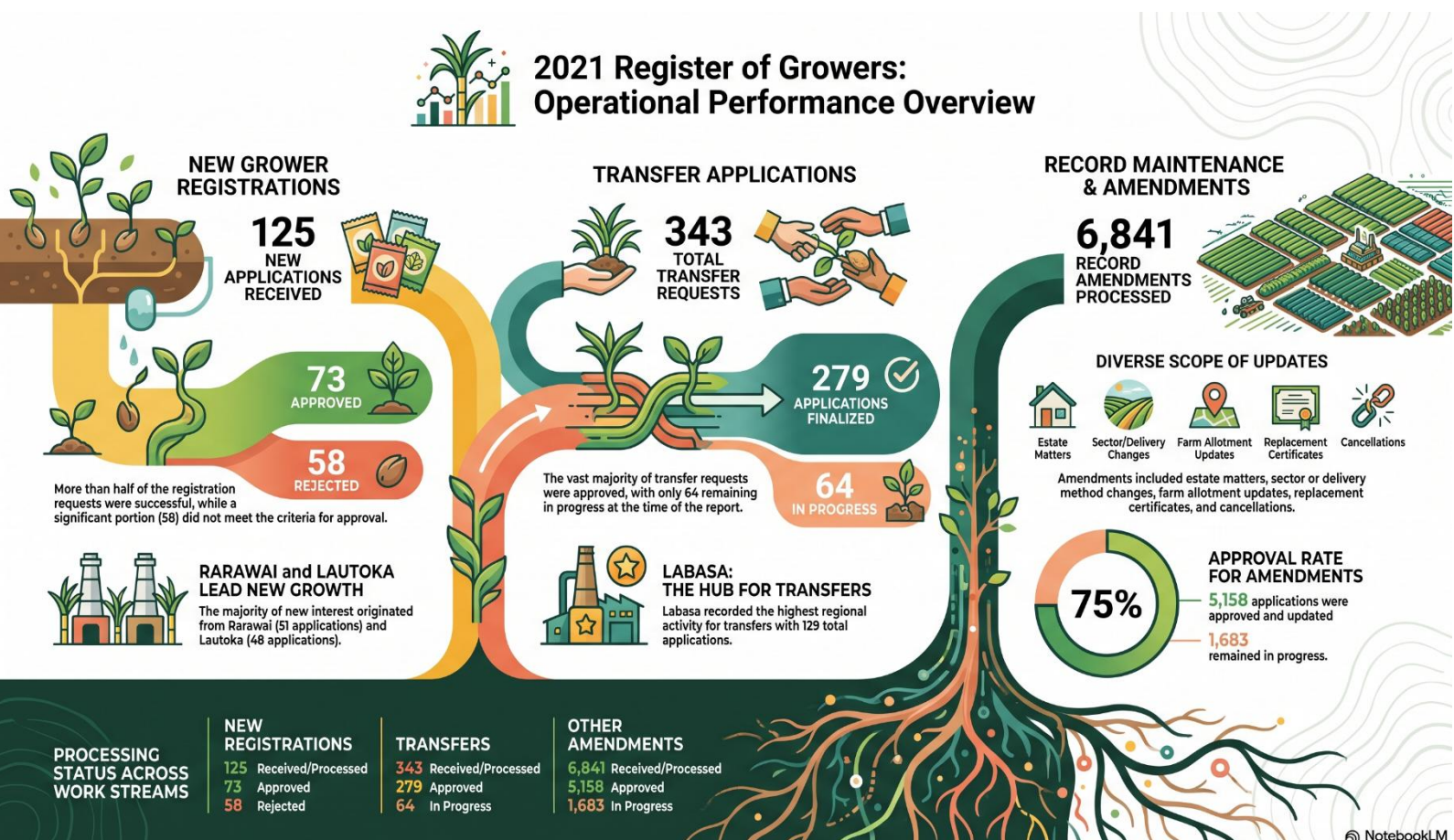
- Fiji Sugar Corporation requested termination of crushing on **14 November 2021**.
- The Tribunal approved an earlier termination date of **3 November 2021**.

Rarawai Mill

- Fiji Sugar Corporation requested termination of crushing on **14 November 2021**.
- The Tribunal approved termination on **14 November 2021**.
- All termination dates were determined after consultation with the Sugar Cane Growers Council and the Industrial Commissioner.

Key Point

The Tribunal reviewed and approved the end dates for the 2021 crushing season at Labasa, Lautoka, and Rarawai mills following consultations with industry stakeholders.



Source: Information is adopted from the Sugar Industry Tribunal Report 2021,P.7; Image is generated via AI (NoteBookLM)

2.4. ALTA Expiry Lease Registrations

Summary

- During **2021**, a total of **95 new registrations** were issued on ALTA-expired leases.
- Of these:
 - **53 registrations** were issued to new incoming iTaukei landowner tenants.
 - **42 registrations** were issued to new Indo-Fijian tenants.
 - **No registrations** were issued to sitting tenants.
- Overall, **6,918 registrations** have been issued on ALTA-expired leases to date.
- The cumulative registrations include:
 - **2,233** to new incoming iTaukei landowner tenants.
 - **4,685** to new Indo-Fijian tenants.
 - **578** to sitting tenants.

Key Point

Most registrations on ALTA-expired leases have been issued to **new Indo-Fijian tenants**, while a significant number have also been allocated to **new incoming iTaukei landowner tenants**. In 2021, no new registrations were granted to sitting tenants.

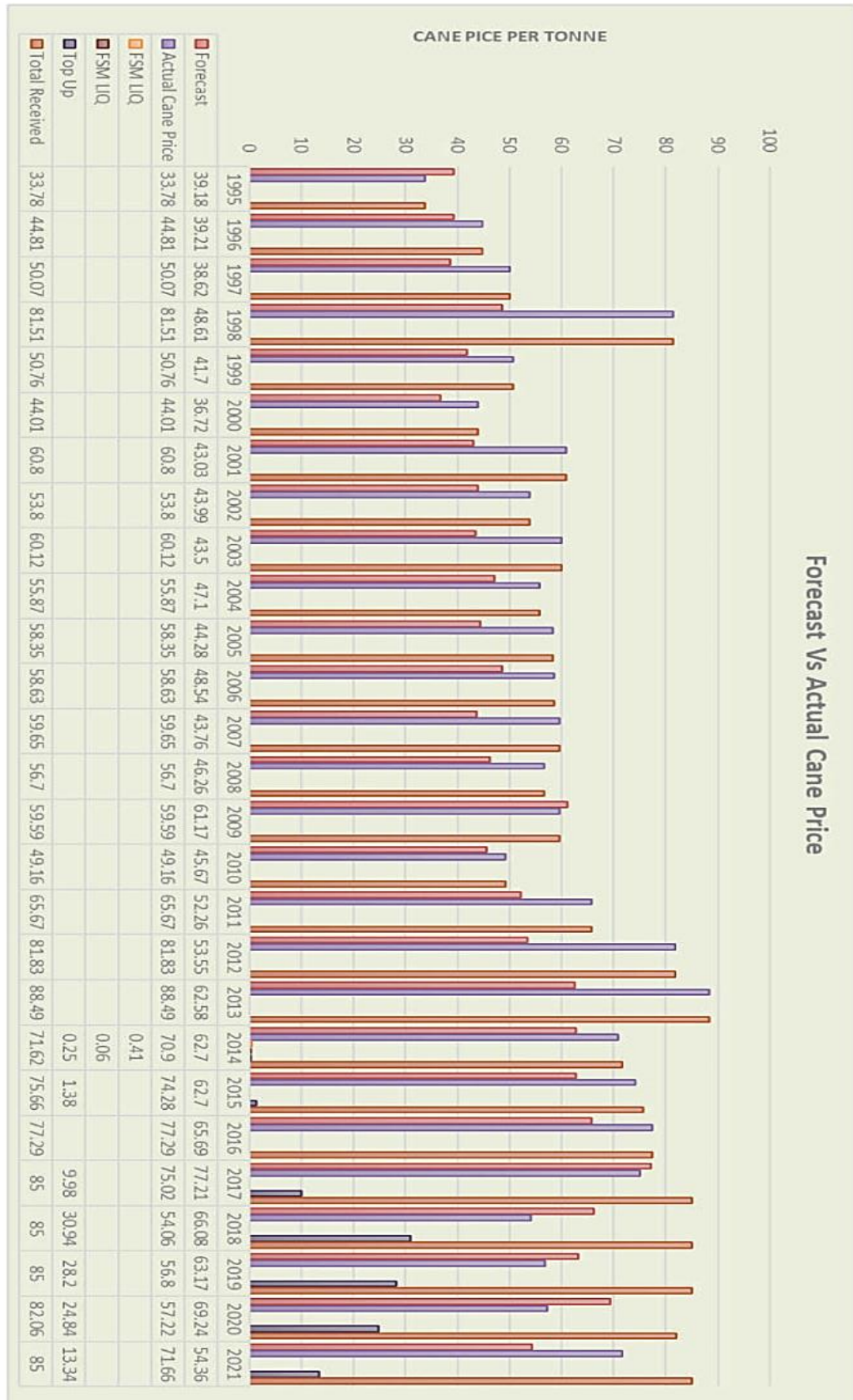
2.5. Pricing Forecast

FORECAST CANE PRICE		2021	2020	2019
Tonnes of cane paid	MT	1,400,000	1,840,480	1,870,000
Which Produced:				
Sugar	MT	127,273	193,948	208,878
[TCTS]				
Molasses	MT	63,000	84,785	84,150
Proceeds:				
From Sugar - Overseas (net of marketing commission)		62,877,217	116,693,600	116,153,136
- Local & Regional		46,975,582	41,571,000	41,562,226
- Stocks				
From Molasses - Overseas		14,683,713	27,751,304	16,225,750
- Local		1,530,000	1,530,000	1,000,000
TOTAL		126,066,511	187,545,904	174,941,112
Additional Income was Received from:				
Fiji Sugar Marketing Co Ltd (Excess Income for the year)				
Sundries				
Deductions prior to dividing proceeds were:				
Export duty - Sugar		300,000		
- Molasses				
Bulk loading costs & SCRC		1,669,768	1,669,768	1,669,768
Wharfage, sugar		88,114	165,320	181,342
molasses		121,800	167,549	166,215
Molasses Handling		100,340	138,028	136,930
Marketing Cost			300,000	300,000
Rouging Costs				
Lorry Transport Allowance		1,358,000	1,776,875	1,582,917
Sundries				
Insurance		50,000		
Cost of Importing sugar				
Cost Handling import sugar				
Total Certified Deductions		3,988,022	4,217,540	4,037,171
Revenue for Distribution		122,078,490	183,328,394	170,903,941
This was divided under the terms of the Master Award as follows:				
Payable to the Growers		85,454,943	128,329,855	119,632,759
Less grower's contribution to SRIF		900,000	900,000	900,000
Less Re-melt Sugar Recovery				607,779
Nett payable to growers		84,554,943	127,429,855	118,124,980
Equaling per tonne of cane		60.40	69.24	63.17
The forecast price was:		54.36	64.17	63.17
The Millers share was:		32.61	54,998,509	51,271,182
or per tonne of cane crushed		26.15	29.88	27.41

Source: The Table above is adopted for the SIT AR 2021; P.9

2.6. Total VS Actual Price

In view of the low Cane Forecasted Price of Cane at \$60 per tonne the Fiji Sugar Cooperation requested that the Forecast price to be paid to growers be reduced by 10% to take into account any fluctuations in exchange rates. This was approved by the Tribunal.



Source: The Table above is adopted for the SIT AR 2021; P.23

2.7. FINAL CANE PRICE FOR 2021 SEASON

The final cane price was calculated as follows:

Total Income from Sugar & Molasses Sale as Per Regulation 17.2 of the Master Award	\$141,417,820
Growers Share of Proceeds (Sec 20.2)	\$97,204,079
Tonnes of Sugar Produced	133,209
Tonnes of Cane Delivered and paid for	1,417,267
Price per tonne of Cane	\$68.59
Certified deduction added back	\$3.07
Total Cane pay out from Sugar & Molasses Proceeds	\$71.66

Government topped up the Cane Price by **\$13.34 per tonne** to bring the total paid out to growers to **\$85.00 per tonne of cane for the 2021 season**.

2.8. Industrial Disputes

Summary

- A dispute between the **Sugar Research Institute of Fiji (SRIF)** and the **Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC)** was heard by the Tribunal on **20 December 2021**.
- The dispute concerned FSC's failure to deduct the **growers' one-third contribution to SRIF** from sugar proceeds in **2018**, following a directive from the Ministry of Sugar.
- The Tribunal ruled that:
 - The **Director of Sugar had no legal authority** to direct FSC not to deduct the SRIF contribution from sugar proceeds.
 - FSC acted **unlawfully** by failing to deduct and remit the growers' contribution to SRIF as required by law.
 - FSC should consult the Ministry of Sugar and seek legal advice on how the outstanding contribution to SRIF should be paid.

Key Point

The Tribunal found that FSC's failure to deduct and forward the growers' statutory contribution to SRIF was not legally justified and did not comply with its legal obligations.

2.9. Gang Matters

Category	Applications Received	Approved	Not Approved	Pending
<i>Amalgamation / Formation of New Gangs</i>	74	70	3	0
<i>Change of Method of Delivery</i>	7	7	0	0
<i>Gang Transfers</i>	157	157	0	0
<i>Other Matters (Individual Harvesting, Bonds, Substitutes, etc.)</i>	36	N/A	N/A	N/A

Summary

- The Industrial Commissioner managed gang-related matters for the 2021 season.
- A total of **74 applications** were received for gang amalgamations and formation of new gangs, with **70 approved**.
- All **7 applications** for changes in delivery methods were approved.
- All **157 gang transfer applications** were approved.
- An additional **36 applications** were received for matters such as individual harvesting, bonds, and substitutes.
- No applications were pending at the end of the reporting period.

Key Point

The Industrial Commissioner efficiently handled gang-related activities in 2021, approving all gang transfer and delivery method change applications while maintaining no outstanding cases.

2.10. Gang Disputes

Table: Gang Disputes Handled in 2021

Category	Number of Cases
Gang Disputes Referred	77
Decisions Made	77
Pending Cases	0

Summary

- In **2021**, a total of **77 gang disputes** were referred to the Industrial Commissioner for resolution.
- The Industrial Commissioner issued decisions on **all 77 cases**.
- No gang dispute cases remained pending at the end of the year.

Key Point

The Industrial Commissioner successfully resolved all gang disputes referred during 2021, ensuring that every case received a decision within the reporting period.

REGISTER OF GROWERS

RACES – 2021

	LAUTOKA	RARAWAI	LABASA	TOTAL
INDIAN	4,290	5,331	3,473	13,094
FIJIAN	1,146	1,797	673	3,616
OTHERS	87	65	51	203
TOTAL	5,523	7,193	4,197	16,913

TOTAL

Race	Number	Percentage
INDIAN	13,094	77.42%
FIJIAN	3,616	21.38%
OTHERS	203	1.20%
TOTAL	16,913	100.00%

INDIAN - 13,094 77.42%

FIJIAN - 3,616 21.38%

OTHERS - 203 1.20%

16,913 100.00%

METHOD OF DELIVERY (2021)

Table 1: Method of Delivery by Mill Area

Method of Delivery	Lautoka	Rarawai	Labasa	Total
Portable Line	18	241	226	485
Tractor Trailer	1,582	1,435	1,116	4,133
Lorry Direct	3,923	5,511	2,855	12,295
Total	5,523	7,187	4,197	16,913

Table 2: Overall Distribution

Method of Delivery	Total	Percentage
Portable Line	485	2.87%
Tractor Trailer	4,133	24.43%
Lorry Direct	12,295	72.70%
Total	16,913	100.00%

Summary

- A total of 16,913 growers delivered cane in 2021.

	• Lorry Direct was the most common delivery method, used by 12,295 growers (72.7%). • Tractor Trailer was used by 4,133 growers (24.4%). • Portable Line was used by only 485 growers (2.9%). • Across all mill areas, Lorry Direct remained the preferred method of cane transportation. Key Point The sugar industry relied heavily on Lorry Direct delivery, with nearly three-quarters of growers using this method to transport cane to the mills in 2021.																																																																																									
FORM OF LAND TITLE (2021) Table 1: Land Title by Mill Area <table><tr><th></th><th>Form of Land Title</th><th>Lautoka</th><th>Rarawai</th><th>Labasa</th><th>Total</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>Native Land</td><td>3,429</td><td>3,884</td><td>3,262</td><td>10,645</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Crown Lease</td><td>1,289</td><td>2,059</td><td>703</td><td>4,054</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Freehold</td><td>541</td><td>986</td><td>170</td><td>1,705</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Vakavanua</td><td>260</td><td>245</td><td>3</td><td>509</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Total</td><td>5,521</td><td>7,192</td><td>4,136</td><td>16,913</td></tr></table> Table 2: Overall Distribution <table><tr><th>Form of Land Title</th><th>Total</th><th>Percentage</th></tr><tr><td>Native Land</td><td>10,645</td><td>62.9%</td></tr><tr><td>Crown Lease</td><td>4,054</td><td>24.0%</td></tr><tr><td>Freehold</td><td>1,705</td><td>10.1%</td></tr><tr><td>Vakavanua</td><td>509</td><td>3.0%</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>16,913</td><td>100.0%</td></tr></table> Summary • A total of 16,913 growers were registered in 2021. • Native Land was the dominant form of land tenure, accounting for 10,645 growers (62.9%). • Crown Lease was the second most common land title, with 4,054 growers (24.0%). • Freehold land accounted for 1,705 growers (10.1%). • Vakavanua land represented the smallest category, with 509 growers (3.0%). • Native Land was the most common form of land title across all three mill areas. Key Point Most sugarcane growers operated on Native Land, highlighting its importance as the primary land tenure system in Fiji's sugar industry in 2021.		Form of Land Title	Lautoka	Rarawai	Labasa	Total		Native Land	3,429	3,884	3,262	10,645		Crown Lease	1,289	2,059	703	4,054		Freehold	541	986	170	1,705		Vakavanua	260	245	3	509		Total	5,521	7,192	4,136	16,913	Form of Land Title	Total	Percentage	Native Land	10,645	62.9%	Crown Lease	4,054	24.0%	Freehold	1,705	10.1%	Vakavanua	509	3.0%	Total	16,913	100.0%	FORM OF LAND TITLE BY GENDER (2021) Table 1: Land Title by Gender <table><tr><th></th><th>Gender</th><th>Vakavanua</th><th>Native Lease</th><th>Crown Lease</th><th>Freehold</th><th>Total</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>Female</td><td>79</td><td>1,409</td><td>455</td><td>203</td><td>2,146</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Male</td><td>423</td><td>9,184</td><td>3,580</td><td>1,473</td><td>14,660</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Others</td><td>7</td><td>52</td><td>19</td><td>29</td><td>107</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Total</td><td>509</td><td>10,645</td><td>4,054</td><td>1,705</td><td>16,913</td></tr></table> Summary • A total of 16,913 growers were registered in 2021. • Male growers accounted for the majority, with 14,660 registrations (86.7%). • Female growers accounted for 2,146 registrations (12.7%). • Other gender categories accounted for 107 registrations (0.6%). • Native Lease was the most common land title across all gender groups, with 10,645 registrations. • Crown Lease accounted for 4,054 registrations, while Freehold and Vakavanua accounted for 1,705 and		Gender	Vakavanua	Native Lease	Crown Lease	Freehold	Total		Female	79	1,409	455	203	2,146		Male	423	9,184	3,580	1,473	14,660		Others	7	52	19	29	107		Total	509	10,645	4,054	1,705	16,913
	Form of Land Title	Lautoka	Rarawai	Labasa	Total																																																																																					
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	Others	7	52	19	29	107																																																																																				
	Total	509	10,645	4,054	1,705	16,913																																																																																				

509 registrations respectively.

3.0. Financials

SUGAR INDUSTRY TRIBUNAL
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

	Notes	2021 \$	2020 \$
INCOME			
Government grant - operational		364,553	389,722
Other income	4	4,850	13,198
Total income		369,403	402,920
EXPENDITURE			
Personnel expenses	5	247,649	237,492
Operating expenses	6	27,503	24,273
Administrative expenses	7	108,577	108,459
Depreciation	10	12,324	13,198
Total expenditure		396,053	383,422
(Deficit) / Surplus		(26,650)	19,498
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total Comprehensive (Loss)/Income for the year		(26,650)	19,498

Source: The information is adopted from SIT AR 2021, p33.

4.0. SDG ANALYSIS

SDG 1: No Poverty

The Tribunal plays a critical role in supporting the livelihoods of **16,913 registered growers**. By overseeing the "Master Award" and ensuring growers received a total of **\$85.00 per tonne** for the 2021 season (including a government top-up of \$13.34), the organization helps maintain economic stability for thousands of families. Furthermore, the management of **Employee Benefit Funds**, such as the Social Security Benefit Fund which approved over \$38,000 in loans, provides a financial safety net for industry workers.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

The report provides transparent data on gender representation within the sugar industry, which is a starting point for addressing inequalities.

- **Grower Demographics:** Of the total registered growers, **2,146 are female**, while 14,660 are male.
- **Production:** Female growers contributed significantly to production, including **128,991 tonnes** from Indo-Fijian women and **24,506 tonnes** from iTaukei women.
- **Land Ownership:** Statistics show that women hold titles across various land forms, including **1,409 native leases** and **455 crown leases**.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

The Tribunal's mandate to promote "efficiency and development" directly aligns with fostering economic growth.

- **Industrial Relations:** The Industrial Commissioner processed **157 gang transfer applications** and **77 gang disputes**, ensuring smooth labor operations and protecting worker rights through regulated agreements like the Memorandum of Gang Agreement (MOGA).
- **Economic Stability:** By certifying deductions and ensuring the fair distribution of sugar and

molasses proceeds, the Tribunal ensures the industry remains a viable pillar of the national economy.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

The report highlights the coordination of the "crushing season" across the **Lautoka, Rarawai, and Labasa mills**. The Tribunal also handles legal matters involving the **Sugar Research Institute of Fiji (SRIF)**, supporting the scientific and innovative framework necessary for the industry's long-term sustainability.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

The Tribunal monitors equity across different ethnic groups and land tenure systems.

- **Ethnic Representation:** The report tracks growers by race, showing a population that is **77.42% Indian, 21.38% Fijian, and 1.2% others**.
- **Land Tenure:** It tracks the transition of **ALTA expired leases**, noting that in 2021, 53 new registrations were issued to incoming iTaukei landowners and 42 to Indo-Fijian tenants, ensuring a regulated process for land access.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

This is the Tribunal's primary area of impact. As a statutory body, it embodies the goal of building effective and accountable institutions.

- **Access to Justice:** Its core objective is to provide means for **conciliation and dispute settlement** with "maximum expedition and minimum legal technicality".
- **Accountability:** The report includes an **independent auditor's report** from the Auditor-General, which gave an unqualified opinion, confirming the Tribunal's adherence to international financial reporting standards.
- **Governance:** The Tribunal ensures that all parties, including the Fiji Sugar Corporation, comply with the **Sugar Industry Act** and the **Master Award**.

5.0. Suggested Questions

- ❧ What specific enforcement actions or penalties were considered against the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) for its failure to inform the Tribunal of its intent to purchase the National Harvest Quota and all cane as required under Regulation 5.6 of the Master Award? **(Page 3)**
- ❧ Out of 125 new registration applications, 58 were rejected; what were the primary grounds for these rejections, and how does this affect the objective of industry development? **(Page 7)**
- ❧ In 2021, a total of 95 new registrations were issued on ALTA-expired leases, yet zero registrations were issued to sitting tenants; what are the policy implications of this trend for land stability and tenant welfare? **(Pages 8, 21)**
- ❧ Given the Tribunal's ruling that the FSC acted "unlawfully" by not deducting grower contributions for the Sugar Research Institute of Fiji (SRIF), what mechanisms have been established to prevent future statutory breaches by the Corporation? **(Page 24)**
- ❧ The independent auditor's report and the Registrar's statement were not signed until August and September 2025; can the Tribunal explain the four-year delay in finalizing the 2021 financial statements and the impact this has on public transparency? **(Pages 29, 32)**
- ❧ Can the Tribunal provide details on the **"Write off NIR receivable" of \$181,722** and the **"Understated cash on hand"** mentioned in the prior year restatements? **(Page 42)**
- ❧ What is the nature of the \$11,646 receivable from "S.K. Trust" (a related party), and why has this



balance remained unchanged between 2020 and 2021? (Page 42)

23 July 2026

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ANNEX 3

VERBATIM REPORT

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON **ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

ANNUAL REPORT

Ministry of Sugar Industry Annual Report 2021 and 2022

SUBMITTEES: (1) Ministry for Sugar
 (2) Sugar Industry Tribunal
 (3) Sugar Cane Growers Fund

VENUE: **Big Committee Room, Parliament**

DATE: **Tuesday, 8th September, 2026**

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AFFAIRS HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS ON TUESDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER, 2026 AT 9.20 A.M.

Present

Hon. S. Tubuna	-	Chairman
Hon. P.D. Kumar	-	Deputy Chairperson
Hon. S.T. Koroilavesau	-	Member
Hon. A.N. Tuicolo	-	Member

Interviewee/Submittee: Ministry of Agriculture, Waterways and Sugar Industry

In Attendance:

(1) Dr. Andrew Tukana	-	Permanent Secretary
(2) Mr. Praneel Naidu	-	Director Operations
(3) Ms. Rinu Dayal	-	Principal Economic Planning Officer – Sugar Industry
(4) Mr. Nitin Singh	-	Manager, Human Resources – Sugar Industry

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, members of the media and the public and the secretariat, ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to you all and it is a pleasure to welcome everyone to this public hearing session. At the outset for information purposes, pursuant to Standing Order 111 of the Standing Orders of Parliament, all Committee meetings are to be open to the public. Therefore, this submission meeting is open to the public and the media and it is aired live on Parliament's channel through the *Walesi* platform and live streamed through the Parliament's *Facebook* page.

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 this will not only be allowed in a few specific circumstances which include;

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

I wish to remind all honourable Members and our invited submittees that all comments and questions to be asked are to be addressed through the Chairperson. Also be mindful that only the invited submittees will be allowed to ask any questions or give comments to the Committee.

This is a Parliamentary meeting and all information gathered here is covered under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act and the Standing Orders of Parliament. Please note that the Committee does not condone libel or slander or any allegations against any individual that is not present today to defend themselves.

In terms of other protocols of this Committee, be advised that whilst the meeting is in progress, movement within the meeting room will be restricted. There should be minimal usage of

mobile phones, whereby answering of mobile phones should be done outside this room and all mobile phones are to be on silent mode.

I would like to introduce myself and following this I will the honourable Members introduce themselves.

(Introduction of Committee Members)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- With us this morning, is our first submittee who are the representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Waterways and Sugar Industry, which the Committee has invited to provide us their submission on the Ministry of Sugar Industry Annual Report 2021 and 2022.

The purpose of the submission is to assist the Committee in its examination of the Ministry's performance, programmes, policies and strategic initiatives undertaken to support the development and sustainability of Fiji's sugar industry.

The Committee also seeks to gain a better understanding of the Ministry's achievements, challenges, financial and operational performance, stakeholder engagement and measures being implemented to improve industry productivity, profitability and long-term growth. With this brief introduction, I now take this time to invite our submission guests to introduce themselves and after that I will ask the Ministry to make a short presentation and following that we will have another question-and-answer session. You do not have to go through the whole submission that you have prepared but just provide an overview of the achievements that are being made for that specific year, the constraints and other challenges.

(Introduction of representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Waterways and Sugar Industry)

DR. A. TUKANA.- Mr. Chairman, if I may say a few opening remarks. To start off, the Annual Report before the Committee provides an account of the Ministry's activities and performance for the 2021-2022 Financial Year. The sugar industry has been an important pillar of Fiji's economy for many generations. It has supported thousands of farming families, has provided employment throughout the cane belt, generated export earnings and supported a significant rural economic ecosystem.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that the industry has experienced a long-term decline in productivity and competitiveness. This decline is not attributable to one single issue, it is the result of a combination of factors, such as ageing mills infrastructure, ageing farmers, labour shortages, land tenure issues, conversion of arable land into housing and other development, increasing production costs, climate change, declining soil health, transport challenges and changes in the international sugar market.

I put forward this morning, that we should not look at the sugar industry only through the lens of what it has achieved historically. However, we must also ask what the industry needs to become if it is to remain viable for the next generations to come. I have a few areas that we would like to look at, however, I can leave that to the discussions that will follow.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You would like to make a short presentation on what was achieved during the year that we are currently scrutinising, in terms of the achievement, what are the challenges and following that, then we can have a question-and-answer session.

DR. A. TUKANA.- Mr. Chairman, I would like to request the Director....

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, I think the Permanent Secretary started off very well and he wanted to tell us some of the things they want to do. That is a very important point that we would like to hear, since we already know the problems in the industry, however, now you want to share with us the way forward, and perhaps after that, you can very briefly

DR. A. TUKANA.- Mr. Chairman, I have a list of ways that we think we should move forward on to improve the industry and the sector. I think one of the most important ones is the industry needs reform. Since taking over the portfolio, our focus has been on reforming the industry rather than just simply maintaining the status quo. Even though the Government has been continuing to provide substantial support to the farmers in the industry, we need to try and maintain some of that, but the Government cannot alone support the long-term solution. We cannot continue to indefinitely address structural problems through subsidies and short-term interventions.

The industry needs to become more productive, efficient, commercially sustainable and climate resilient. This requires reform across the entire value chain, around production, housing, transportation, milling, research and development, land use, farmer services, mechanisation and value addition. The recent merger of the sugar industry or portfolio with the agriculture portfolio provides an important area that we can take advantage of. These are to:

- integrate agricultural extension services with the sugar sector;
- strengthen research and technology transfer;
- have a better coordination mechanism;
- align sugar production with water and land management;
- reduce the duplication between government agencies;
- improve the delivery of services to farmers; and
- take a whole-of-sector approach to rural development.

The second one we have is diversification. This is a very important area in terms of trying to uplift the livelihoods of those farmers who are unproductive as sugar remains as an important industrial and will continue to play a significant role in Fiji's economy. However, we need to recognise that every farmer or every piece of land will not remain economically viable for sugarcane farmers indefinitely. As I mentioned earlier, for a small holder farmer, the economics can be challenging because the input costs are high. The labour is increasingly difficult to obtain. Harvesting costs are high. Transportation costs are also high and climate events can severely affect production. The farmer has limited ability to achieve economies of scale with a small scale of production.

Our approach is we need to create an environment where small holder farmers have options. And these options will focus on the production of vegetables, fruits, wood crops, legumes, high value horticulture, livestock, as well as systems of intercropping, crop rotation, and agro-processing opportunities. The objective is to allow farmers to generate additional or alternative income streams to reduce their dependence on a single commodity like sugar.

This also has wider national benefits, and will relate to stronger food security, reduce dependence on imported food and improve rural incomes and livelihood, have greater climate resilience and opportunities to supply the tourism industry and the development of agro processing of potentially higher value export commodities. Diversification should not be viewed as moving away from sugar. It should be viewed as giving farmers more choices and ensuring that land is used for the activity that provides the best sustainable economic return.

I also mention here that the European Union Diversification Study has already started. Phase one has been completed, and we are currently waiting for the report to come in soon. A bit of background regarding the study, the EU team was in Fiji in June 2026 and undertook the first phase of field and analytical work. The first phase is intended to give Government evidence, based on where sugar remains commercially viable, where diversification may provide better returns, where integrated farming systems can be appropriate, and what markets and value chains can support those alternatives.

Based on the information, that report from the first phase will inform the second phase, which will also include a potential pilot intervention from the project. We are not proposing a wholesale transition away from sugarcane, we want the evidence to tell us where sugar should remain, where diversification makes economic sense and where an integrated farming model can provide the greatest return.

The other area as we move forward honourable Members is mechanisation. We already have a lot of this happening within the agricultural portfolio. We also have a lot of that happening within the sugar portfolio. However, at this point in time, we all know that there is a huge shortage of labour. I think the way for us to go forward is to have sustainable mechanisation programmes.

Manual harvesting is one of the things that is currently happening and is becoming more difficult and costly. However, mechanisation also needs to be expanded, particularly where it can reduce production costs and improve harvesting efficiency. The Committee may have also heard some of the problems we have with mechanical harvesting. Most of these machines just work on areas that are flat and not easily able to harvest on hilly terrain.

The Government has already supported cooperatives and service providers with mechanical harvesters, with fertiliser applicators and sugarcane planters. We are also continuing to examine mechanisation solutions that are suitable for Fiji's different terrain. I think the team had also made a trip this year or last year, just to see some of the harvesters or mechanical harvesters that they have overseas that may be applicable to Fiji's condition.

Another area is milling and infrastructure. We also need to be realistic about the condition of the industry's physical infrastructure as Fiji's mills are very old and significant expenditure is required to maintain those plants, equipment and safety standards. However, maintenance alone is not enough. We need to improve milling efficiency and sugar recovery. The cane quality, milling efficiency, factory performance, and recovery are also equally important.

Mr. Chairman and Members, there is the roads and transport networks. At the moment, we have more than 90 percent of cane which is transported by road and less by rail. Even though we had invested, the Government invested a lot of money to upgrade those rails over the last few years. The cane access road network is extensive; however, it requires continuous maintenance, upgrading, and flooding and climate events can quickly reverse planned infrastructure work. However, the rail remains important in selected areas and a complete return to rail would require significant time and capital investment. Therefore, our approach needs to be practical and economically sustainable, combining road, rail, and improved logistics where appropriate.

Mr. Chairman, there is also the area around climate resilience. We have all heard about El Nino that is starting to impact us, and drought is a major concern for all of us. So, climate change is no longer a future consideration. The industry is already experiencing flooding, waterlogging, saltwater intrusion, cyclones, and periods of drought.

Our work therefore needs to move from responding to climate disasters to being prepared for them. This means we must have drought tolerant varieties for crops, not only for sugar but also for other crops as well. We must have better water management, better drainage and soil moisture conservation practices incorporated into our practices. We need to improve agronomic practices. We must have more crop diversification, and importantly, we must have better early warning systems.

The integration of agriculture, waterways and sugar gives Government a stronger platform to address these issues and to have a better coordinated approach. As I had mentioned earlier, the other one is on institutional reforms. We have many institutions around the sugar sector, and we are now looking at, for example, the council members for the Growers Council. We had been working with them recently for them to write up a Terms of Reference (TOR) to see how best we can have the elections to bring those councillors back to be able to give strategic direction to the Sugar Cane Growers Council. That is one of the things we are working on.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Considering that sugar is back with agriculture, I expected the Permanent Secretary to discuss what the quick gains are that you see in this sector. Some of the things that you have mentioned is sort of long term. It is not going to happen overnight. There are certain areas because we have been looking at sugar industry for a while, if you review the Committee's Reports, you will see the areas which we have mentioned along with the recommendations on what needs to be done very quickly. I will give you an example. Why can we not have the whole sugar sector have one board only for synergies rather than each institution having its own board, there is a lack of synergy. What is your thought on this?

DR. A. TUKANA.- Mr. Chairman, if I may respond, since these boards have legislation that they operate with, if we can make it into one board then obviously, we need to review the Acts or legislation they work with. One of the short-term things that we are looking into now is, for example, on the Growers Fund Board, we need to have representatives from all these entities. However, we see most of that is not happening or is limited. There must be someone to represent the farmers sitting on that board and someone from the Sugar Cane Growers Council when their current terms expire, who are the most appropriate people who can sit in. I totally agree with you, to have one board or one neck for them to operate under will be more streamlined and efficient. However, the only issue is for us to be able to review that legislation and see how best they can get it to do that.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- We talk about the legislation being a barrier in this case, however, I am sure the legislation must be specific as to who the representatives would be for each board. Now, if you select individuals for say FSC and if other legislations say the same thing, then that means that they can be placed on other boards as well. I hope that the Ministry for Agriculture is going to look at that as soon as possible because then only we will be able to see synergies.

Now, you also mentioned that sugar being with Ministry for Agriculture means that extension services will be available. We also know that there are Field Officers with FSC. That does not make sense. Is there any plan to get them over either with SRIF so that they can roll out some of the new varieties of cane, soil testing and leaf analysis, et cetera? Can they help? Is there any immediate plan to sort that out or is it still linked to the legislation?

DR. A. TUKANA.- We had discussions over the last month or so and prior to that, we had already been talking about this issue. The field services exist within FSC. However, some of those works cannot be carried out by SRIF because they do not have the manpower. So, we are closely working with them to ensure how best we can work together and take out some of these new technologies. We have already noted that limitation and we are working with them very closely to ensure we....

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Our concern is, we have been making recommendations and things are not moving in the right direction. This is a Parliamentary Committee. After public consultation, after meeting the stakeholders, particularly the growers, they also do not see value in some of these institutions as well as the staff being wrongly placed in an institution that is supposed to be focusing on milling rather than farm-related matters.

I do not have the page number but if I look at your 2021-2022 Report, there is a place where reference is made to about \$212,216, that is, 12 percent was given to Sugar Research Institute (SRIF) for the procurement of a fully developed analytical machine for soil and leaf analysis.

Now, I see there is value in getting the right equipment to get the job done, just like SRIF has been working extremely hard in getting new varieties of cane which is suitable for our climatic condition. However, our finding has shown that there is very low uptake. There is no point getting the research done, with lots of money being spent plus the staff being paid, however, if there is no uptake for those varieties, if there is no push for that variety that has been a problem in the sugar industry, how do you think you are going to deal with this particular issue?

MR. P. NAIDU.- For the uptake of new varieties, for the uptake of husbandry practices, the uptake of a lot of the larger farmers, they do take on board the recommendations by SRIF. Unfortunately for the smallholders, as we have identified, a lot of farmers producing 100 tonnes, 150 tonnes or less, they are very hesitant to take that on board, because they are used to a certain variety, for example, *mana* in this case. A lot of farmers do not want to move from *mana*.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Can I stop you here? What I would like to hear is percentages, not a lot of farmers. You give us precise percentage of those farmers who have taken up the new varieties. If you do not have the number now, you can submit it to our Secretariat, because that will clarify the doubt we have. Similarly, like we have with the soil and leaf analysis, and when you talk to the fertilisers and the farmers, there is only one type or two types of blends of fertilisers, which is going into the soil without soil analysis. There are a lot of issues, which I hope you all understand and that needs to be sorted out. That is all I wanted to raise.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Looking at 2021-2022 and the considerable subsidy provided during those years to support farmers, one of the concerns that we have is, subsidies have been provided to all the farmers without any clear targeting, and given that, only 20 percent of the farmers might be producing 80 percent of the total tonnage, while the other 80 percent of farmers are not performing. Are there any ideas of how you can better target as this will also go down to how do we strategise the way forward for the industry?

I was in Labasa the other day, we agreed that the new way forward now is, only the bigger farms will survive. The smaller farms are the ones that we are going to be targeting for this diversification. Can you identify some ways in which you can target the assistance towards those who are contributing significantly to their production?

MR. P. NAIDU.- Mr. Chairman, you have picked on it quite aptly when you said that 80 percent of the farmers are getting the benefit, but they are not producing the yields that we want them to produce. Unfortunately, the current grant is set as such that, around 50 percent or more goes into cane top-up payment. Generally, everyone has access to that. If you want to have a way forward, then we need to set some tiers. We have set tiers for the Sugar Cane Development and Farmer's Assistance Programme, whereby if you are producing 100 tonnes or less, you get access to one hectare of planting or replanting, that is \$2,000 per hectare. If you are producing between 100 tonnes to 300 tonnes, you get access to two hectares, which is \$4,000. If you are producing more than 300

tonnes, then you have access to four hectares or above even that four hectares of replanting, which is \$8,000 or more, that is based on tier level systems. That is something we are looking at.

We cannot say with confidence that it will work for all programmes, but it has worked for Sugar Cane Farmer's Development Programme. We are also looking into fertiliser subsidy, how we can implement such a tier system. For sugar stabilisation, which is the cane top-up, it might prove a lot more difficult because we want farmers to get access to one benefit, to pass along to everyone. We cannot have a tier system in cane top-up.

We are also looking at how we can set up a system, which is more reward system based rather than a generic payout to all farmers, no matter what they achieve. We had introduced a farm incentive programme, but that was based on, if you increase your yield, your production from the previous season, you get \$5 per tonne additional benefit on every tonne of cane additional you produce. However, it has not really yielded the results that we required of it. This year we are going to re-divert that into probably Green Cane Farmer's Incentive Programme. Those farmers who supply green cane, will get the benefit of that programme. There are some areas where we are manoeuvring. and looking at other ways, we can get the programmes to yield the better results, so it is a work in progress.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Permanent Secretary, you raised some very important points relating to the way forward, diversification, mechanisation, building infrastructure, roads, climate resilience, institutional reform, et cetera. One of the issues that I think needs to be attended to is also land use planning. Land use is very important. And if you are going to have a strategy for the future, we need to know how much land we have.

Currently we have about 50,000 hectares, but only 20,000 hectares is being used. Where are the rest? We must start with availability of land, how many farmers that we can have. I think that is an area too that needs to be urgently addressed. A national Land Use Plan, iTLTB is doing this, but it is only for their interest. We must have a national land use plan where we demarcate all the flat areas to be used for agriculture. On the hill lands then you move up other land uses like commercial, housing, et cetera. This has been done in other countries, but I think to maintain the sugar industry and agriculture we need to have those nuclear plants not to be made.

DR. A. TUKANA.- Your points are noted, Mr. Chairman. Within the sugar portfolio, we are already starting to work with them because they have drones that can do mapping. We also have our team with us at Land Use. So, one of the things that we came to see when we got in was, they estimate the potential cane production based on the land area without looking to see in those parcels of land, how much is actually used to grow cane, and the rest is left idle.

That is something that we are also working very closely with them on and with our team to now try and map out all those farms and see what is actually being used for cane production and what can be used for other types of crops or livestock and also to probably do some tests around the soil that can give us an idea on what to grow on the soil that are being unutilised. But I also note your point, Mr. Chairman, that there also needs to be collaboration with the Ministry of Land in developing that larger land use plan.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Mr. Chairman, through you, I have a question on the labour issues. We recognize that the farm labour shortages are immediate challenges for the industry driven by declining willingness to do manual harvesting and understaff harvesting gangs. Beyond the Fiji Corrections Service' operation *Musu Dovu* Initiative, has your Ministry discussed partnering with the Ministry for Youth and Sports to engage youth or sports groups to assist our kid farmers?

DR. A. TUKANA.- I think we still need to discuss that with them. That point is very important and noted because we cannot totally rely on the Corrections Service to do most of that. But one of the other ways we are looking at, it was just to use the mechanical harvesters and also support some of the manual harvesting through some of the grants that we are providing. We will certainly work closely with the other ministries, the Ministry for Youth and Sports to explore other opportunities.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman my question is more related to the findings we have made on the ground. When we moved around from different farm area, the farmers were complaining about stray animals, wild pigs, stray livestock and horses, and this is serious damage they have done to their farms.

What we heard in Lomawai where the farmers took initiative of gathering the stray livestock in one area and they had made a call to Ministry for Agriculture but then they did not have a vehicle, the vehicle was somewhere in Ba. They waited patiently and by the time the vehicle was supposed to reach them, the animals jumped over the fence and disappeared. They expressed their frustration because the losses are borne by the farmers and not by Ministry of Agriculture or by anyone else. How can the Ministry of Agriculture improve? I understand that you are doing some poundage, or whatever your legislation allows you to do, however, I think there must be a quick sort of helpline or some kind of mechanism where they can make a call and the nearest staff can attend to them. The current mechanism is not working, considering the number of complaints we received.

DR. A. TUKANA.- Mr. Chairman, stray animals are a huge issue now and we understand that; however, it boils down as well to the owners of those livestock. For example, once we capture a cow, the owner will say it does not belong to him after that cow has done damage to someone else's plantation and if you put it in a pound, someone will come and claim it. All these issues are there.

At the moment we are reviewing the Brands and Pound Act, which is under the five Acts that govern the work being done. The first five that we are reviewing for this financial year, for example, the PS and the Minister have more powers to make quick decisions.

Currently, we have this issue of bovine brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis happening in Fiji in cattle. We have constructed pounds in certain areas where we know that there is a high population of animals.

The law says that the people in those areas can take those animals to the nearest pound, so once the animals are in there, then after a certain time, then it will be open to auction. If not, then the owners can come and collect those animals after paying the fee for that retention in the pound.

However, when these animals mix, there is the potential of transmission of tuberculosis from an infected animal to a clean animal. The Act is limited, so the owners of those animals can still come, make a declaration and remove the animals. These are some of the things that we are trying to address. Currently, it does not allow us to and once the animals are released, they become a problem again when they are left to roam freely because the owners are not ensuring that they fence them or that they tether them even if they are just a few.

In a way, it is very similar to stray dogs, where the owners are not responsible enough. They do not ensure that their dogs are confined, dogs go out without licenses, they can kill or they bite somebody and it can also lead to an automotive accident where the person dies. They are not responsible enough and we are trying to raise this awareness that if you own livestock, you also need to be responsible to feed them, to give them water to drink and to ensure that they do not roam.

I take note of your point, honourable deputy Chair, that we need to have a mechanism. One of the things we can also do is, if we see that there are large numbers of cattle or horses on the road and if it is reported to us, then we can also do a campaign to go and capture them and take them to a pound. This is what we have been doing over the years, however, we just need those reports to come up to us very quickly.

Obviously, these landowners or farmers will not have transport as well to capture them, to take them to the nearest bound. Some of these animals are quite feral and can cause injury to humans. I do understand where you are coming from and we will work very hard to ensure that we can streamline this mechanism.

If you drive through close to Lawaqa Road and you see that there are a lot of cattle, give us a call and we will try to ensure that we do a campaign, capture them and put them in the pound. However, the only issue is we are trying to review the Act now and they can still be released. If we had more power, then we would just put them into the pound or send them to the meatworker. That will reduce the numbers of animals in those areas. These are some of the areas that we are working on.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Rather than reviewing the whole Act, which can take time to do, but under section 51, you can make quick amendments, are you considering that because the issue is very big. I would suggest that under section 51 of the Standing Orders if you can just make few changes as quickly as possible so that this problem can be addressed. The farmers are not getting motivated, they are demotivated because it is a loss of income for them.

DR. A. TUKANA. - Mr. Chairman, the point is noted.

MR. CHAIRMAN. - Are there any other questions from the honourable Members?

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Permanent Secretary, you had stated that the expenses in the transportation sector for cane, both rail and road, even to reinvigorate the railway is going to be very expensive to get it back online. We had a discussion yesterday and you had stated that the team from the Ministry of Sugar had made trips overseas to look at other systems overseas.

I just wanted to ask if this extensive transportation of cane is going to be a huge challenge in regards to cost, has there been any studies for countries like India and Pakistan? They actually have juices where they actually have small factories in every big cane farming area where they extract the juice and then take the juice to the mill to actually mill it? Will that work? Has there been any consideration on that?

MR. P. NAIDU.- There has not been a specific study on that honorable Member. However, we have done some reading on that. The thing with extracting juice is if it is not delivered to the factory on time, leads to fermentation, it loses the sugar content. And currently in Fiji, even when we are milling it at the sugar mills, it is a bit of a challenge to convert it to crystal sugar. So for the time being, we are not actively looking into that. But if we get our mills upgraded, other things in place, then we probably might be able to revisit that area again.

MR. CHAIRMAN. - Thank you. Any other comments?

HON. P.D. KUMAR. - I do have a question related to two issues. One is the annual reports. I had raised it previously because it is all about parliamentary accountability. We have noted that the Ministry for Sugar Annual Reports have come in late. It is almost like four years late and the same thing applies to all other sugar entities except for FSC, and I think one other organisation but the rest

of them have been submitting their annual reports very late, in particular the Sugar Industry Tribunal which is extremely late. You are the Ministry for Sugar and you have to set an example to the rest of them. We note that the Ministry for Sugar has not set a good example and the others have followed suit. So that would be one of the challenges that the Ministry must take on board and ensure that all the annual reports are submitted on time for Parliamentary scrutiny. So, I just wanted to make a comment on that.

And then from your report itself, we do understand that the Ministry for Sugar, you have very few staff because you have been managing the funds generally. But reading your report, it says that two staff monitored about 860 farms and that is across seven different programmes. The question is, how do you ensure that the funds are utilised in the best possible way? Giving the fund is one thing, monitoring is another and ensuring that it is used effectively and wisely is another. How do you do that with two staff?

MR. P. NAIDU.- Honourable Member, in 2021-2022 Annual Report, we had only two monitoring officers. Since then, we have increased the monitoring officers to now four. We first do a lot of desktop analysis. We look at the report and reconcile it within the system to the farmers, and then individually, those are the 800 or 1,000 plus farmers we choose and physically monitor.

We have a monitoring system where we do a lot of desktop monitoring. We identify if there are gaps or areas where we can improve and we work with FSC. Mr. Chairman, FSC has this robust Field Information System (FIS) through which, we can monitor and track which subsidies have gone to which farmers and check with those farmers if the subsidies have reached them. By those accounts, we can with confidence say, that majority of the funds reach where it should – to the farmers.

However, as alluded to earlier, the return on those investments is another question altogether. We need to do a more detailed and thorough analysis of those investments we have done into those farmers, if they have yielded returns or not. That is one area which we believe we have lagged in and are looking to improve on that aspect as well. For example, fertiliser subsidy, previously we were providing \$20 million so, this year it is \$15 million. However, we have not been able to link if that subsidy has yielded the return it should return. The soil health is a problem, we understand the blend, there are only three blends available now, and it is not really based on the soil testing. The blends are just distributed based on if it is a plant crop, if it is a ratoon crop, as such. Those are some areas which we are looking to improve on, and once we get those areas in sync, we should be able to better report on those matters.

MR. CHAIRMAN. - I think from all the discussions that we have had, the subsidies and every support that we are giving to the industry is not yielding return, because we continue to note the substantial reduction in the production and the tonnage produced. In terms of whether it is yielding production, I do not think the return has been attained. That is why we need to be looking at what is the best way for the industry.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Chairman, I wanted to again look at the land use plan, working with iTLTB in that regard. We had visited a lot of areas in regards to the sugar industry. It has also been noted of increasing farm areas for non-productive farmers – the land that had been returned to the landowners. I am talking about the Western side, between Sigatoka and Lautoka. We have seen huge land areas that have been turned to bush and forest. This is basically an iTLTB issue. We have also seen good productive areas, mainly in Nadi and Lautoka, which have been turned into factories, industries and housing.

Mr. Chairman has stated that this is a national issue. We should try and resolve it. Honourable Premila has said, if you cannot change the whole Act, maybe you can ask the honourable Minister to bring in those portions that can be changed to correct it; iTLTB to look at the landowners' initiatives so that they gain maximum return. However, I think this is a national issue that we need to look at collectively so that we can maintain, if we want to maintain the sugar industry. I wanted to ask the PS, if you can make a comment on what I had stated.

DR. A. TUKANA.- Mr. Chairman, I think you are correct in saying that iTLTB just looks out for the landowners. They want the maximum gains they can get. However, on the other side, we are also thinking about the farmers who need to farm the land and survive. At the moment, the CEO for iTLTB is a Board member at FSC. That is one way we are trying to get him to see the other issues as well. But we certainly note your point that we need to work together with the other line ministries as well. For example, with the Ministry of Lands, when some of these lands need to be converted from agriculture to development, they come through us to do the groundwork, and then we normally give a recommendation that okay this land is still suitable for agriculture. We need to save it for agriculture, but the final decision is with the Minister of Lands. Those are some of the things that we need to work closely with them on, to ensure that we have a common goal at the end of the day.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I think we have come to the end of this session and of course, sugar is quite a priority. The Government is aware also that there is a special task force on sugar that is already being formed. And we are also gathering information, so all this information will also be part of the way forward. We will still have the sugar industry. When we were in Labasa, they questioned the Prime Minister whether sugar will continue. Of course, Government is committed to ensuring that the sugar industry remains to be there. But in what shape or form? That will be decided by the Special Committee on the Sugar Industry. We might have more or reduced. It must tie in also with the European Union, the diversification study, the FAO report that was produced three years ago, all these things must be put together for us to formulate the way forward. We cannot continue the way it is now. We cannot continue providing subsidies because we are also not encouraging other industries that need to be supported.

There is a big demand for coconut, cocoa, coffee and other produce. But we are subsidising only one industry, which is also counterproductive to the other agriculture industry, so sugar itself must be profitable, sustainable into the future, and of course, farmers must have some profit in gaining the livelihood and income, not from sugar on a sustainable basis.

On behalf of the Economic Affairs Committee, I would like to thank the Permanent Secretary and the team for availing yourselves to making your submission, and of course, we thank you for your time and hope that you will avail yourselves if the Committee has any other further queries and questions on this matter.

The Committee adjourned at 10.13 a.m.

The Committee resumed at 10.24 a.m.

Interviewee/Submittee: Sugar Industry Tribunal

In Attendance:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| (1) Mr. Timothy Brown | - | Registrar/Industrial Commissioner |
| (2) Mr. Semi Leweniqila | - | Sugar Industry Tribunal |
| (3) Ms. Winnie Niumataiwalu | - | Assistant Registrar |
| (4) Ms. Nisha Singh | - | Accounts Officer |
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MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, members of the media and the public, the secretariat, ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to you all and it is a pleasure to welcome everyone to this public hearing session.

At the outset, for information purposes, pursuant to Standing Order 111 of the Standing Orders of Parliament, all Committee meetings are to be open to the public. Therefore, this submission meeting is open to the public and the media and aired live on the Parliament's *Facebook* page. 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 few specific circumstances, which include:

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

I wish to remind our members and invited submittees that all comments and questions to be asked are to be addressed through the Chairperson. Also be mindful that only invited submittees will be allowed to ask any questions or give any comments to the Committee. This is a Parliamentary meeting and all information gathered here is covered under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act and the Standing Orders of Parliament.

Please note that the Committee does not condone libel or slander or any allegations against any individual that is not present today to defend themselves. In terms of other protocols, please be advised that once the meeting is in progress, movement within the meeting room will be restricted, there should be minimal use of mobile phones, whereby answering of the phone should be done outside of this room and all mobile phones are to be on silent mode.

(Introduction of Committee Members)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Our second submittee are representatives from the Sugar Industry Tribunal, which the Committee has invited to provide a submission on the Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Report 2021. The purpose of the submission is to assist the Committee with its examination of the Tribunal's performance and functions, operations, including its role in dispute resolution, stakeholder engagement, and effective administration.

The Committee also seeks to gain a better understanding of the Tribunal's achievements, challenges, strategic priorities, and measures being undertaken to improve service delivery and support the interest of sugarcane growers and industry stakeholders.

With this brief introduction I now take this time to invite our submission guests to introduce themselves before we proceed with the submission. I would ask you to introduce yourselves and following that we will just ask you to make a brief presentation on the report instead of going through the entire report that you have submitted.

(Introduction of representatives from the Sugar Industry Tribunal)

MR. T. BROWN.- We sent our presentation, however, I am not too sure whether they have put it up for presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I think it is very detailed. Perhaps you can just go through the main features of the Report. We will give you maybe 10 minutes just to go through it.

MR. T. BROWN.- Before the Registrar, I will ask the Assistant Registrar to present that part, and the Accounts Officer will present the accounts section.

MS. M. NIUMATAIWALU.- Our presentation provides an overview of the Sugar Industry Tribunal covering its 2021 Annual Report as well as the key operational and financial developments until to-date. Since 2021, we had a total of 16,913 registered growers. In comparing that to August 2026, there are 13,771 growers. There was an exercise that the Tribunal office had done in the year 2024 whereby there were 4,750 cancellations for all those non-productive growers. And for harvesting limit processing, there were 1,176 harvesting limits approved out of 1,255 forms applied to the Tribunal's Office. The cancellations were done in 2024, but there was a notice given to the growers for them to appeal if they do not want their contracts to be cancelled. There was a total of 1,325 growers reinstated to their old contract numbers.

MS. N. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, we would like to present our budget situation. Our balance as at 7th September, 2026 is \$912.34, immediate expenses to be met amounting to \$19,655.33, resulting in a loss of \$18,742.99. Our anticipated expenses are amounting to \$38,343.62. The Tribunal's office requires additional \$100,000 for its operational expenses.

Moving on, the financial performance for the year ended 31st December 2021. Income received was \$369,403, expenses were \$396,053, which resulted in a deficit of \$26,650 and the Auditors Report that we received for year 2021 was unqualified. Total assets amounting to \$100,353, total liabilities was \$40,159, which gave a net asset of \$62,194. The budget allocation and funding challenges. Budget allocation for financial year 2021 has always been well below our request for the current financial year.

MR. S. LEWENIQILA.- I will now address the questions that the Committee had written.

What measures are in place to minimize delays in the commencement and completion of the crushing season?

I am not too sure where the question is coming from, but basically the commencement of crush and the cessation of crush is outlined in the Master Award. The Tribunal will receive an application from FSC. The Tribunal will refer that to the Sugar Cane Growth Council. The Sugar Cane Growers Council will respond, the Registrar will meet the parties, and then once there is an agreement between the parties, the Registrar will advise the Tribunal to issue an order. That is the process. We have not had an issue about the lateness of the start, but basically what is taken into account is mill readiness. The mill has to be ready.

Secondly, the volume of matured cane. Before the season starts, the FSC field team will go out and breaks the cane in the middle to test the sugar quality. What we want to know is the volume of that cane, whether it is enough to supply the mill. So that will be taken into account.

Thirdly, the gangs and growers who are ready to harvest and this is measured by the number of memorandum of gang agreements that are delivered to the sector office. Some gangs wait two weeks after the crush and then they fill their memorandum of gang agreements. What we want to do is to ensure that we have enough gangs to start the mill, so that we have enough cane so that the mill can continue to crush. Those are the points that we have to take into consideration before the Tribunal can issue an order.

The second is the forecast price. This also relates to a question later, that is why it is kept a secret. I will share with you, and I ask you to keep this confidential but basically under the Master Award, the Tribunal Accountant, the Growers Accountant, and the FSC Accountant audit the books before the final cane price is announced. When we are making a forecast price, at that time we do an estimate on how many tonnes of cane will we harvest this year, how many tonnes of sugar we will make from that cane, what are the tonnes of cane per tonne of sugar, and how much molasses will we do. Then we estimate based on that and what we have been selling, how much will we get for sugar, and how much will we get for molasses.

In the 2026 estimates, we would have a total sugar sale of \$134, 663,000. For molasses, it is \$17,947,000. The total is \$152,811,000. There are some certified deductions taken, and the auditors will go through them, but we put an estimate of bulk loading, export and customs charges, insurance, wharf fees for sugar, wharf fees for molasses, marketing costs, lorry and trailer allowance. This is the lorry and trailer allowance that are paid back to the growers under the Master Award, and the molasses handling.

And this comes to about \$535, 309, 936 million. The total revenue for distribution is \$147, 301,346.18. The grower share is 70 percent. That is \$103.110,942 million is the grower's share. That is divided, and then from the grower's share, they also pay a one-third contribution for SRIF. That is taken out, and the growers also have a bundle insurance that is taken off the top for any issues, burnt houses, deaths. That is taken off the top because all the growers' benefit, and that is \$548,280.

So the net payable after all the deductions is \$101,024,247 and that is divided by the total amount of cane as I said before, \$1496,000. So the price of cane comes to \$67,000.53. That is money from sale of molasses and sugar.

Now, under the Master Award, the price of cane is reduced by 15 percent to take into account exchange rates that can fluctuate badly. That 15 percent of the 67 comes to 5740. Now over 5740, another Master Award again, the growers receive 60 percent of the forecast price. So that is \$34.44. And the second payment that is six weeks after comes to \$11.48. That is to answer the question of why is it so low?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, if I can ask some questions related to that. We went around, we had conversations with the farmers, we met the Sugar Cane Growers Council et cetera. One of the concerns raised by the farmers, wherever we visited, they felt that there was less disclosure on how the forecast price was calculated. They said they do not even know how much sugar was sold at what price in the international market. So they felt that when we talk about the sugar industry, without the farmers there is no sugar industry, which is a fact because they are funding FSC, they are funding everyone else. Even the exchange rate and wharfage fee and everything.

But unfortunately for farmers, it is really a sour deal. We understand that Master Award was made in the colonial era and unfortunately from that time with few amendments, we are still carrying on the same mechanism which is not doing justice to farmers. Even worse is, when they have to wait for 16 months or 15 months or whatever time frame to recover all their money from the first year's crop. They do have a very valid point in terms of airing their grievances and that is demotivating for farmers. We all understand when a copra farmer, when a *kava* farmer takes their produce, they are paid immediately. But unlike the sugar sector, a lot has to do with changing the Master Award and other legislations, et cetera.

My question to you is, what effort has been placed into changing the Master Award? Because when we put up a tribunal, I know it is very specifically stated what your roles are. And you need to create that fairness in the system, that is why you are there. But unfortunately from the farmer's point of view, the system is not fair to them. So what would you suggest? What changes are you going to propose? What can be done to make the system fair to every party, not just the millers, but to farmers as well.

MR. T. BROWN.- Mr. Chairman, maybe at the outset I should say that the Master Award was made not during the colonial era, it was made around the 1980s, that is way after independence and it was made during the heydays of the industry, when the industry was really making a lot. Now there is nothing sinister about it. I am sad that the farmers are thinking that in terms of working out the forecast price, there is some kind of dealings that is going in there that they are not aware of.

The representatives of the Sugar Cane Growers Council are very much aware of that. Our dilemma is, we are weighing sugar cane but selling sugar and it is not the same thing. The tonnage of your cane does not equate the sugar, so we will have to wait until the sugar is sold to determine. Therefore, the exercise in forecasting the price is really like neither here nor there, and we have to make an estimate based on most recent figures. The last time we did this exercise was about two years ago. We used that to forecast the cane price. The first or second payments for the cane growers are usually made before the actual money arrives is determined.

The 15 percent is the margin that we usually put in and the Tribunal, as a creature of statute, we work within what is in the law so we really cannot go outside of that in terms of the formula that is used to calculate that price, we have to be very careful because we cannot determine a forecast price that is good for them because farmers would naturally be wishful thinking, give us a good price but then experience will tell us that we are not producing that much.

At the end of the day, we cannot continue to pay at the level that they have seen at some other time. We are doing our best. We had some experiences with the figures not being quite accurate that affected the final determination of the forecast price as compared to the actual price that got paid.

To answer the question and to settle the farmers' anxiety in terms of how the forecast price is set, I would like to clarify that their interests are paramount in consideration of what price, however, at the same time, all other factors have to be considered as well.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you for THE clarification, since the farmers are listening and watching the television, this is for them to understand how the forecast price is actually calculated. We had further discussions with the Sugar Cane Growers Council and we felt that it is very important when they produce the newsletters for the farmers, all these issues need to be addressed through the newsletter so that farmers are well versed with the methodology, calculation, factors taken into consideration, et cetera, for clarity purposes. We understand that the word forecast is not real. It is what you are assuming would be.

So going back to what I meant was colonial era, the mechanism was same, except that it is now written clearly in the Master Award and we have carried that system forward for many decades. What is the best international practice? Is it still the same that farmers must wait several months before they are paid, or is the international best practice something else? It is important for the farmers to hear this.

MR. S. LEWENIQILA.- We paid farmers for sugar content. I think the world goes like that. If you farm, then you have to farm the right variety of cane that produces the best optimum result for you. That would be more of a fair playing field. The problem with us is that we are paying sugar cane tonnage and then selling sugar. To put it like a world level production system, if the system went back to you, will be paid according to how much sugar content is in the harvest that you produce in your cane.

For some time, we tried to put in some mechanism to do that, to pay when it started, however, due to Government policy, it stopped again. To seriously answer that question, fairly, the way to go, you get paid for sugar content rather than the weight of your cane.

MR. T. BROWN.- Just to add to what the Tribunal said, everyone is saying to change the Master Award. There are two parties to the Master Award - growers and the millers. The Tribunal cannot change the Master Award on its own, since this is an agreement between two parties.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- So, who facilitates between the two parties?

MR. T. BROWN.- The Tribunal will. The parties will have to make that submission. Like you are saying, they have not got this, they have not got that. They want a chance, the methods of payment. We have not got any submission from the Growers Council who are the representative of the growers about changing the cane formula or putting in a cane quality payment system. We are now working with a team from Australia, including the council, to look at ways we can introduce a cane quality payment system. But to do that, we have to get a submission. We cannot dictate, and say it has to be this. Someone has to make the submission. And on the other part, FSC will say, “it is going to affect our finances.” So, unless a party to the Master Award makes a submission, the Tribunal cannot make any changes.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- On that note, would you like to say....

MR. T. BROWN.- Yes, I was going to say that we have received directives from the Ministry for Sugar under the last Minister to consider reviewing the Master Award. We have started that process by forming a working group. We did not only include the Growers Council and FSC, but we have tried to include a wide group of stakeholders to come in and talk about how we could make changes to the Master Award. We had set ourselves a timetable by the end of the year, before November, that we come up with something.

It was interesting that at our first meeting, there has been a lot of talks about, even extremes like, let us just get away with the whole document and start along with it. But at the same time there were some reservations too, the Cane Growers Council and I think FSC as well seemed anxious about introducing other people into this. They said, “this is only ours, we should talk about it.” These are the challenges that we face. We want to change the document, but then some of the players in the group are resisting the change.

As a Tribunal, we tried forward looking and were saying, “let us talk about the document, how can we change it, do we do a new document altogether or amend the existing document?” We

started that process and we are hopeful that we get the buy-in from all stakeholders and at the end of the day it produces the....

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- I hope they all understand that if they do not want to cooperate then the Parliament will change the law and that would be the ultimatum, and that is not where we want to go because we would like to see that the industry thrives, survives and does better and we already know how the industry is sliding downwards.

Going back to my stakeholder consultation when the Committee went out, there was another issue raised by the farmers and it was to do with the Tribunal decision which is still pending on FSC planning to get rid of the railway network. I wanted to know when you receive something like this, what is the process involved and how long does it take to make a decision?

MR. R. SHARMA.- Madam, can we just go through the questions because that is one of the questions?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- No, that is fine. I mean, we can jump the questions. Basically, the process is under the Master Award that the Tribunal makes the decision to close or not to close a tram line. In the Rarawai case, FSC had applied to shut the tramline from Lausalutu Tawatawa point. That is the whole of the Tavua area.

Mr. Chairman, FSC's proposal was then sent to the Council for their submission. The Council in the details opposed FSC's submission. Based on that, it was put before the Tribunal. The Tribunal heard the cases. And as I said in my report to you, two things. first, you had only 88 growers using the tramline. Second, you have millions of dollars to spend to repair the tramline. So, the Tribunal had to make a decision one way or the other. The Tribunal found that we should just leave it as status quo, and if a party wants to come back, they can come back. That is why he said it is temporarily closed. All the growers who were involved have been compensated fully by FSC as a conversion allowance from rail to lorry. In the presentation we made, you will look at individual growers and what do they get for their conversion allowance. It is not closed for good, either party can come back.

As I shared with you, the honourable Minister then ordered the FSC to open the tramline. The FSC then went about fixing the tramline, but it did not get any money from the honourable Minister. Then the Rarawai Mill boiler caught fire, so the whole process shut down. The same issue for Lautoka. So little cane is coming by rail that any businessman will say let us shut it down. The Tribunal did not want to make the final order. It has left it as status quo so that if and when government decides to fix the rail or put in cage bins, then the rail is still there. That is the situation we are in.

MR. S. LEWENIQILA.- Mr. Chairman, the railway is indeed a big issue and it is central to the sugar industry. It is the best system that would work in terms of farmers, at the end of the day. The final cost of production would really help them out. However, FSC has a very strong case in that they cannot afford to maintain it and keep it going.

I, as the Tribunal, am in that kind of fix – do I go this way or do I go that way? If I order FSC to keep it open, they say, we simply do not have the money to keep it open. FSC has shown statistics, that even when the tramlines are open, they are not being used. Farmers have consistently asked the farmers' representatives to show proof that you will really use it because they want to have their cake and eat it too. They want to choose whether they will use the trucks, lorries, or use the railway line when it suits them. However, FSC does not have that luxury.

In terms of farmers trying to force the hand of the Tribunal to make a decision one way or the other, I feel is a bit overstepping the mark because the law clearly states that the Tribunal is to see the overall picture of what is good for the industry. The last experience that Mr. Brown talked about is that Lausalutu, where we made a decision in favour of FSC that it would be temporarily closed, but then FSC, because of a directive from government, said they will open it. Then they were going to open it and then promised that some money was going to come, but then it did not happen, and it went the other way around.

This time around, when the FSC is asking for closure of the whole tramline system, I feel, as the Tribunal, that is not a decision that should be put on us to make. It is an overall industry decision. We all know how tramlines are important, but to force the hand of the Tribunal to make a decision either way is, I feel, forcing us to enter into that political playground where people, without having the overall consideration which we are mandated to do.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- There has been a lot of talk on the railway, but I think the way forward is perhaps if you are going to have a sugar industry for the future, in order for it to be sustained, we still need railways. However, to come up with ways that you can also use it to transport the public.

You have to come up with a more innovative approach where it can be used also for the public instead of just six months. You can use it in order to sustain it, because the costs are quite exorbitant in terms of maintaining the current railway structure. I think that into the future we will sustain the industry and ensure that it is cost effective. We still need the railway, but we have to come up with new arrangements, maybe to have a sort of national railway system where we can have passengers also.

Another company can be involved. In six months, we can use it for cane and the other six months and maybe for 12 months you can use it for other users. If people want to watch the Drua in Lautoka, they can go from Nadi or from Suva to go and watch the game. But those are the sort of things that the Government has to take into account.

With the current structure that we have, it is very tight because the industry is not sustainable, production is declining, FSC is insolvent, so you have got all these issues there that needs not be addressed by Government.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Through you Mr. Chairman, this is in regards to the current versus the recommended yields. We understand that the average yield for Fijian sugarcane farmers currently stands at approximately 50 tonnes per hectare. However, to ensure long-term profitability and sustainability, growers need to achieve a target of at least 65 tonnes per hectare. Could you clarify what percentage of the registered growers are currently meeting or exceeding the 65 tonne benchmark? Additionally, what specific initiatives or support systems are planned to assist farmers whose yields fall below this target?

MR. S. LEWENIQILA.- Mr. Chairman through you, sorry, we do not have the data here, but we have the data in the office that we can send to the Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Perhaps you can provide that to Ms. Awantika, our secretariat in terms of detailed information.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Just one more question on the presentation that was made. It is about the new producers, and I think cancelling of the contract and then on appeal about thousand plus were reinstated. Can you explain if they did not produce anything and then when they appealed, the contract was reinstated. Can you explain that?

MR. S. LEWENIQILA.- Yes, under the Master Award, they are served a notice saying if they do not want their contract cancelled, they have got to show some reasons why their contract should be reinstated. And in most of these cases where they have decided to plant cane and they have one acre cane for harvest cancelled in 2024, planted cane in 2025, and harvested in 2026. So they apply using the form saying, “I planted one acre of cane last year and it is going to be harvested this year. Can my contract be reinstated?” That is when the contract is reinstated.

MR. T. BROWN.- We take deregistration seriously, because it is a cumbersome process to be registered. And because farmers, the wording of the law is such that we kind of have to give some leeway. The letter, the notice that goes out is, show cause why you should be permanently deregistered. So that is the provision where we sent out the letter then they prove that they can produce to that level and we give them that opportunity to continue. We really need the production level and we are desperate for the production level to be that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- One of the issues that we were discussing about the way forward and for the industry is to perhaps have bigger farms where we will be more profitable. Currently, if you have 100 tonnes, that is not going to be sustainable. And at the same time, perhaps maybe when you are registering farmers, because I noticed when you went to Nabou, not the other week, certainly iTaukei farmers wanting to come on board. It is about 100 to 150. So, if those farmers come in, they will not be sustainable. You have to look at bigger farms. Maybe perhaps more than 300 tonnes or 400 tonnes. Those will be the ones that will still survive under the current economic climate.

MR. S. LEWENIQILA.- That, Mr. Chairman, is definitely the way forward. There are numerous reports and I am sure you are aware of it. The FAO reports and numerous reports previously have considered that our small holder farms seems not to be working for the industry and bigger farms, more mechanisation and all those sort of things, will definitely be something that needs to be carefully considered.

We believe that it is for the lawmakers to make the necessary changes and we can implement those changes. The land holding, the farm size and all that is prescribed under law and that is all we work within and how much they are supposed to produce within their land allotment is all prescribed. So we are just working with what is there. If the laws are changed, in terms of forward-looking and what we want for the future, I am positive, as I can hear from the Chairperson, there is hope for the industry.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Just my last question, and I always talk about it, the late presentation of annual reports, it affects parliamentary scrutiny, et cetera. I mean we are talking about an annual report which is five years behind and I am sure things have changed over a period of time, so it is a sheer waste of time when we go over very old reports. Can the Tribunal assure the Committee that you will be able to complete the rest of the annual reports and submit on time or what is the issue that the annual reports were not able to be submitted on time?

MR. T. BROWN.- Yes, way back in 2016 we had a lot of issues. We had the accounts officer changed continually and we were able to get the 2021, the 2022 is now being audited and we are waiting for the audit report. We want to do the 2023 and 2024 before the end of the season and then 2025 and 2026. That is where we are at the moment. Things are now in place and we are looking forward to getting the 2022 before the end of September, so that we can use that to rollover the 2023, and then do the 2024 and 2025.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much, Mr. Brown. On behalf of the Economic Affairs Committee, I wish to sincerely thank the team from the Sugar Industry Tribunal for availing

yourselves for this submission meeting. We thank you for your time. and we hope that you will avail yourselves if the Ccommittee has any further queries on this matter.

The Committee adjourned at 11.09 a.m.

The Committee resumed at 11.32 a.m.

Interviewee/Submittee: Sugar Cane Growers Fund

In Attendance:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| (1) Mr. Raj Sharma | Chief Executive Officer |
| (2) Mr. Marika Luveniyali | Chairman, South Pacific Fertilizer Limited (SPFL) |
| (3) Mr. Tevita Madigibuli | Member |
| (4) Mr. Francis Pesamino | Finance Officer |
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MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, members of the media and the public, the secretariat, ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to you all. It is a pleasure to welcome everyone to this public hearing session.

At the outset, for information purposes, pursuant to Standing Order 111 of the Standing Order of Parliament, all Committee meetings have to be open to the public. Therefore, this submission meeting is open to the public and the media and is aired live on the Parliament's channel through the *Walesi* platform and live stream through the Parliament's Facebook page.

For any sensitive information concerning the submission that cannot be disclosed in public, this can be provided to the Committee either in private or in writing. But please note that this will only be allowed in few specific circumstances which include;

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

I wish to remind honourable Members and our invited submittees that all comments and questions to be asked are to be addressed through the Chairperson. Also, be mindful that only the invited submittees will be allowed to ask any questions or give comments to the Committee. This is a Parliamentary meeting and all information gathered here is covered for under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act and the Standing Order of Parliament.

But please note that the Committee does not condone libel or slander or any allegations against any individual that is not present here today to defend themselves.

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

(Introduction of Committee Members)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- With us this morning is our third submittee, the representatives from the Sugar Cane Growers Fund, which the Committee has invited to provide us a submission on the Sugar Cane Growers Fund 2023-2024 Annual Report. The purpose of this submission is to assist the Committee in its examination of the Fund's performance, governance, financial operations, and service delivery to sugar cane growers.

The Committee also seeks to gain a better understanding of the Fund's lending and support programmes, key achievements, challenges encountered, strategic priorities, and measures being implemented to enhance assistance to growers and contribute sustainably to Fiji's sugar development. With this brief introduction, I will take this time to invite our submission guests to introduce themselves before we proceed on with the submission. Please note that if there are any questions by the honourable Members, we will wait until you finish your presentation. Then we can have a question and answer session.

(Introduction of representatives from Sugar Cane Growers Fund)

MR. R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, we have our presentation, and we will just flick through the important points, and if you could put it to the viewpoint of it. These are the highlights that we have at the back of it. It is basically we look at briefly of the last findings and implementations. Then we will look at South Pacific Fertilizers Limited (SPFL) in particular because we had very limited discussions in SPFL. Also we will look at our products and services. Most of the key things that we will present is more to do with the changes and all those presentations that we have.

On the views, the first audit was to do with SPF presentations, financials and diversification. That, we will leave it for the Chair and the Board members to elaborate on that. Then it was to do on the implementation programme. Then we had a few things of Sugar Cane Growers Fund, on the products and services, how we are going to create the awareness, which we continue to do. It has been implemented.

One of the most important things in the past recommendations of the Committee was to look at our Act review. To update you, we are still with the Ministry. The Ministry of Finance had endorsed it last week, the Solicitor-General has advised to get it cleared by latest by this Friday. Then it goes to the Committee and thereafter to the Cabinet. Together with that, the mention of continuous awareness of our products and services was part recommendations that we have continued to do.

Latest challenges, I think some of the things that we have raised were to do with the industry. Since last two years, I think a number of initiatives have been rolled out together with most of the things, Mr. Chairman and Deputy Chair and honourable Members, we expected to come through the Sugar Select Committee. I am sure the committee is quite aware of that.

Now, let us move on. I think the particular is to do with the SPFL and we got the chair of SPFL to elaborate more on what SPFL intends to do.

MR. T. MADIGIBULI.- Mr. Chairman and honourable Members, as I have already mentioned, SPFL is a subsidiary of Sugar Cane Growers Fund and effectively, essentially, it provides service to the sugar industry, basically in terms of fertilizer. I think if you look back in history from 2009, after its establishment, the Government has been very, profound in supporting the sugar industry by way of fertilizer.

I just did an analysis over the past 18 months up to this financial year, I am talking about the government financial year, Government would have contributed \$244 million in terms of fertilizer. That is an average of about \$13.6 million. In addition to that, the weedicide and insecticide. And for the past 10 years, the Government has been very helpful in providing subsidy. By the end of July next year, Government would have contributed \$18 million by the end of the 10 years which is basically about \$1.8 million.

In our last meeting with the honourable Minister of Agriculture early this year, we were told that going forward, they want SPFL to look at diversification plans because of the need to reduce reliance on the Government, which we have taken note of and as a matter of fact, the new board was just appointed early this year, and I think this is one of the primary responsibilities that our strategic plan that will start effective from 1st January 2027. Over the next three to five years, we will look at diversification and what we are trying to see is that there is less reliance on the Government.

What we do not see and we plead for the Government not to just cut the finance off, at least reduce maybe the next five to 10 years, maybe it is declining rather than just cut it off immediately because it will result in financial loss to the company. We have a responsibility for the sugar farmers.

These are our primary people that we look forward to, and we know the contribution of the sugar industry to the national economy. Not only for the past year, but we also look back at the history. So, there is a huge number of populations that depends on sugar cane, and we want to see that Government will still partner as it has been the case over the past in terms of South Pacific fertilizer for the past 20 years.

That is basically what we want and some of the strategies that we have decided to look at what the current products are, the current offering that we have. What we are trying to do is try to expand not only in the volume, the character, the form. At the moment we are just concentrating on blending and supplying. We are trying to go into liquid fertilizer and also introduce the organic form as well.

We understand that the Government has just launched a few months back in January the Horizon 2000 food system security systems strategy and the National Agri Food Investment Plan. And I think the SPFL must also work with Government in ensuring that we look at the five pillars of this plan, which the Government has partnered with the economic partners, the European Union, and FAO as well.

We see an opportunity there, especially in terms of organic markets. Now people are living a lifestyle based on healthy lifestyle, eating habits, and we also to ensure that we go into that market. So, our focus is not only on the sugarcane, we want to expand our income stream towards the other crops as well, so that other farmers in the agriculture sector are not left behind.

So, this is basically what we plan to do. And not only that, but that is also the plan. If other crops, whatever we are doing at the moment, our current product, we are trying to improve on that because basically 90 percent of our products are basically towards the sugarcane industry and we want to divest that so that we get the other Fiji farmers in the other sectors as well they enjoy in terms of solid and liquid fertilizer and organic complement as well.

And that also goes with the weedicide and insecticide. At the moment, there is very little that we have, if you compare the 244 million against the 18 million, so that is also aware while we take into account the need to be sustainable going forward and in line with the Horizon 2030 Food System where we all agree the importance of our people, our citizens to live a healthy lifestyle. This is why we want to integrate the organic alternative as well.

Finally, we look at other farm products in terms of the ancillary. We want to supply an augmented service to the agriculture. That is basically what we want to do. We want to expand to the wholesale specialized farming equipment where growers and farmers need power driven sprayers, protective wear and also related equipment and in terms of technical agronomy service, as we look at a bundle farm package that is beneficial to the farmers going forward.

Lastly, with the time that we are in, we need to be innovative in terms of application fertilizer, we also look at the use of drone in terms of applying fertilizer and weedicide as well. These are basically the strategies that we are looking at.

In terms of the market access, we want to go regional. In terms of focussing on the Fiji market alone, we are looking at regional partners regional markets, Papua New Guinea is a huge market where they grow a lot of corpora and other commodities there that we can penetrate and we are a source of expanding our income streams.

This is basically from the South Pacific Fertilizer. The procurement strategy of raw material. That is the biggest challenge maybe in terms of apart from the social funding which government is providing to source cheap, reliable, quality raw materials from Europe. So we basically supply data or supply from Canada, Southeast Asia, Vietnam, China, even up to as far as Ukraine and Morocco.

It is sort of a balancing act so that we see that we do not run short of this procurement. This is an issue that we think is important, the procurement strategy that the board should look into to ensure that we have a supply that is consistent, of good quality and is timely so that farmers or growers does not complain they get the produce as and when they require. And also in terms of the profit margin that we must ensure.

So, those are basically Mr. Chairman and the Members of the Committee, the strategy and we are looking at the requirements or the mandate of our principal shareholders of course, not forgetting our primary minority shareholder, which is the Sugar Cane Growers Council which is the representative of the growers.

And lastly, at the moment, we have been quite late with the finalization of our 2025 last year's financial statements. There were some changes, decisions that were made by the previous board that we think does not augur well with the new board. So, we have decided that we may have to call back or reverse some of the decisions that were made that were called by the last board, just to ensure that the South Pacific Fertilizer is financially profitable and sustainable.

And lastly, maybe the review of the article of association. At the moment, we are still working on the standard articles of association. We know there are some limitations there, and we would like with the agreement concurrence of the minority shareholder, we are working together to have a proper article of association. And I think that is basically the team would like to share on behalf of South Pacific Fertilizer. And I look forward to answering any queries that you may wish to raise up on behalf of the government.

MR. R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, the challenges, I think, we know about what is happening in the industry. We will skip that slide. This is something that we intended to highlight, the origins of sugar industry, Sugar Cane Growers Fund, how it all started. But one thing is in the Act and the Ordinance Act of 1959. Section 15 and Section 22.

Normally, sometimes we are pressured that this is individual growers' funds or growers money. The history tells and this is what we have found. Of course, the founders have been the sugar cane farmers of that time and as well as the millers. So, millers took their shares out and it remained with the farmers money. And during the process, you will see that Section 15 says, and I quote, "the farmers were able to find that they had a legitimate claim. They were given five years to pay their money. They paid to the credits or pay to outside. Then the remain was consolidated and given as a government statutory fund..." means no individual farmer has the individual right on the fund.

That is why it is a government statutory fund. But obviously it has been funded and profound members are sugar cane farmers. It also says that it has no claims of any individual farmers. So, it has to run as a trust fund and that is what it is with what we are doing. The board appointed by the government of the day through the ministry. We can move to the next slide.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- My question is again related to page 25 where you have shown the structure.

MR. R. SHARMA.- Page 25 of 2023 report?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Page 25 of the 2024 report. The shareholders, the governance and the whole organisation structure. So, when we were out in the field, the farmers had raised their concerns about the shareholding.

Now you are presenting it this way to us, that it's fine, but how will you raise this awareness to the farmers so that they understand the whole shareholding structure? Because till today they understand that it is their money that led to the formation of the Sugar Cane Growers Fund. I think that needs to be sort of highlighted so that there is no mistrust, but acceptance because this has come to the knowledge for the first time, so they are all in shock. How will you try and relay this message the way you are doing to us?

MR. R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, this is the thing we have been trying for the last two years or so within the industry with these stakeholders, together with the Ministry. Our intention and plan is that we have continued – when we started with the exercise of review of Act from a year before last – going to the farmers, telling them, the origination foundation members are sugarcane farmers and the millers. This is the time when we look at the review of the Act, we continue to do it.

In the recent select Committee we have also advocated and are planning to make a press statement. Our board has approved it and it has gone to the Ministry, and even the previous Ministry has acknowledged this. Gradually, we will have to let the people know that this is how the Fund was and these were the things. Why we had gone back to 1959 to look at these things, is to bring them the right narrative. It took us some time to look at all the records and even the Hansard Reports of 1959 at the Office of the Solicitor-General, so we will continue to do that. When the approval of the review of the Act is done, we will continue to do that, definitely.

We quickly move to next. These are the things we are looking at to present in the review of the Act. One of the recommendations from the Committee before was, this should come as a trust fund. It should come under the supervision of the Reserve Bank of Fiji. We have also proposed that in the Act. There was a call by Sugar Cane Growers Council that farmer-members should be represented, though a member is there. We are also looking at that.

The certain things that we have recommended came from the recommendations of the Committee – to expand our business, look at within and outside of the sugar industry, our joint ventures, subsequent amendments to our investment that has gone into South Pacific Fertilisers, and especially the prudential guidelines as to how we are going to make this fund sustainable. These are the scopes that we have in the review of the Act.

As we speak, we are almost eight decades or 80 years old – the Sugar Cane Growers Fund. We have 4,032 growers with us and \$42.734 million loans. When we look at sugarcane farmers only, we represent 65 percent of the market share.

These are our figures as to what it is. There is a risk for us. The way the industry is going, we are very mindful of our prudent risks. You look at zero to 100 tonnes, almost 25 percent of our portfolio is of high risk. When we look at the age factor of the farmers, almost 31 percent of that, we have the risk right now. These were the things highlighted in the reports. We have to manage these things quite well.

This is the portfolio that we discussed. Currently, we are sitting at total arrears of 6 percent. However, if we take one of the major loan accounts, we are at 7 percent. Every month, it is increasing because farmers are yet to start harvesting. We have done better by the number of years. Looking at 2018, we were sitting at 25 percent, and we have brought it down to 7 percent, but this cannot be all the time. That is where the high risk is coming from.

Next is our financial performance. You will see that despite we are giving back to the farmers, we have sustained ourselves without any government support, and we continue to do so. Our profit remains stable to around \$1.8 million to \$2.5 million or even \$3 million, that we have done as to how we have been managing. To date, for the last eight months, we are at \$1.3 million. That is how we have been managing with balance sheet divestments in areas, where we can get the maximum return, and that we are passing down it to the farmers. You will see that we have invested into properties. These returns have reduced our interest rate and we thank the board for looking at the directions we are, but we cannot continue to do that. We can see there are early warning signals coming from the arrears. So, so far, we are on track 80 percent to 90 percent of what we have to lend. We are also not aggressively lending. That is not our core business. We are prudent of the environment and very quality loan that we intend to have.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- About the loan. My apologies, we have to interrupt because as a Committee, we want to get knowledge and information so that we can do our work. Based on that, when we were out with the growers, one of the issues raised was that as a co-operative, they cannot get loan from Sugar Cane Growers Fund, but individually they can. But if you look at the function of the Sugar Cane Growers Fund, one of the functions is, it says here, to enable cane growers to participate in commercial ventures, which in the opinion of the board are intended to benefit the cane growing industry. And mechanization is one way of benefiting the sugar cane industry, particularly when there is a shortage of farmers. So why are the cooperatives not included?

MR. R. SHARMA.- Years back in 2018, 2019, we made a submission through Solicitor-General to our own legal opinion Solicitor-General. They provided an opinion that we can. We did all platforms and everything to start giving loans to the cooperative. Later on, the board revisited and then again consulted Solicitor-General. Then they said it cannot be done.

Since then, we have been going to them, through our Ministry that we should be giving loans to cooperatives. Technically what our Act says, we can only give it to the registered cane growers. That is a limitation. So, if a farmer is an individual, we can give it to him. If he is a member of a cooperative, cooperative is taken as a separate entity, which we could not. We tried the year before last through budget amendments. It has not been, and we continue to pursue it.

In fact, in these amendments, we have again put a request that we should be able to do it and give it to the cooperatives. From the board side and from the management, we would like to give it to the cooperatives. And even if there is a delay in the Act review, we may take it through the amendments by the minister and the select committee to have it for the cooperatives. We are just waiting for that feedback.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- So, you have highlighted that. You took one opinion from Solicitor-General's Office, you took another opinion from Solicitor-General's Office and it was opposite to what they initially agreed.

MR. R. SHARMA.- In 2018 we took it from our lawyers, R. Patel, at that time, 2018-2019. They said we took it to the board and then we went to Solicitor-General's Office, they said they could not.

Year before last, when we took it to the budget amendment, Solicitor-General advised it could be made but there were massive changes that we are bringing it to the, not massive, but there were a number of changes that we are bringing to the Act. They felt that we do it with inclusive of the Act review, but it is there on the agenda.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Alright, we have to be very mindful of the industry itself. Let us not follow a pattern of driving a system which will take another five, six years, because farmers cannot wait; the Government cannot wait. We want the industry to be viable. We have seen some very good examples where farmers have taken loans as cooperatives from FDB at an extremely high interest rate like 15 percent, 12 percent, and 14 percent. It is just crazy. And yet they were able to pay off their loan.

My suggestion would be that under section 51, you can bring in at least those small changes you want in your law while you are looking at the bigger change. Try and get that done because we want the farmers to have money so that they can invest in harvesters and assist the industry. Currently the labour shortage is so bad that they are suffering basically. That is my suggestion.

MR. R. SHARMA.- Point noted, Madam. We will wait for feedback this Friday, and we will make a submission by next Monday to our Ministry to take it through.

We move to the next slide. I think the Committee requested the mortgagee sale updates. You can see it on the slide that we have had in the last six years, 157 mortgagee sales that we had. So, an average of about 26. Mr. Chairman and honourable Members, these are not recently given loans. These are years back given loans. Previously, there were no aggressive follow-ups in the portfolio of loans, that is why we had 28 percent, 20 percent arrears. So these are not recently given loans that we would have called and you can see the number of mortgagee sales loan cleared.

Another factor is well as we follow up, we go to a very standard system. As soon as the accounts are in arrears, we send them a text message by system, our person go and visit them. Look at the harvesting period because we give them almost 18 months to clear the loan. So those are the things that we do. You will see as soon as the mortgagee sales are, despite we send the letters and all that, People do not take heed. As soon as it appears in papers, they ensure that the loans are cleared. So, 68 accounts of that, they had cleared in full.

Then the number of mortgagee sales partly settled, you will see 18 of them. We also had to write off loans since we have tried and continued and this is the figure that represents where we are. Majority has been a legacy of debts like we say.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Can you provide that information breakdown of who these people were and what kind of loan they owed and year it was taken to the Committee please?

MR. R. SHARMA.- Sure. We can. I think the next slide provides the arrears and sectors that you had received. It is by number of mortgagee sale loans cleared and number of mortgagee sales cases return off by each of the districts that you will see in Ba and Labasa, it is all presented.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- We would like the names.

MR. R. SHARMA.- I will provide that information on a spreadsheet by this afternoon. These are basically our products and services that the Committee may be aware of whether you would like me to go through that in detail madam those are the products, we give special loans. This is our digital platform, these are the things that we had said, Document Management System and Chatbot was launched last week by Minister for Finance along with GEDSI which was also launched. We are bringing the digital overdraft facility that is coming by end of the year. This is another United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) project. The first three were supported by Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The growers fund is paying on behalf of the farmers mortgage protection. For almost a year now, we have paid \$402,000 for the farmers and you will see that 18 claims, \$177,000 has been received so far with 105 are claims that are still pending. This gives a peace of mind for the farmers that we bring it from our coffers. Sun insurance and Jetsy which we had talked about, there is no change on that, however, this is something that we are bringing for the women farmers and the youths.

We are the lead organisation for Sugarcane Farmers Award to motivate the farmers as Prime Minister's Award. We are looking at 17th of October as the date tentatively set for that Award. These are our plans going forward and you will see the pillars and strategic plan all the while we would like to maintain majority of the market share.

At least 20 percent of our portfolio should be non-sugar that we are looking at or not related to sugar directly. These are our projects in the work plans. We have achieved investments in properties. Also you will look at membership and savings that we got with Fiji National Provident Fund farmers now, talking to insurance companies.

Tomorrow we are meeting two of the insurance companies to look at crop insurance and bank insurance packages, the digital platform we have already talked about, exploring about the ESG framework is another initiative that we got for the work plan for this year.

This is something that is on our blue strategy where we continue to look at sustainable investment in properties, whether we can also support with medical centers for the farmers we tried that act limited, agro-processing, whether we can do it or we partnership, joint ventures to support the industry or to look at our sustainable development.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Why not start a mill?

MR. R. SHARMA.- Start a new mill? We just have to look at the Sugar Industry Act and all those things. In fact, the FAO report has some recommendations, more to do with payments and we have to look at that. Thank you very much. This is one of the agendas that we have done by ADB. They have reviewed whether we can become a agro-finance institution.

The gap of that is a very comprehensive report that we have actioned, but we have put it on hold. Unless and until our Act is reviewed. Now the question is, we have got only two Parliamentary sessions before the election. That is what we hear say. So, whether this Act review will also commensurate or not is another question for us, Mr. Chairman and the honourable Members. So, those are some timelines that has been set for our transformation.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you for sharing that, I think we are running a bit tight with time.

MR. R. SHARMA.- We are coming to an end. Actually, these are the structure. Just flip to the next one. These are some social work we are actively involved in. So, last week we handed over some wheelchairs and diapers for the farmers that we continue to do. Yesterday our team was part of cleaning up in Seaqaqa highway.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Social responsibility

MR. R. SHARMA.- Yes, and there are a number of things that I think we do. That is all that we have got till here.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much Mr. Sharma. I would like to thank you for those presentation. I just have a comment we are talking about the way forward, ADB strategy and all that because it has to fit in with what the strategy that the government will need to be put in place because one of the problem they face is there are so many reforms have being done in bits and pieces all over the place but needs to be done according to what the select Committee will decide.

Once you have a future strategy for the industry then we need to work out how you can as an organization fits in to those strategy. Those are just my initial comments. And of course we heard from farmers the need for them to have more access to financial resources, perhaps that is also part of government also to be looking at that in terms of providing support with other agencies to look into how best you can support the farmers.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, any other comments?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, I have two questions. One is related to the commercial building that was bought in Lautoka. I think it was about \$4 million.

MR. R. SHARMA.- Yes, Madam

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- My question is whether an independent valuation was undertaken? Secondly, do you have an investment policy?

MR. R. SHARMA.- Within our guidelines and policies, within our Act, it allows us to buy on properties, invest into properties. So, there is a guideline for us. Secondly, there is a...

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- I am not talking about the law. I am talking about investment policy.

MR. R. SHARMA.- We do have. We took it for amendment to the board. Just in the last board meeting, the board intended to have some changes made to the policy previously three, four years back, we took it to the board and the board had deferred it. So, we took it to the board in the last board meeting. The board has considered that some more changes to be made to the policy. But prior to that, we looked at our Act. We also know some farmers have raised concerns whether we do have provisions in our Act. It clearly states that we can own any...

HON. P.D.KUMAR.- Do you know under which section?

MR. R. SHARMA.- I think section 5(1). We can provide that. It says Sugar Cane Growers Fund can own, share and transfer real estate properties is mentioned. It is clearly mentioned in the Act. We can forward a copy of that Section and we will send it too over. And the other one is the valuation of the property. Definitely, we have bought it for \$4 million. The property by independent value was \$4,7 million. We get a return more than 6 percent on it right now, fully tenanted.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- That is very good, because we have been pushing for this for a while, that the Sugar Cane Growers Fund needs to invest, which you have started doing that. The only reason why I spoke about the valuation, because it needs to be undertaken before you purchase the property, so that there is transparency and assurance given to every player who is attached to the Sugar Cane Growers Fund.

MR. R. SHARMA.- In that, we get about \$250,000 rent annually. Because of that rental, we have reduced our interest rate from 6 percent to 4.25 percent and then to 3.95 percent, giving back almost \$500,000 to the farmers. This is because of the rental, and we are forfeiting the MPI of almost \$400,000 dollars. So \$650,000 we are giving back, and this has been one of the reasons. The other one is we have acquired our own property, saving almost \$100,000 annually, which again, we are passing down to the farmers.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- That is how it should be. We need to progress that way rather than being very restrictive. I am referring to page 77 of 2024 Annual Report, which is the financial statement. Number two says, as of June 2025, the fund acquired Vaitari land, which resulted in a loan restructure through debt swap of \$1.05 million, and interest was also revised to 5 percent. Can you give us more information on that?

MR. R. SHARMA.- Madam, FSC is a registered cane farmer, and we have been giving FSC loan. This is supported by croplands over the farms, and by government guarantee. We would not give loans without government guarantee. We initially looked at to ease their burden, whether we can buy one of the vacant lots as a property. That is where the Board decided that we do it against the valuation and we have done that land swap for that. We reduced their interest rate, likewise to the farmers, from 6 percent to 5.5 percent whereas the farmers had 3.95 percent. Currently, they continue to have certain loan facilities. We are not looking at only FSC, we have looked at the industry as a whole. We have provided them finance to support in cane payments and all those things, again, supported and guaranteed by government guarantee. They have been very prompt and up to date with the payments. That what it is right now.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I have a comment relating to your presentation. I noted that you have a farmer's award. We met with the Ministry of Agriculture and Sugar a few minutes ago, before you came in. What we would like to see is more complementary between agriculture and sugar. That is why sugar had been shifted to the Ministry. Next week, they are having their own show and farmer's award. Perhaps in the future, look into how you can combine all these so that you can be working together.

MR. R. SHARMA.- This was started last year when the Ministry was separate. It is not only us, but all the institutions are contributing \$4,000 each. We are the primary sponsors with \$10,000. We have gone through with all the mill awards, and now it is left to the national. Coming back to the agriculture, I think all the sugar industry, as well as us, we had participated. For next week, we are putting up our booth there too for three days.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Who is the organiser for this award?

MR. R. SHARMA.- It is a committee that is headed by us, but the committee was formed by all the stakeholders, representatives are there.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Farmer's award is most appropriately not placed with you since your loans and all that.

MR. R. SHARMA.- Yes, but we took the initiative, Madam. It is supposed to be on a rotational basis. This year, we are completing. We will ask any of other institutions will come up. This Farmers Award had been in train from 2018, 2019 looking at these sponsors. I must also acknowledge the number of private sponsors that we have got inclusive of research.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- But what I am saying is that let us stick to the mandate and be within the mandate too. Because there are other questions, I would like to ask Mr. Chairman, before you say time is up.

Looking at your report again, 17.5 percent fewer growers received loan disbursement in 2024, as compared to 2023. So, I just want to know why there were fewer farmers or growers who took loans in 2024 as compared to 2023.

MR. R. SHARMA.- Whilst we continuously advocate giving the loans, but we have also noticed that when the price of cane has been high, farmers take less loans. And that is what we want. We do not want the farmers to be overburdened with that. So that was one of the reasons.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- When we met the farmers, one of the complaints they have given is this. That they continuously have to go to FDB for the loans and they are taking the loans at a very high rate. Last time we talked about the figure you said about \$15 million. The figure I quoted was over a period of time so that that is a pretty big amount when we talk about 34 million. Again if we have Sugar Cane Growers Fund and the same farmers are going to FDB and taking loan at a very high interest rate, then obviously some of the functions listed in your legislation is questionable.

MR. R. SHARMA.- Madam, we give almost \$9 million to \$10 million annually to the farmers. Our policies are very flexible except if the sugar cane farmer intends to venture into a non-sugar activity means if he wants to start up a service station if he wants to start up a shop which our Act does not allow and as well as for the cooperatives, we have not been able to give but for the sugarcane farmers I think when we compare it with other institutions, our policies have been quite flexible with the fees, charges and interest rate.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- I am also holding the law here, but correct me, maybe if there are some amendments which I am not aware of. It says here to enable cane growers to participate in commercial ventures.

MR. R. SHARMA.- Commercial ventures that will support the sugar industry.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- The opinions of the board are intended to benefit the cane growing industry. Yes, industry out and say for example if they want to set up a business that deals with fertilizer, weedicide or something else that the farmers need.

MR. R. SHARMA.- We have given to the farmers who want to purchase excavators, diggers, run a business of that nature. We have got the BLP loans to look at the farmers because our policies say that the majority of your repayment should be based on the sugar cane farm income. I think the board was of the view that we do not overexpose those limits when it comes to their genuine needs for the inputs on the sugar cane farming, we are not able to do. That is why we need to diversify all that.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- I can understand the concerns, something that perhaps Sugar Cane Growers Fund needs to look at and understand why these farmers are going to FDB. If they have taken \$34 million out of FDB, for what reasons, what else can Sugar Cane Growers Fund do so that you can retain the farmers?

MR. R. SHARMA.- We will look at that. I think the Deputy Chairperson mentioned the size of the loans. Our loans have been limited to \$120,000, and all those individual cooperatives will get about \$300,000 alone. When you look at 10 cooperatives, you are looking at \$3 million, and those are the things.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- I can understand the argument can still be there because you do not give to cooperatives. Where else can they go?

MR. S. LEWENIQILA.- Mr. Chairman, you raised the question of many farmers preferring FDB. My understanding is that based on our financial results, we approve at least 90 percent of the application that comes in and my speculation is that the Fiji Development Bank will approve less than 80 percent since it is their stringent policy. However, just as the CEO has mentioned, because of the size of the loan and our credit policy, we also look at the risks involved in terms of production.

This is why I can say confidently that they struggle since there is a very stringent response in terms of our lending. However, be rest assured that we always try to approve a loan which is the reason why even if it is an outside policy, it is referred to the Board.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I have another comment relating to working together in regards to sugar and agriculture. Agriculture has substantial grant also and they provide to farmers. We understand that your major focus are the sugarcane farmers. Perhaps maybe to look into other farmers if they are moving into other diversification crops, maybe it would also be good to look into how best you can utilise a grant from a ministry. You will be able to discuss with them and at least have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) since there are no substantial grants there.

If there are keen farmers wanting to have a tractor, no digger or whatever, you can access those grants. Additionally, perhaps maybe another way forward also when you are looking into bigger farms. This is where I am looking as there will be substantial work for you to undertake in terms of diversification.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Just a follow-up question in regards to crop diversification. We understand that you support farmers looking to supplement their income through alternative crops and new business models. What is their success rate in making this transition?

MR. R. SHARMA.- We have information as part our the PowerPoint presentation that will show you the success, and when we looked at it, we do have loans up to \$7,000 that we can give it to them for other crops. Even the Business Link Pacific, which allows them up to \$100,000.

One thing with the diversification has been the farmers have to pay cash is one model. They plant the crop and they pay cash. Other one is that they can do it through cane payments. Non-cane payments have been a success rate. It ranges between 65 to 75 percent means arrears collection. So 25 percent is a non-timely repayment. 75 percent have been paying on time.

So generally, it has been a very successful story. A farmer is given a loan to plant *duruka*, harvested the crop and cleared the loan \$26,000 within 12 month's time. That is the level of success that we have got from the people. Some of the farmers ensure that they pay on a timely basis so we do not have to call them which is good.

When we look at other crops, we have funded some of the people in the rice industry; 60 percent to 70 percent of sugarcane farmers in the Northern Division are planting rice. In Sigatoka and Nadi, they have other crops that they are planting and some of them have been supported with

tractors. These are implements that we have financed them. There are good success stories that we do have.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Have you supported any farmers?

MR. R. SHARMA.- We are about to sign an agreement with three parties with Valley Processors and Pacific Island Development Forum (PIDF). This is a new market, Valley Processors in Sabeto are the ones that we have met and we are supposed to sign up an agreement so that we can finance sugarcane farmers in parts of Rakiraki and Nadi areas who are already planting.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much, Mr. Sarma. I think we have come to the end of this meeting. Of course, I would like to thank the team from Sugar Cane Growers Fund for availing themselves to come all the way from Lautoka and meet up with us this afternoon. We thank you for your time and we hope that you will avail yourselves if the Ccommittee has any further stories on this matter. The meeting is now adjourned.

The Committee adjourned at 12.30 p.m.

ANNEX 4

SITE VISIT/ CONSULTATION

11ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
WESTERN DIVISION SITE VISIT PROGRAMME
Monday 24 August 2026 - Saturday 29 August 2026

Objective – Purpose of the sites visits is to review the following Annual Reports which are under scrutiny of the Committee.

- 1.) Ministry of Sugar Industry Annual Report 2021-2022**
- 2.) Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Report 2021**
- 3.) Sugar Cane Growers Fund Annual Report 2023 and 2024**
- 4.) Assets Fiji Pte Limited Annual Reports 2023 and 2024**
- 5.) Energy Fiji Limited Annual Report 2025**
- 6.) Rural Electrification**

DAY 1: MONDAY, 24 AUGUST 2026

SUVA TO SIGATOKA

Time	Activity / Meeting	Venue	Contact Person
1:40 pm	Staff Pick-up: Awantika Raj	Nausori	-
1:50 pm	Staff Pick-up: Katie	Nakasi	-
2:00 pm	Staff Pick-up: Tuita	Valelevu	-

2:30 pm	Pick-up: Hon. Tuicolo	Suva	-
2:40 pm	Pick-up: Hon. Ravu	Suva	-
2:45 pm	Pick-up: Hon. Koroilavesau	Suva	-
2:50 pm	Pick-up: Hon. Deputy Chairperson	Suva	-
3:00 pm	EFL: Site Visit to the New 20MW Kinoya Power Station	Kinoya	Tupou Semesi (8914580)
4:15 pm	Depart Suva for the Western Division	Suva	-

Overnight Accommodation

Ramada Hotel, Sigatoka.

DAY 2: TUESDAY, 25 AUGUST 2026

SIGATOKA TO NADI

Time	Activity / Meeting	Venue	Contact Person
7:00 am - 8:00 am	Breakfast	Ramada Hotel, Sigatoka	-
8:30 am	Check-out	Ramada Hotel	-
8:40 am	Depart Hotel	Sigatoka	-

9:00 am	EFL: Meeting with Beneficiary at Lawai Village & Site Visit to Butoni Wind Farm	Butoni Wind Farm	Lusiano Koroiveibau (9992576)
11:00 am	Sugar Reports - Consultation Meeting with Cane Growers. (to seek views on the SCGF, Mini of Sugar and Tribunal).	Lomawai Sangam Temple	Mr Timoci Sila — 9990537
1:00 pm	EFL: Site Visit to Google Landing Site	En route between Sigatoka and Nadi – Natadola	Navneet Sen (8916310)
2:30 pm	Sugar Reports - Consultation Meeting with Cane Growers. (to seek views on the SCGF, Mini of Sugar and Tribunal).	FSC Navo Office, Nadi	Mr Timoci Sila — 9990537
3.45 pm	Rural Electrification – Quotation Scheme No. NA03-24	Jayant Rd Malolo Transmitter Rd, Nadi	Kamlesh - 8017248

Overnight Accommodation

Vualiku Hotel, Nadi.

DAY 3: WEDNESDAY, 26 AUGUST 2026**NADI - VUDA - LAUTOKA**

Time	Activity / Meeting	Venue	Contact Person
7:00 am - 8:00 am	Breakfast	Vualiku Hotel	-
8:15 am	Depart Hotel	Nadi	-
8.45 am	EFL Site Visit to Nagado Power Station	Nagado	Arnit Sharma/Uate (9985275/9992422)
9:45 am	EFL : Site Visit to NCC Projects, Vuda Projects and Vuda 132kV Substation	Vuda	Manoj (9999247), Armogam (9992406), Arnit Sharma/Uate (9985275/9992422), Saimone Rogoimuri (9992419)
10:30 am - 11:00 am	Rural Electrification - LU02-13 (Electricity Supply to Abaca Village, Lautoka)	Abaca Village, Lautoka	Department of Energy
11:15 am – 12.45 pm	Assets Fiji Land - AMEX Site Visit, Assets Fiji Land - Tropik Woodchip Site Visit and Assets Fiji Land - King's Jetty Local Wharf Site Visit	Lautoka	General Manager (7773715), Alisha Ali (7773714)
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm	Lunch Break	Lautoka	-

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm	Sugar Reports - Site Consultation with Sugar Cane Growers Council	CGC Building, Lautoka	Vimal Dutt (9992059)
3:05 pm - 4:05 pm	SCGF Report - Site Consultation with Sugar Cane Growers Fund	SCGF Centre, Lautoka	Raj Sharma (9991277)

Overnight Accommodation

Vualiku Hotel, Nadi.

DAY 4: THURSDAY, 27 AUGUST 2026

LAUTOKA

Time	Activity / Meeting	Venue	Contact Person
7:00 am - 8:00 am	Breakfast	Hotel	-
8:45 am	Depart Hotel	Nadi/Lautoka	-
9:30 am	Sugar Reports - Consultation Meeting with Cane Growers. (to seek views on the SCGF, Mini of Sugar and Tribunal).	Sugar Cane Growers Hall, Lautoka	Mr Timoci Sila — 9990537

10:50 am - 11:50 am	SCGF, Sugar Tribunal and Ministry of Sugar Reports - Joint Meeting with the Sugar Research Institute of Fiji (SRIF) and Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) and South Pacific Fertilizer (SPFL)	FSC Training Room, Lautoka Mill Compound	Bhan (CEO – FSC) – 9991429 Ashween (SPFL) - 9920465
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Report - Site Consultation with the Sugar Industry Tribunal	“Sugar House” building at the Cnr Walu Street and Waterfront Road Lautoka on the Ground Floor	Menani - 9061980
1:15 pm – 2:15 pm	Ministry of Sugar Industry Annual Report - Site Consultation with the Ministry of Sugar Industry	Ministry of Sugar Industry Boardroom, Level 1, Sugar House - Marine Drive	Praneel – (Director Sugar) - 9997396
3.30 pm	Rural Electrification - Electricity Supply at Natabua, Lautoka	Natabua Lautoka	
5.00 pm	Rural Electrification - Electricity Supply to Navuso Settlement, Sabeto, Nadi	Sabeto Nadi	

Overnight Accommodation

Vualiku Hotel, Nadi

DAY 5: FRIDAY, 28 AUGUST 2026**BA - TAVUA - RAKIRAKI**

Time	Activity / Meeting	Venue	Contact Person
7:00 AM - 8:00 AM	Breakfast	Hotel	-
8:30 AM	Depart Vualiku Hotel	Nadi	-
9:00 AM - 9:45 AM	Rural Electrification - BA03-19 (Electricity Supply to Gurdayal Sharma & 15 Others at Tabataba, Ba)	Tabataba, Ba	Department of Energy
10:00 AM - 10:45 AM	Rural Electrification - BA11-18 (Electricity Supply to Vatusui, Ba)	Vatusui, Ba	Department of Energy
11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Sugar Reports - Consultation Meeting with Cane Growers Ba & Tavua (to seek views on the SCGF and Tribunal)	Veisaru Temple, Ba	Mr Bimlesh Kumar Nath (9992774)
12:00 PM - 12:30 PM	Travel	Tavua	-
12:30 PM - 1:15 PM	Rural Electrification - TA05-18 (Electricity Supply to Nadelei, Tavua)	Nadelei, Tavua	Department of Energy
1:15 PM - 2:00 PM	Lunch Break	Tavua	-

2:00 PM - 2:45 PM	Rural Electrification - TA02-20 (Electricity Supply to Nabuna Street, Tavua)	Nabuna Street, Tavua	Department of Energy
2:45 PM - 3:30 PM	Travel to Rakiraki	Rakiraki	-
5:00 PM - 5:45 PM	Check-in – Tanoa Rakiraki Hotel	Rakiraki	-
6:15 PM	Sugar Reports - Consultation Meeting with Cane Growers (to seek views on the SCGF and Tribunal)	Wailevu Temple, Rakiraki	Mr Bimlesh Kumar Nath (9992774)

Overnight Accommodation

Tanoa Rakiraki Hotel

DAY 6: SATURDAY, 29 AUGUST 2026

RETURN TO SUVA

Time	Activity / Meeting	Venue	Contact Person
7:00 am - 8:00 am	Breakfast	Tanoa Rakiraki Hotel	-
8.30 am	Check Out – Hotel, leave for the site		
9.00 am	Rural Electrification - RA02-18 (Electricity Supply to Lau Settlement Dreketi, Waimicia) TBA or any other location	Lau Settlement, Rakiraki	Department of Energy

END OF WESTERN DIVISION SITE VISIT PROGRAMME.

ACCOMMODATION SCHEDULE

Date	Accommodation
Monday, 24 August 2026	Ramada Hotel, Sigatoka
Tuesday, 25 August 2026	Vualiku Hotel, Nadi
Wednesday, 26 August 2026	Vualiku Hotel, Nadi

Thursday, 27 August 2026	Vualiku Hotel, Nadi
Friday, 28 August 2026	Tanoa Rakiraki
Saturday, 29 August 2026	Return to Suva

EAC Northern Division Programme

31 August - 4 September 2026

31 August 2026 - Taveuni Site Visits

Time	Activity
6:00 AM - 6:30 AM	Flight: Nausori to Nadi
7:40 AM - 9:00 AM	Flight: Nadi to Taveuni
9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	Arrive at Matei Airport and travel to first site
9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	Rural Electrification (Unfunded) TAVE01-25 – Bouma Village to Lavena Village – Briefing Session with the Beneficiaries at Bouma Village.
10:50 AM - 11:15 AM	EFL Visit to Mua Solar PV Power Station
11.30AM - 1.00PM	Rural Electrification TAVE02-17 – Drekeniwai and Burotu Settlement – Briefing Session with the Beneficiaries at Burotu Settlement
1.15 PM - 2:15 PM	Lunch
2.15 PM - 2:30 PM	Travel to Hydro Site
2:30 PM – 3.30 PM	EFL Visit to Taveuni Hydro Power Station
3:30 PM onwards	Check-in at Garden Island Resort

1 September 2026 - Savusavu (Navatu/Navakaka Cluster)

Time	Activity
6:30 AM	Check-out
7:00 AM	Board ferry from Salia Jetty to Vatuyalewa Jetty
8.15AM	Arrive at Vatuyalewa Jetty
8:15 AM – 9:15 AM	Travel to Navatu Area

9:30 AM – 11.30 AM 9:45 AM - 10:45 AM 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Rural Electrification SA01-26 – Korolevu & Drano Village
Joint Briefing Session with the Beneficiaries at Drano Village	Rural Electrification SA02-26 – Bucalevu & Navakaka Village
	Rural Electrification SA09-23 – Waivula Village
12:00 PM - 12:45 PM	Travel to Savusavu Town
12:45 PM - 1:00 PM	Lunch
2:00 PM onwards	Check-in at Grand & Epic Hotel

2 September 2026 - Savusavu (Waisali/Nabalebale Cluster)

Time	Activity
8:15 AM	Depart Hotel
8:15 AM - 9:30 AM	Travel to Dawara
9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	Rural Electrification SA01-18 – [DAWARA] Vunidawamoli, Natuvu & Natua
Briefing Session with the Beneficiaries at Natua Village.	Rural Electrification SA07-18 – Waisali Village & Settlements
10.45AM- 11.30 AM	Travel Waisali & Nabalebale
11: 40AM - 12:15 AM	Rural Electrification SA04-18 – Nabalebale, Matakunea, Nasavu & Natuvu
	Briefing Session with the Beneficiaries at Nabalebale Village.
12:15 PM - 12:45 PM	Lunch
2:00 PM onwards	Return to Hotel

3 September 2026 - Seaqqa / Dreketi Corridor

Time	Activity
8:10 AM - 9:20 AM	Travel to Naua Settlement

9:30AM - 10:15AM	Rural Electrification LAB14-15 – Naua, Drawa & Lutukina Settlement (Ongoing) Briefing Session with the Beneficiaries at Naua Settlement.
11.00 AM – 12:00 PM	Sugar Reports - Meeting with Seaqaqa Cane Growers - At Police Bure
12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch – Seaqaqa
1:40 PM - 2:00 PM	EFL Visit - Seaqaqa Solar Site
2.15 PM – 3.15 PM	Rural Electrification LAB36-18 – Dradramea & Korolevu Settlements, Seaqaqa (Unfunded) Briefing Session with the Beneficiaries at Dradramea Settlement.
4:00 PM onwards	Check-in at Hotel Northpole, Labasa

4 September 2026 - Labasa / Korotari Corridor

Time	Activity
8:15 AM	Depart Hotel Northpole
9:00 AM – 10.10 AM	Sugar Reports - Meeting with Cane Growers at FSC Training Room.
10:10 AM - 11:00 AM	Travel to Korotari
11:30 AM – 1.00 PM	Rural Electrification LAB17-18 – Navakuru & Suweni Settlements (Ongoing) Briefing Session with the Beneficiaries at the Navakuru Settlement
1.15 PM - 2:15 PM	Lunch
2:15 PM	Depart for Labasa Airport
4:30 PM	Flight to Suva

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

WESTERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 24 August 2026 – Saturday 29 August 2026

Objective – Purpose of the sites visits was to review the following Annual Reports which are under scrutiny of the Committee.

- 1.) Ministry of Sugar Industry Annual Report 2021-2022
- 2.) Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Report 2021
- 3.) Sugar Cane Growers Fund Annual Report 2023 and 2024
- 4.) Assets Fiji Pte Limited Annual Reports 2023 and 2024
- 5.) Energy Fiji Limited Annual Report 2025
- 6.) Rural Electrification

Date & Day	Institution / Site Visited & Address	Concerns Raised During the Visit/Consultation	Committee's Comments (if any)
24 August 2026 (Monday)	EFL: Site Visit to the New 20MW Kinoya Power Station	General Information on the Site	
		- The Kinoya Power Station is a key Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) project located in the Central Division and forms part of EFL's efforts to strengthen national energy security and grid reliability. - EFL is investing in the Kinoya Power Station and Substation Project, which will add approximately 20MW of generation capacity together with associated	

substation infrastructure to support growing electricity demand and ensure a reliable power supply during Fiji's transition towards renewable energy targets.

Key Findings

◆ Operational Preparedness

- Discussions highlighted the importance of emergency generators and contingency measures to ensure continuity of operations during power disruptions or emergencies.
- The discussion reflected an awareness of operational risks and the need for ongoing preparedness planning.

◆ Team Engagement and Coordination

- The visit reflected a positive and collaborative working environment among personnel.
- Participants demonstrated good teamwork, coordination and engagement during activities undertaken at the site.

Recommendations

✓ Maintain Organised Records

- Maintain organised records of operational and site activities for reporting and accountability purposes.

✓ Enhance Emergency Preparedness

- Review emergency response procedures regularly.
- Ensure backup power systems and generators are available and operational.
- Conduct periodic inspections and testing of emergency equipment.

		 Strengthen Communication and Coordination • Provide clear instructions and communication during site activities and operations. • Designate responsible coordinators to improve efficiency and minimise confusion.	
25 August 2026 (Tuesday)	EFL Beneficiary Meeting & Butoni Wind Farm, Lawai Village, Sigatoka	Key Matters Discussed • The Committee received an update from Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) on the performance of the Butoni (Nabou) Wind Farm, future renewable energy plans, and concerns raised by landowners regarding access, communication and royalty arrangements. Concerns Raised and Key Findings ◆ Wind Farm Performance Below Expectations • The wind farm was commissioned in 2007 with 37 turbines. • Two turbines were decommissioned following cyclone damage and were not included in insurance claims. • Of the remaining 35 turbines, 20 were refurbished and returned to EFL; however, only 7 turbines are currently operational. • The facility generated only 758 MWh of electricity in the previous year, which was considered significantly below expected output. • Committee Members expressed concern over the low return on a substantial public investment.	

		◆ Wind Resource Limitations • EFL advised that turbines require a minimum wind speed of approximately 4 m/s to operate effectively. • Historical wind speeds at the site range between 4.6 and 5.5 m/s, limiting generation potential. • Members questioned whether sufficient feasibility assessments were undertaken prior to the project's approval. ◆ Significant Public Investment • Initial project costs were reported at approximately \$37 to \$38 million. • Additional rehabilitation and insurance-related expenditure following cyclone damage reportedly amounted to approximately \$50 million. • The Committee requested further information on project costs, insurance claims, refurbishment expenditure and the costs required to restore remaining non-operational turbines. ◆ Transition from Wind to Solar Energy • The Asian Development Bank (ADB), with support from consultant Entura, identified the site as suitable for a proposed 10 MW solar project. • EFL indicated it intends to cease further wind turbine refurbishment, decommission approximately eight turbines and utilise existing infrastructure for solar energy development. • Members stressed that lessons learned from the wind farm should inform future solar developments. ◆ Renewable Energy Project Risks	
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		• EFL highlighted challenges associated with wind projects, including high capital costs, maintenance expenses, limited spare parts availability and dependence on suitable wind conditions. • Solar-related risks discussed included battery lifespan limitations, battery disposal challenges, fire risks, grid integration issues and climate variability. • The Committee emphasized the importance of undertaking climate resilience assessments, lifecycle costing and comprehensive feasibility studies before progressing with the solar project. ◆ Landowner Engagement and Communication • Members highlighted the need for stronger engagement and communication with landowners regarding the proposed transition from wind to solar energy. • The importance of early consultation, regular updates and collaborative planning was emphasized to avoid future disputes. ◆ Landowner Concerns Access to Roads • Landowners stated they had initially been advised that roads constructed for the project would remain accessible to them. • They expressed concern that access restrictions were later imposed. • EFL advised that restrictions were primarily due to safety requirements associated with nearby 33kV transmission infrastructure, although farming access remains generally permitted. Royalty Payments and Benefits • Landowners raised concerns regarding royalty arrangements, benefit-sharing commitments and the lack of clarity surrounding payments received.	
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- EFL committed to providing relevant financial records and documentation relating to royalty payments and previous agreements.

Recommendations

✓ EFL to provide detailed information on:

- Original project costs;
- Insurance claims and related expenditure;
- Refurbishment costs;
- Operational and maintenance costs; and
- Estimated costs of restoring non-operational turbines.

✓ Prior to development of the proposed 10 MW solar project:

- Complete comprehensive technical, environmental and financial feasibility studies;
- Assess climate change impacts and long-term sustainability;
- Evaluate battery management and disposal arrangements.

✓ Strengthen engagement with landowners through:

- A structured communication strategy;
- Regular project updates;
- Consultation on project changes; and
- Early resolution of community concerns.

✓ Review access arrangements by:

		• Clarifying access rights; • Identifying safe access routes where possible; and • Balancing community needs with operational safety requirements. ✅ Clarify royalty and benefit-sharing arrangements by: • Verifying existing agreements; • Providing transparent payment records; and • Addressing outstanding concerns raised by landowners. ✅ Ensure lessons learned from the Butoni Wind Farm project are documented and incorporated into future renewable energy projects to avoid similar planning and implementation challenges	
25 August 2026 (Tuesday)	EFL Google Landing Site, Natadola	Key Matters Discussed • The Committee met with EFL representatives and project personnel to understand the infrastructure requirements of the proposed Google-related development, particularly its electricity and water demands, EFL's role in supplying power, and the potential benefits to surrounding communities. Concerns Raised and Key Findings ♦ Lack of Information on Energy Demand • Members sought clarification on the facility's total electricity demand, peak load requirements, expected power consumption and infrastructure capacity requirements.	

		• EFL confirmed it would supply electricity to the project but was unable to provide definitive figures on the facility's energy requirements during the visit. • The Committee noted that energy demand data is critical for assessing the project's impact on Fiji's electricity network and future energy planning. ◆ Uncertainty Regarding Water Consumption • Members raised concerns regarding the volume of water required to operate the facility, the source of water supply and whether existing infrastructure could accommodate the demand. • Concerns were expressed given existing challenges in providing reliable water services to nearby communities. • No confirmed information was available on projected water usage or long-term water sourcing arrangements. ◆ EFL Infrastructure Commitments • EFL confirmed that: ○ Electricity will be supplied through an 11kV feeder connection; ○ Underground cables have already been installed; ○ A dedicated substation connection is being established; ○ The developer is responsible for trenching and certain civil works; and ○ The developer has contributed towards substation-related infrastructure costs. • While physical infrastructure preparations were advanced, operational demand forecasts remained unavailable.	
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◆ **Infrastructure and Community Development Concerns**

• **Members discussed the wider implications of the development, including:**

- Future housing requirements associated with workforce growth;
- Electricity and water infrastructure needs for surrounding communities;
- Potential economic growth opportunities for the area; and
- Additional pressures on public services and utility networks.

- **The Committee emphasized that major infrastructure projects should contribute to broader community development and not solely benefit the development itself.**

◆ **Community and Landowner Benefits**

• **Questions were raised regarding:**

- Benefits that would accrue to local landowners and residents;
- Whether supporting infrastructure upgrades would improve services for neighbouring communities; and
- The extent of local employment and economic opportunities that would be generated.

- **Members stressed the importance of ensuring that large-scale developments deliver meaningful socio-economic benefits to surrounding communities.**

Recommendations

- ✓ **Obtain detailed information from the developer and EFL on:**

		• Maximum electricity demand (MW/MVA); • Annual electricity consumption forecasts; • Power reliability requirements; • Future expansion requirements; and • Potential impacts on the national grid. ✓ Undertake a comprehensive assessment of: • Daily and annual water consumption requirements; • Water source and supply arrangements; • Potential impacts on existing water infrastructure; and • Long-term sustainability and resilience measures. ✓ Strengthen integrated infrastructure planning involving: • EFL; • Water Authority of Fiji; • Ministry of Lands; • Housing Authority; • Local government authorities; and • Project developers, to ensure both project and community needs are adequately considered. ✓ Request a Community Benefits Framework outlining: • Local employment opportunities;	
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		• Training and skills development programmes; • Infrastructure improvements benefiting surrounding communities; and • Engagement with landowners and affected stakeholders. ✅ Arrange a follow-up technical briefing with EFL, project developers and Water Authority officials to address outstanding questions relating to energy consumption, water requirements, infrastructure capacity and long-term operational impacts.	
25 August 2026 (Tuesday)	Cane Growers Consultation Meeting, Lomawai Sangam Temple, Sigatoka	Key Concerns Raised by Farmers • Land lease expiry and renewal processes remain the most significant challenge, with uncertainty surrounding renewals, limited communication on lease decisions, high renewal premiums, and farmers being required to negotiate directly with landowners. This has discouraged investment and resulted in productive cane land being abandoned. • High lease renewal premiums were highlighted as a major financial burden, with some farmers reporting costs of approximately \$17,000 or more. Many are forced to obtain loans to meet these costs, increasing debt levels and reducing profitability. • Access to finance through the Sugar Cane Growers Fund (SCGF) remains challenging. Farmers noted that loan amounts are often insufficient, lending criteria are heavily tied to land value and lease terms, and financing for machinery and transport equipment is difficult to obtain. As a result, many continue to depend on commercial lenders. • Concerns were raised regarding governance and representation within the sugar industry, including a perceived disconnect between decision-makers and	

		active farmers, the need for stronger farmer representation, timely Growers Council elections, and greater accountability within industry institutions. • Farmers and Committee Members discussed the long-term sustainability of the sugar industry, including the need for mechanisation, modernization, increased production, and diversification into value-added products such as ethanol, sustainable aviation fuel, rum, and other sugar by-products. • Concerns were expressed regarding the ageing farming population, with younger generations increasingly moving away from agriculture, creating challenges for the future sustainability of the industry. • Farmers requested the continuation of fuel subsidy programmes and broader support measures to address rising production and operational costs affecting farm profitability. • Discussions also highlighted wider financial challenges facing the sugar industry, including FSC's reliance on government support and the slow progress in developing value-added industries. • Stray horses and cattle were identified as a persistent problem causing crop damage, reduced yields, increased labour costs and loss of income, with farmers expressing frustration over weak enforcement measures. • Mixed views were expressed regarding whether the Ministry of Sugar should remain a standalone ministry or be integrated with the Ministry of Agriculture to improve efficiency and coordination. • Concerns were raised regarding the leadership and effectiveness of the Sugar Industry Tribunal, with some farmers questioning whether the institution requires renewal and succession planning. Views were expressed that the Tribunal's leadership has remained in place for a long period, and consideration should be given to ensuring the institution remains responsive, effective and aligned with the current needs of the industry.	
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		Recommendations and Suggestions Raised • Reform lease renewal processes to provide earlier notification, greater transparency and improved tenure security for farmers. • Review agricultural lease premium structures to ensure affordability and alignment with farm productivity and economic returns. • Review and modernise SCGF lending policies by increasing accessibility, expanding eligibility criteria, financing machinery and transport assets, and considering farmers' repayment history when assessing applications. • Explore the establishment of a dedicated Agricultural Development Bank or specialised agricultural financing model offering lower interest rates, flexible lending criteria and longer repayment periods. • Strengthen farmer representation through regular elections, increased participation in decision-making processes and improved governance arrangements across industry institutions. • Develop a long-term Sugar Industry Transformation Strategy focused on mechanisation, modernization, productivity growth and value-added industries. • Introduce programmes to encourage youth participation in agriculture, including training, entrepreneurship support and career pathways into farming. • Continue and review the effectiveness of fuel subsidy programmes to support farmers facing rising production costs. • Strengthen livestock control and enforcement measures to address crop damage caused by stray animals. • Review the institutional arrangements of the sugar sector, including the role and structure of the Ministry of Sugar.	

25 August 2026 (Tuesday)	Rural Electrification (NA03-24), Jayant Road/Malolo Transmitter Road, Nadi	Key Matters Discussed - The Committee met with residents to assess challenges relating to rural electrification, water supply, roads and subdivision infrastructure. Residents raised concerns regarding lengthy delays in accessing essential services despite having purchased lots and constructed homes. Concerns Raised and Key Findings ◆ Electricity Supply and Connection Issues - Residents reported significant difficulties obtaining reliable electricity despite being located near existing power infrastructure. - Homeowners have been required to personally fund electricity connections, including poles, cabling and installation costs, with one resident reporting expenditure of approximately \$12,000. - Some households continue to experience limited electricity supply due to transformer and network capacity constraints. - These issues have restricted household electricity use and increased costs for residents. ◆ Delays in Rural Electrification Applications - Residents reported delays of more than four years in processing electrification applications. - Concerns were raised regarding poor communication, lack of updates and repeated follow-ups without resolution. ◆ Water Supply Challenges	
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		- Residents highlighted ongoing water supply issues, including low water pressure, water shortages and multiple households relying on a single water meter. - While some infrastructure has reportedly been installed and approved, final connections remain incomplete. ◆ Residents Bearing Infrastructure Costs - Residents stated that they have collectively funded water pipelines, water extensions and electricity connections that would normally be expected as part of subdivision development. - Concerns were raised that essential infrastructure responsibilities have effectively shifted from the developer to homeowners. ◆ Developer Accountability - Residents questioned why residential lots were sold before electricity, water, roads and supporting infrastructure were fully completed. - Concerns were raised as to whether subdivision approval requirements and infrastructure obligations had been properly enforced. ◆ Roads and Drainage - Residents highlighted poor road conditions, narrow access roads, inadequate drainage and concerns regarding flooding and road damage during heavy rain. - Poor access has increased transport and construction costs and created safety concerns. ◆ Growing Demand Exceeding Infrastructure Capacity - The subdivision continues to expand, but electricity and water infrastructure has not kept pace with population growth.	
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	- Existing transformers and water systems appear unable to adequately meet current demand. ◆ Financial Impact on Residents - Residents reported increased construction costs, the need for alternative power sources, additional transportation expenses and delays in occupying homes due to infrastructure deficiencies. Recommendations ✓ Urgently review all outstanding electrification applications and provide residents with clear timelines and status updates. ✓ Assess and upgrade transformer capacity and electricity infrastructure to meet existing and future demand. ✓ Accelerate water supply improvements, including completion of outstanding connections and upgrades to water pressure and reliability. ✓ Investigate developer compliance with subdivision approval conditions and infrastructure obligations. ✓ Improve coordination between the Department of Energy, EFL, Water Authority of Fiji, Fiji Roads Authority and relevant local authorities to ensure timely delivery of basic services. ✓ Upgrade roads, bridges and drainage infrastructure to improve access and resilience during adverse weather conditions. ✓ Establish better communication mechanisms and regular updates for affected residents.	

25 August 2026 (Tuesday)	Cane Growers Consultation Meeting, FSC Navo Office, Nadi	Concerns Raised and Key Findings ◆ Rural Infrastructure Challenges • Inadequate access to clean water in several settlements and subdivisions. • Delays in infrastructure approvals and development. • Poor drainage and waterway maintenance affecting farming operations. • The Malamala River was identified as heavily clogged, contributing to flooding and significant reductions in cane production. ◆ Critical State of the Sugar Industry • Farmers noted that the sugar industry is no longer operating profitably. • Rising production costs continue to affect returns. • FSC remains heavily reliant on Government-backed financing. • Declining global sugar prices and the loss of EU preferential pricing arrangements have adversely affected industry revenues. • Cane production has declined significantly from historical levels of approximately 4 million tonnes to around 1.3-1.6 million tonnes annually. ◆ High Cost of Production • Rising fertilizer, transport, labour and harvesting costs are reducing profitability. • Farmers reported earning minimal returns despite continued production. • Current cane prices were considered insufficient to cover operating expenses.	
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◆ **Harvesting Challenges**

- Severe labour shortages.
- Increasing dependence on mechanical harvesting.
- Limited access to harvesting equipment.
- High harvesting and transport costs.
- Delays in cane delivery and processing.

◆ **FSC Operational Concerns**

- Farmers expressed dissatisfaction with FSC's responsiveness to growers' concerns.
- Poor communication between FSC and farmers.
- Delays in resolving operational issues.
- Concerns regarding leadership capability and accountability.

◆ **Cane Quality and Processing**

- Questions were raised regarding cane quality assessment methods.
- Concerns over delays between harvesting and crushing.
- Delayed processing was viewed as negatively affecting cane quality and farmer returns.
- Concerns were also raised regarding the overall efficiency of mill operations.

◆ **Sugar Cane Growers Fund (SCGF)**

- Farmers reported limited accessibility to Growers Fund loans.

		• Loan application processes were considered difficult and restrictive. • Many farmers continue to seek financing from commercial institutions. • Concerns were raised regarding outstanding debts and financing constraints. • The Committee noted that many farmers hold substantial loans with the Fiji Development Bank at commercial interest rates. ◆ Land Lease Issues • High lease renewal premiums continue to place financial pressure on farmers. • Significant costs are associated with lease renewals. • Uncertainty surrounding long-term land tenure security remains a major concern. • Farmers suggested government assistance for lease renewal premiums and reforms to current lease arrangements. ◆ Sugar Industry Tribunal, SCGF and Industry Institutions • Discussions highlighted the need to review the effectiveness and performance of the Sugar Industry Tribunal. • The future role and effectiveness of the Sugar Cane Growers Fund was also discussed. • Concerns were raised regarding the performance of the Sugar Cane Growers Council and overall industry governance arrangements. • Members discussed opportunities to streamline industry institutions and improve accountability and service delivery. ◆ Industry Transformation and Diversification	
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Committee emphasized the need for the industry to move beyond traditional sugar production.• Potential opportunities identified included:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Ethanol production;◦ Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF);◦ Bioenergy and cogeneration; and◦ Other value-added agricultural products.• Growing international demand for renewable energy and alternative fuel products was highlighted. <p>◆ Farm Size and Productivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussions noted that traditional small farming models may no longer be economically sustainable.• Consideration should be given to larger consolidated farming operations to improve economies of scale and productivity. <p>◆ Youth Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concerns were raised regarding the ageing farmer population.• The need to attract younger and educated farmers into agriculture was emphasized.• Long-term sustainability of the industry workforce remains a concern. | |
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		Recommendations ✓ Urgently clear and rehabilitate the Malamala River and other affected waterways to improve drainage and reduce flooding impacts on cane farms. ✓ Improve coordination between the Ministry of Sugar and Ministry of Agriculture to address farmer concerns more effectively. ✓ Review harvesting capacity and strengthen support for mechanisation. ✓ Strengthen FSC's responsiveness, communication and stakeholder engagement. ✓ Reform the Sugar Cane Growers Fund to improve access to affordable financing for farmers. ✓ Review land lease renewal policies and explore measures to reduce the financial burden on farmers. ✓ Strengthen agricultural extension services through closer collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. ✓ Establish programmes to attract and retain young farmers in the sugar industry. ✓ Develop a long-term Sugar Industry Transformation Strategy focusing on ethanol, sustainable aviation fuel, renewable energy and value-added agricultural products. ✓ Review the governance and effectiveness of industry institutions, including the Sugar Industry Tribunal, Sugar Cane Growers Fund and Sugar Cane Growers Council, to improve efficiency, accountability and service delivery. ✓ Explore farm consolidation and commercial farming models to improve productivity and competitiveness.	

26 August 2026 (Wednesday)	Briefing session with the Dept of Energy and Energy Fiji Limited	✚ The Committee received a briefing from the Department of Energy (DoE) and Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) on the implementation of rural electrification projects in the Western Division. ✚ Officials advised that approximately 50 rural electrification projects, valued at around \$6.4 million, are currently being implemented. ✚ Discussions focused on the progress of ongoing projects and the status of projects still awaiting implementation. ✚ It was highlighted that a number of projects remain pending due to: ◆ Funding limitations; ◆ Procurement delays; ◆ Adverse weather conditions; ◆ Escalating material costs; ◆ Contractor capacity constraints; and ◆ Difficult access to remote locations. ✚ Officials explained that the Department of Energy facilitates community applications, consultations, approvals and funding submissions, while EFL undertakes technical assessments, costing, procurement and project implementation. ✚ Members raised concerns over prolonged delays in the delivery of rural electrification projects despite annual government budget allocations. ✚ The need for greater transparency, improved monitoring and timely reporting on project implementation was discussed. ✚ Members highlighted concerns raised by communities regarding lengthy waiting periods for electricity connections and project completion.	
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	✚ Discussions noted that delayed electrification continues to affect socio-economic development opportunities in rural communities. ✚ Concerns were raised regarding newly established residential subdivisions where homeowners had purchased land but were without electricity and water services. ✚ Members discussed the impact of inadequate infrastructure planning and the failure to adequately account for future electricity demand in residential developments. ✚ Concerns were expressed that utility requirements may not have been sufficiently considered during subdivision approval processes. ✚ Discussions highlighted the limited visibility available on project progress, completion rates and pending projects. ✚ Members noted the absence of readily available performance data and updates on delayed projects. ✚ Officials discussed the challenges posed by flooding and adverse weather conditions on project implementation timelines. ✚ Procurement and supply chain disruptions were identified as contributing factors to project delays. ✚ Rising costs of electrical materials, particularly copper and other components, were discussed as a significant challenge affecting project delivery. ✚ Concerns were raised regarding contractor availability, capacity limitations and scheduling difficulties.	
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		- Members discussed the importance of improving coordination among the Department of Energy, EFL, contractors, local authorities and communities. - The Department of Energy briefed Members on the assessment of alternative energy solutions for remote communities. - Discussions included the use of solar home systems and other renewable energy options where grid extensions are not economically feasible. - Members acknowledged the importance of balancing accessibility, affordability and sustainability in rural electrification initiatives. - The Committee emphasized the need for stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure government investments result in timely service delivery and tangible community benefits. - Discussions concluded with concerns over the broader impacts of delays on economic development, housing construction and public confidence in government infrastructure planning and delivery.	
26 August 2026 (Wednesday)	EFL Nagado Power Station, Nagado, Nadi	- The Committee was informed that the Nagado Hydropower Station is currently non-operational due to insufficient water pressure required to drive the turbine. - Officials explained that increased water demand in the Western Division has significantly reduced the pressure available for electricity generation. - Discussions highlighted that water supplied to consumers has increased from approximately 80 megalitres to 96 megalitres per day, resulting in insufficient pressure for hydropower generation.	

		• The Committee was advised that the station was originally designed to generate approximately 2 MW of renewable electricity through water supplied via the Water Authority's transmission system. • Members discussed the loss of a potential renewable energy source due to the station's inability to operate at its intended capacity. • Officials informed the Committee that consultant studies and technical assessments have identified possible solutions to restore generation capacity. • Discussions focused on the need to increase the diameter of sections of the pipeline network to improve water flow and pressure. • Members were informed that inspections and cleaning of the existing pipeline system may be required to remove blockages affecting water movement and pressure. • Concerns were raised regarding the condition of the existing pipeline infrastructure and the possibility that sediment build-up or blockages may be contributing to operational challenges. • Discussions highlighted that the hydropower scheme relies on infrastructure managed by both Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) and the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF). • Members discussed the importance of close collaboration and coordinated planning between EFL and WAF to address the challenges affecting the station. • The Committee discussed the broader role of hydropower in reducing dependence on diesel-generated electricity. • Discussions highlighted the contribution hydropower can make towards strengthening Fiji's renewable energy mix.	
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	• Members observed that while a generation capacity of 2 MW may appear small nationally, it could supply electricity to a substantial number of households and strengthen energy security. • Discussions emphasized the importance of renewable energy projects in supporting climate resilience and reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels. • Officials and Members discussed examples of multi-stage hydropower generation systems, including the Monasavu hydropower scheme where water is reused through multiple stages before discharge. • The Committee considered the potential application of similar multi-stage hydropower concepts for future renewable energy developments. • Discussions included the potential for such approaches to be explored in proposed hydropower developments in Namosi. • Members highlighted the need for stakeholder engagement and public awareness in future hydropower developments, particularly where communities may have concerns regarding environmental impacts and water resource management.	
	Key Issues Identified • Non-operational hydropower station due to inadequate water pressure. • Increasing water demand affecting electricity generation capacity. • Underutilisation of a renewable energy asset capable of generating approximately 2 MW of electricity. • Need for pipeline upgrades, inspections, and maintenance works. • Uncertainty regarding the condition of the existing pipeline network. • Need for stronger coordination between EFL and WAF.	

		• Importance of hydropower in supporting Fiji's renewable energy and energy security objectives. • Importance of public awareness and stakeholder engagement for future hydropower projects.	
26 August 2026 (Wednesday)	Assets Fiji Sites (AMEX, Tropik Woodchip & King's Jetty), Lautoka	✚ Officials briefed the Committee on existing lease arrangements involving freight operators, fishing-related businesses, and a waterfront property reserved for a proposed shipbuilding facility. ✚ Discussions highlighted that several strategically located government-owned properties remain underutilized despite their significant commercial potential. ✚ The Committee noted that some vacant sites continue to be maintained pending future government decisions on development. ✚ Discussions focused on the status of a major waterfront property reserved for a proposed shipbuilding facility which has yet to be developed. ✚ Members discussed existing lease management practices and the effectiveness of current leasing arrangements. ✚ Concerns were raised that certain long-term lease agreements may limit the Government's ability to redevelop strategic assets in response to changing economic priorities. ✚ Discussions emphasized the importance of ensuring lease arrangements remain aligned with national development objectives. ✚ The Committee examined subleasing arrangements and discussed whether existing agreements adequately protect government interests. ✚ Concerns were raised regarding situations where lessees generate additional income through subleasing activities.	

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✚ Members discussed the lack of mechanisms in some lease agreements for Government to share in the financial benefits generated through subleases.✚ Discussions highlighted the need for stronger oversight and governance of subleasing arrangements.✚ Members noted the considerable commercial value of waterfront and port-adjacent assets due to their proximity to maritime infrastructure.✚ Discussions focused on opportunities to improve utilization of these assets to generate greater economic returns and employment opportunities.✚ Concerns were expressed that some leased properties have not delivered the level of development and economic activity initially proposed by investors.✚ The Committee discussed the risk of strategic government land being committed to developments that do not proceed as planned.✚ Members highlighted the need for safeguards within lease agreements to enable Government intervention where development commitments are not fulfilled.✚ Discussions emphasized the importance of conducting periodic reviews of lease compliance, development performance, and investment outcomes.✚ The Committee acknowledged that private investment on government-owned land can contribute to employment creation, skills transfer, and economic activity.✚ Members discussed the need to balance investment benefits with ensuring fair and sustainable returns from public assets. | |
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		- Discussions highlighted the importance of effective monitoring of government-owned properties to ensure lease obligations are met and assets are properly maintained. - The Committee discussed the need for regular asset reviews to identify redevelopment opportunities and maximize the value of state-owned properties. - Members emphasized the importance of strong lease governance, strategic planning, and asset management to safeguard long-term government interests. - Discussions concluded with the view that improved asset utilization, stronger lease oversight, and enhanced revenue generation strategies could increase the contribution of state-owned properties to national economic development	
26 August 2026 (Wednesday)	Sugar Cane Growers Fund Consultation, SCGF Centre, Lautoka	Financial Performance & Sustainability - Sugar Cane Growers Fund (SCGF) provided an overview of its role in supporting sugarcane farmers through financial services, development assistance, and industry support programmes. - The Committee discussed SCGF's strong financial position, with total assets exceeding \$90 million and a loan portfolio of approximately \$39 million. - Members were informed that SCGF holds approximately 63% of lending to sugarcane growers, making it a key financial institution within the sugar sector. - Discussions highlighted that SCGF continues to record annual profits while maintaining concessional lending rates and providing subsidies and support services to farmers.	

- The Committee discussed the significant reduction in non-performing loans from approximately **25% in 2018 to 6% in 2025**, demonstrating improved financial management and loan recovery performance.

Digital Transformation & Service Delivery

- SCGF briefed the Committee on its digital transformation initiatives aimed at improving accessibility and service delivery to farmers.
- Discussions covered the introduction of:
 - Online loan application services;
 - Core banking systems;
 - Mobile application services;
 - Electronic document management systems; and
 - Proposed chatbot and artificial intelligence-based customer support services.
- Members discussed how digital services have reduced processing times and minimized travel costs for farmers.
- The importance of expanding digital platforms to improve financial inclusion and accessibility for farmers nationwide was discussed.

Legislative Reform

- Discussions highlighted that the **Sugar Cane Growers Fund Act 1984** is outdated and no longer adequately reflects the current operating environment.
- SCGF informed the Committee that a review of the legislation is underway.
- Discussions focused on proposed legislative changes to:
 - Strengthen corporate governance;

		○ Expand lending services beyond sugarcane farmers; ○ Allow broader investment opportunities; and ○ Introduce stronger regulatory oversight mechanisms. • Members discussed the importance of modernising the legislative framework to improve institutional flexibility and long-term sustainability.	
		Diversification & Institutional Transformation • SCGF discussed plans to diversify beyond its traditional sugarcane-focused mandate. • Discussions covered proposals for SCGF to evolve into a broader agricultural financing institution. • Members were informed of plans to eventually establish a subsidiary financial institution capable of providing: ○ Savings products; ○ Insurance services; and ○ Expanded agricultural financing. • Discussions highlighted that diversification is viewed as critical due to the gradual decline of the sugar industry.	
		Challenges Facing the Sugar Industry • SCGF identified several challenges affecting sugar production and industry sustainability. • Discussions included concerns relating to: ○ Expiring agricultural leases;	

		○ Uncertainty surrounding lease renewals; ○ Labour shortages for cane harvesting; ○ Rising production and harvesting costs; ○ Climate-related impacts on farming; ○ An ageing farmer population; ○ Limited information sharing among institutions; and ○ Continued reliance on government support by some industry entities. • Members discussed the impact of these challenges on farmer confidence, productivity and future investment in the sugar sector.	
		Governance & Coordination	
		• Discussions highlighted governance concerns affecting the broader sugar industry. • SCGF raised concerns regarding: ○ Political interference; ○ Institutional interference; ○ Weak collaboration among industry entities; and ○ Duplication of services. • Members discussed the need for stronger accountability mechanisms and performance monitoring for boards and senior executives across industry institutions. • The importance of improving coordination and information sharing among sector stakeholders was emphasized.	

		South Pacific Fertilizers Limited (SPFL) • The Committee was informed that SCGF holds a 90.6% shareholding in South Pacific Fertilizers Limited (SPFL). • Discussions focused on SPFL's efforts to diversify beyond traditional fertilizer production. • Members discussed opportunities for SPFL to expand into new products, services and commercial activities. • The need for innovation and commercial sustainability to reduce reliance on government assistance was highlighted. Committee Observations • Members acknowledged SCGF as one of the strongest-performing institutions within the sugar sector. • Discussions recognized SCGF's prudent financial management, innovation and responsiveness to farmers' needs. • The Committee discussed the importance of continued legislative reform, institutional diversification and improved governance arrangements to ensure long-term sustainability. • Members noted that stronger coordination among sugar industry stakeholders will be critical in supporting future industry reforms and improving sector performance. • The Committee noted its intention to seek further clarification through an oral submission, including engagement with the SCGF Board, as part of its review of the 2023-2024 Annual Reports. Key Issues Identified • Strong financial position of SCGF.	
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		• Successful reduction in non-performing loans. • Need to modernise the Sugar Cane Growers Fund Act 1984. • Digital transformation and improved service delivery to farmers. • Diversification beyond sugarcane lending. • Expiring leases and lease renewal uncertainties. • Labour shortages and rising production costs. • Climate-related impacts on sugarcane farming. • Governance and accountability concerns within the sugar sector. • Weak coordination and information sharing among industry agencies. • Diversification and sustainability of SPFL operations. • Long-term sustainability of the sugar industry and sector reform efforts.	
26 August 2026 (Wednesday)	Sugar Cane Growers Council Consultation, SCGC Building, Lautoka	Governance of the Sugar Cane Growers Fund • The Council raised concerns regarding the governance structure of the Sugar Cane Growers Fund and the removal of grower representation from the Board following the 2015 legislative amendments. • It was argued that growers should be represented on the Board as the Fund was established from resources derived from growers. • Discussions highlighted that the absence of direct grower representation has affected stakeholder confidence, accountability, and transparency in decision-making. Performance of the Sugar Industry Tribunal	

- The Council acknowledged the important role of the Sugar Industry Tribunal in administering the Master Award and resolving disputes between growers and the miller.
- Concerns were raised regarding delays in Tribunal hearings and rulings on industry matters.
- Stakeholders advised that decisions on important operational matters often remain unresolved for extended periods, creating uncertainty for growers.
- The Council confirmed that delays in Tribunal decisions are a frequent concern raised by sugarcane farmers.

Need for Legislative Reform

- Discussions highlighted that several pieces of sugar industry legislation are outdated and no longer reflect current industry conditions.
- Concerns were raised regarding the adequacy of:
 - The Sugar Industry Act;
 - The Sugar Cane Growers Fund legislation; and
 - The Master Award.
- Stakeholders emphasized the need to modernise legislation to address:
 - Mechanisation;
 - Harvesting practices;
 - Logistics;
 - Cane quality management; and
 - Mill efficiency issues.

Re-establishment of Industry Institutions

- The Council advocated for the re-establishment of former industry institutions and coordination mechanisms.
- Discussions included the possible return of:
 - Sugar Commission of Fiji;
 - Mill Area Committees; and
 - Other consultative industry platforms.
- Stakeholders noted that these mechanisms previously enhanced communication, industry oversight, coordination, and dispute resolution.

Industry Governance, Accountability & Compliance

- Members discussed concerns regarding weak governance and accountability across sugar sector institutions.
- It was noted that several institutions have not consistently met statutory obligations, including the timely submission and publication of annual reports.
- Discussions highlighted concerns regarding continued reliance on Government financial assistance without corresponding structural reforms.

Cane Quality Payment System

- The Council discussed previous attempts to introduce a cane quality-based payment system.
- Stakeholders acknowledged that the concept had merit but was not successfully implemented due to concerns raised by both growers and the Fiji Sugar Corporation.

- Discussions highlighted the need for any future payment system to fairly account for:
 - Grower performance; and
 - Milling efficiency.

Land Tenure & Lease Security

- Stakeholders identified land lease uncertainty as one of the most significant challenges affecting the sugar industry.
- It was noted that uncertainty surrounding lease renewals discourages growers from making long-term investments in farm development and infrastructure.
- The Council proposed greater Government involvement through head lease and sub-lease arrangements to provide farmers with greater security.
- Discussions highlighted the importance of secure land tenure in improving productivity and encouraging investment.

Cooperatives & Mechanisation

- The Council reported positive outcomes from grower cooperatives established to address labour shortages and improve mechanisation.
- Members were informed that approximately **48 grower cooperatives** have been established.
- Discussions highlighted that cooperatives have enabled shared investment in harvesters and agricultural machinery.
- Stakeholders viewed cooperative farming and farm amalgamation as viable approaches to increasing productivity and economies of scale.

Grower Debt & Financial Sustainability

- The Council raised concerns regarding increasing grower indebtedness.
- Discussions highlighted that rising production costs have reduced growers' ability to service loans.
- Concerns were expressed regarding potential increases in:
 - Loan restructuring;
 - Loan arrears;
 - Loan defaults; and
 - Mortgagee sales.
- Stakeholders noted that these risks may worsen if industry profitability continues to decline.

Relationship Between Growers & Fiji Sugar Corporation

- Discussions highlighted differing perspectives between growers and the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC).
- Growers raised concerns regarding FSC management costs and executive remuneration.
- It was acknowledged that FSC continues to face challenges associated with:
 - Ageing mills;
 - Inconsistent cane supply; and
 - High operational costs.
- Both growers and FSC acknowledged the need for improved communication and collaborative problem-solving to address industry challenges.

Key Issues Identified

		• Lack of grower representation on the Sugar Cane Growers Fund Board. • Delays in hearings and rulings by the Sugar Industry Tribunal. • Outdated sugar industry legislation and regulatory framework. • Absence of former industry coordination mechanisms. • Weak governance, accountability and statutory compliance across industry institutions. • Need to review and improve the cane quality payment system. • Land tenure insecurity and lease renewal uncertainty. • Labour shortages and the need for increased mechanisation. • Rising grower debt and declining repayment capacity. • Weak collaboration and trust between growers and FSC. • Long-term sustainability concerns across Fiji's sugar industry.	
26 August 2026 (Wednesday)	Rural Electrification (LU02-13), Abaca Village, Lautoka	✚ Application from 2013 ✚ House wiring has been done since last year ✚ The Committee noted that EFL has maximum of 7 rural electrification construction per year. ✚ Contractors volume of work... Have other work for the Govt ✚ Tendor for the contractor sometimes one contractor wins most of the tendor ✚ 50 Projects total in Western- 5 at contracting stage ✚ Workers are not properly paid by the contractor ✚ Dept of Energy giving fund set target, KPIs ✚ Timeframe with the contractor... Usually 6 months Project Progress and Current Status	

	• The Committee conducted a site visit to Abaca Village to assess the progress of the rural electrification project and understand challenges affecting implementation. • Discussions were held with representatives from Energy Fiji Limited (EFL), the Department of Energy (DoE), contractors, and community representatives. • The Committee was informed that the project requires the installation of approximately 154 power poles. • Officials advised that 76 power poles had been erected at the time of the visit. • Members discussed the slow progress of the project and concerns regarding delays in connecting the village to electricity services. • Officials advised that the project commenced in May and is currently targeted for completion in October, subject to no further disruptions.	
	Causes of Project Delays • Discussions identified delays in obtaining landowner approvals as a major challenge affecting implementation. • Officials advised that additional approvals were required for vegetation and tree clearing along the transmission corridor. • Material shortages and supply chain disruptions were discussed as key factors affecting project delivery. • Members were informed that adverse weather conditions had slowed construction activities. • Discussions highlighted contractor resource constraints and workforce limitations during implementation.	

		• Officials advised that the contractor was simultaneously undertaking several government-funded projects, affecting the pace of works.	
		Contractor Performance and Capacity • Members discussed concerns regarding contractor capacity and the impact this has on project completion timeframes. • Officials noted that only a limited number of contractors are available to undertake rural electrification works nationally. • Discussions highlighted that a small number of contractors are often awarded multiple projects, creating resource constraints. • Members discussed how resource sharing across project sites contributes to implementation delays. • Concerns were raised regarding whether existing procurement and contract management arrangements adequately incentivise timely project completion. • Discussions highlighted concerns over projects extending beyond contractual timelines with limited consequences for delays. • Members discussed the need to explore alternative procurement or contracting arrangements to improve performance and accountability.	
		Rural Electrification Programme Challenges • The Committee expressed concerns regarding the slow pace of rural electrification projects nationally. • Discussions highlighted growing dissatisfaction among rural communities waiting for access to electricity despite government funding commitments. • Members noted that public expectations are often created following budget announcements and project approvals.	

		• Discussions highlighted that prolonged delays are frequently perceived by communities as government inaction. • Members noted that delays negatively impact public confidence in government service delivery programmes. • The Committee was informed that approximately 50 rural electrification projects remain within the programme backlog. • Discussions highlighted concerns that only a limited number of projects are completed annually. • Members noted that current implementation rates may result in lengthy delays before all approved communities receive electricity access.	
		Project Monitoring and Communication • Members discussed the need for stronger project monitoring and oversight mechanisms. • Discussions highlighted the importance of clearer reporting and regular updates on project implementation. • The Committee noted that improved communication with communities would strengthen transparency and public understanding of project progress. • Members emphasized the importance of greater accountability among implementing agencies to ensure timely delivery of projects.	
		Community Impact and Benefits • Discussions highlighted that access to reliable electricity is critical for improving livelihoods in rural communities. • Members discussed the role of electricity access in supporting education opportunities and access to information.	

- The Committee noted the importance of rural electrification in supporting economic opportunities and broader community development.

Community Participation and Sustainability

- Discussions identified opportunities for greater community participation in supporting project sustainability.
- Members discussed involving village youth and community members in maintenance awareness programmes.
- Discussions highlighted the importance of electrical safety awareness programmes within communities.
- Members noted that community involvement could strengthen local ownership of infrastructure and contribute to the long-term sustainability of electrification investments.

Key Issues Identified

- Delays in the completion of the Abaca Village Rural Electrification Project.
- Landowner and vegetation-clearing approval processes causing implementation delays.
- Material shortages and supply chain disruptions.
- Adverse weather impacts on project timelines.
- Contractor workforce and capacity constraints.
- Limited number of contractors undertaking multiple projects.
- Weaknesses in procurement and contractor performance management arrangements.
- Significant backlog of rural electrification projects.

		• Need for stronger monitoring, reporting, and accountability mechanisms. • Community frustration arising from prolonged delays in receiving electricity services. • Importance of electricity access for education, livelihoods, economic development, and community wellbeing. • Need for greater stakeholder coordination and community participation.	
27 August 2026 (Thursday)	Cane Growers Consultation Meeting, Sugar Cane Growers Council Hall, Lautoka	Labour Shortages and Aging Farmers	
		• Farmers highlighted the ongoing shortage of labour within the sugar industry, which continues to affect harvesting operations and farm productivity. • Concerns were raised that significant areas of standing cane remain unharvested due to the unavailability of labour. • Elderly farmers indicated difficulties in maintaining their farms and undertaking harvesting activities due to age-related limitations. • Rising harvesting and transportation costs were identified as additional challenges affecting farmers' profitability. • Farmers noted a decline in family participation in sugarcane farming, contributing to labour constraints across the sector.	
		Cane Payment Arrangements	
		• Farmers expressed concerns regarding the current cane payment system, whereby payments are received in several instalments over an extended period.	

- It was noted that delays in receiving full payment create cash flow difficulties and affect farmers' ability to meet operational and household expenses.
- Participants suggested that alternative financing mechanisms be explored to enable farmers to receive a larger proportion of payment upon cane delivery.

Financial Management of the Fiji Sugar Corporation

- Farmers raised concerns regarding the financial sustainability and operational performance of the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC).
- Discussions focused on FSC's reliance on Government support, debt levels within the industry, and the need for greater transparency in financial management.
- Farmers emphasized the importance of ensuring that industry revenues and subsidies are managed efficiently to maximise returns to growers.

Sugar Cane Growers Fund

- Questions were raised regarding the effectiveness of programmes and services provided by the Sugar Cane Growers Fund (SCGF).
- Participants discussed the need to assess whether SCGF continues to effectively fulfil its grower-support mandate.
- Concerns were also expressed regarding the effectiveness of loan and insurance programmes and the level of farmer representation in decision-making processes.

Industry Governance and Farmer Representation

- Farmers emphasized that growers remain the foundation of Fiji's sugar industry and should be at the centre of all industry reforms.
- Participants called for greater consultation with farmers when implementing policy changes, institutional reforms, and industry initiatives.

		It was noted that the sustainability of industry institutions ultimately depends on the profitability and wellbeing of sugarcane farmers.	
		Review of the Master Award - Stakeholders discussed the need to review and modernise the existing Master Award to better reflect current industry conditions. - Concerns were raised that certain provisions are outdated and no longer align with present-day production realities and operational challenges. - Farmers supported reforms aimed at improving industry efficiency, competitiveness, and payment arrangements.	
		Sugar Industry Tribunal Related Discussions - Farmers expressed concerns regarding the adequacy of current industry arrangements governing cane payments. - Discussions highlighted the need to reassess existing payment mechanisms to better support growers. - Stakeholders advocated for reforms that would improve payment efficiency and reduce financial hardship experienced by farmers. - Participants raised concerns regarding industry governance arrangements and the need for greater consultation on reforms affecting growers	
		General Observations - Farmers reiterated the need for reforms that prioritise grower welfare, profitability, and long-term industry sustainability. - Strong support was expressed for enhanced transparency, accountability, and farmer participation in industry decision-making processes.	

		Participants advocated for policy and legislative reforms that would strengthen the viability and resilience of the sugar industry.	
27 August 2026 (Thursday)	Joint Meeting with SRIF, FSC & SPFL, FSC Training Room, Lautoka Mill Compound	South Pacific Fertilizers Limited (SPFL) - Concerns were raised regarding the governance structure of SPFL, particularly in relation to instances where management was allegedly approached directly by shareholders instead of through the Board of Directors. - It was emphasised that management should remain accountable to the Board and that shareholder involvement in operational matters should be exercised through appropriate governance channels. - Concerns were expressed that direct interference in management decisions could undermine accountability, create operational inefficiencies, and affect organisational performance. - Discussions focused on the need for stronger corporate governance practices and clearly defined reporting structures within SPFL. - Stakeholders highlighted the importance of maintaining an independent and effective Board to provide oversight and strategic direction. - The Committee discussed the possibility of improving coordination among sugar industry institutions through shared governance arrangements or a more integrated management framework. - Government fertilizer subsidy programmes were discussed, with stakeholders acknowledging the significant role such subsidies have played in supporting cane farmers and sustaining production. - It was noted that substantial Government investment has been directed towards fertilizer assistance programmes over the years.	

		- Concerns were raised regarding whether fertilizer utilisation is being adequately monitored to ensure maximum returns on Government-funded assistance. - Discussions highlighted the importance of linking fertilizer assistance and grower financing to productivity outcomes and measurable performance indicators. - Suggestions were made for soil testing and farm assessments to be undertaken before fertilizer and financial assistance are approved.	
		Sugar Research Institute of Fiji (SRIF) - Discussions focused on the need to strengthen research and development programmes aimed at improving sugarcane productivity and sustainability. - Stakeholders highlighted the importance of developing and promoting improved cane varieties capable of increasing yields and resilience. - Concerns were raised that some farming practices currently adopted by growers are outdated and require modernisation. - Participants stressed the need for greater adoption of technology, mechanisation and precision agriculture within the sugar industry. - It was noted that research findings should be translated into practical solutions that can be readily adopted by farmers. - Discussions emphasised the importance of aligning research priorities with the needs and challenges faced by growers. - There were calls for enhanced extension services to ensure that research outcomes are effectively communicated and implemented at the farm level.	

		• Stakeholders discussed the importance of monitoring the impact of research programmes through measurable improvements in cane yields, farm productivity and profitability. • Considerable discussion centred on farm size and economic viability, with stakeholders noting that low-production farms often face significant challenges in generating sustainable income. • It was highlighted that a substantial proportion of growers produce relatively small volumes of cane, raising concerns regarding long-term economic viability. • Discussions focused on the need to establish productivity benchmarks and identify economically sustainable production levels for growers. • Participants highlighted the importance of evidence-based policies and research-driven decision-making in supporting the future development of the industry.	
		Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) • Concerns were raised regarding the financial sustainability and operational performance of the Fiji Sugar Corporation. • Discussions focused on FSC's continued reliance on Government support and the broader implications for the future viability of the sugar industry. • Stakeholders raised concerns regarding operational efficiencies within the Corporation and the need to improve performance outcomes. • Participants discussed the importance of transparency and accountability in the utilisation of industry revenues, Government grants and other financial support mechanisms. • Concerns were expressed regarding industry debt levels and their impact on the long-term sustainability of the sector.	

		• Discussions highlighted the need for improved coordination between FSC and other sugar industry institutions. • Stakeholders noted that growers remain the primary stakeholders within the industry and that FSC's operations should ultimately contribute towards improved farmer profitability. • The relationship between grower productivity and FSC's operational performance was discussed extensively. • Participants emphasised the need to improve cane supply reliability and strengthen collaboration between growers and FSC. • Discussions also focused on opportunities for diversification and value-adding initiatives within the sugar industry. • Stakeholders highlighted the importance of exploring emerging opportunities such as ethanol production, renewable energy initiatives and other by-products of the sugar industry. • The Committee sought views on the future structure of the sugar industry and the role FSC should play in supporting industry transformation.	
		Sugar Industry Institutional Framework • Discussions were held on the effectiveness and relevance of existing sugar industry institutions and their respective mandates. • Participants highlighted the need for greater collaboration and coordination among institutions to reduce duplication and improve service delivery. • Views were sought regarding whether sugar sector functions should remain under a dedicated Ministry or be integrated into the Ministry of Agriculture. • Stakeholders discussed the advantages and disadvantages of both models and their potential impact on industry administration.	

		- Concerns were raised regarding the effectiveness of the Sugar Industry Tribunal in resolving disputes and carrying out its legislative functions. - Questions were raised regarding the current role of the Sugar Cane Growers Fund and whether its activities continue to align with its original mandate. - Participants highlighted the importance of ensuring that industry institutions remain focused on supporting growers and improving sector performance. - Stakeholders broadly supported reforms aimed at strengthening governance, improving accountability, enhancing productivity and ensuring the long-term sustainability of Fiji's sugar industry.	
27 August 2026 (Thursday)	Sugar Industry Tribunal Consultation, Sugar House, Cnr Walu Street & Waterfront Road, Lautoka	Discussion The Committee met with representatives of the Sugar Industry Tribunal (SIT) and received a comprehensive briefing on the Tribunal's statutory functions, operational performance, financial position, and challenges affecting its ability to effectively discharge its mandate under the Sugar Industry Act 1984. Tribunal Mandate and Functions The Tribunal informed the Committee that it is a statutory body established under the Sugar Industry Act 1984 and is responsible for maintaining orderly industrial relations within the sugar industry. Its key functions include dispute resolution, grower registration and transfer processes, industry compliance oversight, and the administration of matters governed under the Master Award. The Tribunal continues to serve as an independent regulatory and adjudicative body for growers and other stakeholders within the sugar industry. Financial Challenges The Tribunal advised that persistent reductions in approved budget allocations continue to adversely affect its operations and financial sustainability. Committee members were informed that annual budget submissions have consistently exceeded the approved allocations received from Government. For the 2025-2026 financial year,	

the Tribunal requested \$650,000 but received only \$391,300. For the current financial year, a budget request of \$670,000 was submitted, however only \$160,000 was approved.

The Tribunal further highlighted its financial position for 2021, noting that it received a Government grant of \$364,553 and generated additional income of \$4,850, resulting in total income of \$369,403. Total expenditure for the year amounted to \$396,053, resulting in an operating deficit of \$26,650. The Tribunal expressed concern that its financial position has continued to deteriorate and indicated that urgent funding assistance would be required to ensure the continuation of its operations.

Administrative and Operational Constraints

The Tribunal informed the Committee that chronic underfunding continues to limit its ability to fulfil its statutory obligations and maintain effective service delivery. Budget reductions have affected operational activities, staffing requirements, and administrative functions.

The Committee was advised that existing staffing levels and administrative capacity are insufficient to adequately manage the Tribunal's increasing workload and responsibilities. These limitations have affected the timely processing of grower registrations, transfer applications, amendments, and other regulatory functions undertaken by the Tribunal.

The Tribunal also raised concerns regarding information management within the sugar industry. It was noted that the current system of data management remains fragmented across various organisations, resulting in duplication of information, inefficiencies, and operational challenges. Stakeholders emphasised the need for a centralised and integrated information management system that would enable relevant institutions to access and share information efficiently.

Institutional Relationship with the Ministry

The Tribunal raised concerns regarding its institutional relationship with the Ministry responsible for sugar affairs. It was noted that the Tribunal has experienced difficulties

in securing adequate engagement during budget consultations and policy discussions. The Tribunal further advised that challenges remain in obtaining ministerial support and timely consideration of funding requests, which has contributed to ongoing operational constraints.

Legislative and Governance Issues

The Tribunal expressed concern that successive amendments and institutional changes have weakened the effectiveness of the Sugar Industry Act 1984. It was submitted that the current legislative framework is no longer operating as originally intended and that certain provisions have either been amended or removed, creating gaps within the regulatory framework. The Tribunal therefore advocated for a comprehensive review of the legislation to restore clarity, effectiveness, and coherence across the industry.

The Committee was also informed that broader discussions on sugar industry reforms are currently underway, including stakeholder consultations aimed at developing a long-term strategy for the sector.

Audit and Accountability

The Tribunal informed the Committee that the Auditor-General had issued an Unqualified Audit Opinion on the Tribunal's 2021 financial statements. The audit confirmed that the financial statements fairly presented the Tribunal's financial position, adequate financial records had been maintained, sufficient information and assistance had been provided during the audit process, and compliance with the Sugar Industry Act 1984 had been achieved in all material respects. The Committee noted that these findings demonstrated sound financial governance and accountability despite the financial and operational challenges facing the Tribunal.

Industry-Wide Concerns

The Committee and Tribunal discussed broader challenges affecting Fiji's sugar industry. These included declining industry performance, delays in payments to farmers, reduced grower participation, the need to modernise regulatory and administrative systems, and the importance of developing a coordinated national

		strategy to support industry recovery and long-term sustainability. The Committee further acknowledged ongoing work arising from the FAO review, which may assist in informing future policy reforms and recommendations for the sector. Committee Observations In concluding discussions, the Committee acknowledged the important regulatory and dispute resolution role performed by the Sugar Industry Tribunal. The Committee noted, however, that the Tribunal's effectiveness continues to be undermined by inadequate and unsustainable funding, staffing shortages, administrative limitations, and legislative shortcomings. The Committee further noted that many of the concerns raised by the Tribunal, particularly relating to funding and institutional support, have remained unresolved despite being consistently highlighted over several years. The Committee emphasised the importance of legislative reform, strengthened institutional collaboration, sustainable funding arrangements, improved administrative support, and integrated information management systems to enhance the Tribunal's effectiveness and support the long-term viability of Fiji's sugar industry.	
27 August 2026 (Thursday)	Ministry of Sugar Industry Consultation, Ministry of Sugar Industry Boardroom, Level 1, Sugar House, Marine Drive, Lautoka	Discussion Points • The Ministry provided an overview of its roles and responsibilities in supporting, coordinating and monitoring the development of Fiji's sugar industry. • The Committee sought clarification on the Ministry's delayed Annual Reports and queried the reasons for the backlog in statutory reporting requirements. • Ministry officials acknowledged the reporting delays and advised that staffing limitations and capacity constraints within the Ministry had contributed to the backlog. • Discussions focused on measures being undertaken by the Ministry to address outstanding reports and improve compliance with reporting obligations.	

- The Committee emphasised the importance of timely annual reporting to strengthen transparency, accountability and parliamentary oversight.

Industry Performance and Sustainability

- The Ministry highlighted the current state of the sugar industry and outlined key challenges affecting its sustainability and long-term viability.
- Discussions centred on the declining performance of the industry and the need for reforms to improve productivity, efficiency and profitability.
- Officials acknowledged that the industry continues to rely significantly on Government support and assistance programmes.
- The Committee sought the Ministry's views on the long-term sustainability of the industry and strategies being considered to address ongoing challenges.
- Discussions highlighted the need to focus on improving farm productivity, cane quality and operational efficiency throughout the industry.

Cane Quality Payment System (CQPS)

- Significant discussions were held on the proposed Cane Quality Payment System and its potential impact on cane growers and industry performance.
- Ministry officials advised that the current payment arrangement largely rewards cane quantity rather than cane quality.
- It was explained that the proposed CQPS aims to provide incentives for growers to improve cane quality and sugar recovery rates.
- Discussions focused on the relationship between cane quality and mill efficiency, noting that poor-quality cane affects sugar extraction and production outcomes.
- The Ministry outlined preliminary work being undertaken towards implementing the proposed payment system.

		• Committee Members sought clarification on implementation arrangements and the potential implications for cane growers. • Discussions highlighted the need for extensive awareness programmes and stakeholder consultations prior to introducing any new payment mechanism.	
		Cane Quality and Farm Management Practices • Officials identified poor farming practices as a major contributor to declining cane quality and reduced productivity. • Discussions focused on issues such as delayed harvesting, excessive weed infestation, poor field maintenance and inadequate ratoon management. • The Ministry highlighted the importance of adopting good agricultural practices to improve cane quality and maximise yields. • Concerns were raised regarding the continued use of farming methods that adversely affect cane production and sugar recovery. • Officials advised that considerable productivity gains could be achieved through improved farm management practices.	
		Sugarcane Varieties • Discussions focused on the performance of different sugarcane varieties currently being cultivated throughout Fiji. • Ministry officials advised that some growers continue to utilise varieties that are climate resilient but do not necessarily provide optimal sugar recovery and productivity outcomes. • The Ministry encouraged the adoption of recommended cane varieties based on growing conditions and production requirements. • Officials highlighted the importance of balancing climate resilience with productivity and sugar yield considerations.	

		Discussions also focused on increasing farmer awareness regarding the benefits of improved cane varieties.	
		Productivity Levels - The Committee discussed the current productivity performance of the sugar industry and factors limiting production growth. - Ministry officials noted that productivity levels vary significantly among growers. - It was highlighted that while some farmers achieve high production levels, national averages remain comparatively low. - Discussions focused on identifying strategies to increase production and improve grower profitability. - The Ministry advised that improved farm management and better utilisation of available technologies could significantly enhance productivity outcomes.	
		Ratoon Management and Replanting - Officials identified poor ratoon management as a major issue affecting cane yields. - Discussions centred on the need for timely crop renewal and replanting programmes. - The Ministry highlighted the importance of maintaining healthy ratoon crops and avoiding prolonged use of ageing cane stools. - Committee Members were informed that timely replanting contributes significantly to improved productivity and farm performance. - Discussions also covered improved field management techniques and better crop husbandry practices.	

		Soil Health and Fertility Management • The Ministry discussed challenges associated with declining soil fertility within cane-growing areas. • Concerns were raised regarding increasing soil acidity and the long-term impacts on agricultural productivity. • Officials highlighted the risks associated with excessive dependence on chemical fertilizers. • Discussions focused on the importance of regular soil testing to guide fertilizer application and nutrient management practices. • The Ministry advocated for improved soil conservation measures and sustainable farming practices. • The benefits of crop rotation, intercropping and legume cultivation were discussed as methods of improving soil quality and productivity. Mechanisation and Labour Challenges • Discussions highlighted labour shortages as one of the major challenges affecting the sugar industry. • The Ministry advised that the availability of harvesting labour has continued to decline in many cane-growing areas. • Committee Members discussed opportunities to increase mechanisation throughout the industry. • Officials explained that mechanisation opportunities are limited in certain areas due to terrain and farm layout constraints. • Discussions focused on balancing increased mechanisation with the practical realities of Fiji's cane-growing landscape.	
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- The Ministry emphasised the importance of strategic planning to support greater mechanisation where feasible.

Farm Size and Economic Viability

- Discussions focused on the economic viability of current farming operations.
- Ministry officials highlighted concerns regarding the large number of small-scale growers operating below commercially sustainable production levels.
- The Committee discussed the relationship between farm size, production capacity and profitability.
- Officials shared views on the potential benefits of larger commercial farming operations.
- Discussions also considered options for improving economies of scale and increasing production efficiency.

Farm Consolidation

- The Ministry discussed farm consolidation as a possible strategy for improving industry productivity and sustainability.
- Officials noted that larger farm operations would be more conducive to mechanisation and efficient resource utilisation.
- Discussions centred on the advantages and challenges associated with farm consolidation.
- Committee Members sought views on how consolidation could be implemented while protecting the interests of existing growers.

Land Tenure Issues

- Significant discussion focused on land tenure challenges affecting the sugar industry.

		- Concerns were raised regarding lease uncertainties and their impact on investment decisions and long-term farm planning. - The Ministry advised that tenure security remains an important factor in maintaining grower confidence. - Discussions focused on the implications of fragmented landholdings and the resulting productivity challenges. - Officials highlighted the importance of providing certainty for both landowners and tenant farmers.	
		Government Assistance and Industry Support - The Ministry outlined various Government assistance programmes available to support growers and industry stakeholders. - Discussions focused on the administration and effectiveness of grants and other assistance initiatives. - Committee Members sought clarification on monitoring processes used to ensure accountability in the utilisation of public funds. - Officials advised that mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate funded projects and programmes.	
		Economic Contribution of the Sugar Industry - The Ministry highlighted the importance of the sugar industry to Fiji's economy and rural communities. - Discussions focused on the industry's contribution to employment, livelihoods and export earnings. - Officials noted the continued significance of the sector despite ongoing structural and operational challenges.	

		- The Committee acknowledged the industry's historical and economic importance to Fiji. Future Direction of the Industry - Discussions centred on the future structure and direction of Fiji's sugar industry. - Ministry officials highlighted the need for institutional, operational and policy reforms. - The Committee discussed opportunities to improve competitiveness, productivity and overall industry performance. - Emphasis was placed on ensuring that future reforms support grower profitability and long-term sustainability. - Both the Committee and Ministry officials recognised the need for evidence-based decision-making to guide future industry development and transformation.	
27 August 2026 (Thursday)	Rural Electrification, Navuso Settlement, Sabeto, Nadi	- The Committee was briefed on the Navuso Rural Electrification Project, which is being implemented by Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) in partnership with the Rural Electrification Unit under the Ministry of Energy. - EFL advised that the project is being delivered through a contracted service provider and involves the installation of approximately 38 power poles to provide electricity access to households within the Navuso area. - Officials informed the Committee that construction activities, including pole installation and vegetation clearing, were currently underway. - EFL indicated that the project is expected to benefit approximately 10 to 12 households and is targeted for completion by December 2026, subject to weather conditions and other operational factors.	

Project Delays and Implementation Challenges

- Significant discussion focused on the lengthy delay between the project's initial approval and the commencement of implementation activities.
- Community members advised that they had been awaiting electricity access for several years despite approvals and funding arrangements having been secured.
- It was noted that the original quotation for the project was reportedly issued in 2018.
- Discussions revealed that Government funding had subsequently been approved through the Department of Energy; however, implementation did not proceed immediately after funding was secured.
- Committee Members expressed concern that lengthy implementation delays undermine public confidence in rural electrification programmes and affect the intended benefits of Government investments.

Roles, Responsibilities and Accountability

- The Committee sought clarification regarding the respective responsibilities of Parliament, the Department of Energy, EFL and contractors in the delivery of rural electrification projects.
- Discussions noted that Parliament approves budget allocations for rural electrification projects, while funding is administered through the Department of Energy.
- EFL advised that it is responsible for the delivery of electrification infrastructure and connection works following the release of funding.
- Committee Members emphasised that once funding has been approved and released, responsibility rests with the implementing agencies and contractors to ensure timely project delivery.

Availability of Project Information

- The Committee expressed concerns regarding the inability of project representatives to provide complete details relating to project implementation.
- Members sought information on funding approval dates, fund disbursement dates, project commencement timelines and historical project records.
- Discussions highlighted the importance of officers attending parliamentary inspections being adequately briefed and equipped with project-specific information.
- Concerns were raised regarding the availability of records relating to contractor performance and implementation progress.

Electricity Access and Community Impact

- Community members informed the Committee that some households had lived in the area for decades without access to electricity services.
- Discussions highlighted the importance of electricity as an essential service for rural communities.
- Residents advised that many households continue to rely on solar systems and alternative energy sources to meet basic household needs.
- Members discussed the impact of lacking reliable electricity on education, communication, access to information, household productivity and overall quality of life.
- Community members highlighted the difficulties experienced during emergencies and major national events when reliable electricity services were unavailable.

Factors Contributing to Delays

		• EFL and Ministry officials outlined a number of factors that have contributed to implementation delays in rural electrification projects. • Discussions identified delays in funding approvals under previous funding arrangements as one contributing factor. • Officials advised that quotations may expire before works commence, resulting in the need for revised cost assessments and procurement processes. • Increased construction and material costs over time were also identified as factors affecting project implementation. • Discussions noted challenges relating to landowner consent for pole installations and access approvals. • Vegetation clearing requirements and site access constraints were identified as additional implementation challenges. • Officials further noted that contractor scheduling, workforce availability and adverse weather conditions can significantly affect implementation timelines. • While acknowledging these challenges, the Committee stressed the importance of proactive planning and stronger project management practices.	
		Contractor Performance and Monitoring • Committee Members questioned the capacity of contractors to complete approved rural electrification projects within expected timeframes. • Discussions focused on the need for improved monitoring of contractor performance throughout project implementation. • Members highlighted the importance of establishing clear project milestones and reporting requirements. • Concerns were raised regarding accountability mechanisms where contractors fail to meet agreed timelines.	

		- The Committee emphasised that contract management arrangements should ensure timely completion of approved projects. Community Trust and Communication - Residents expressed frustration regarding prolonged waiting periods and uncertainty surrounding project completion. - Discussions highlighted the impact of delayed service delivery on public confidence in Government programmes and implementing agencies. - Community members emphasised the importance of regular updates and communication regarding project progress and expected completion dates. - EFL reaffirmed its commitment during the meeting that the project would be completed and commissioned by December 2026. - The Committee stressed the importance of transparency, accountability and effective coordination among all stakeholders involved in the delivery of rural electrification projects.	
28 August 2026 (Friday)	Rural Electrification (BA03-19), Tabataba, Ba	- Community representatives advised that rural electrification surveys were conducted as early as 2014; however, several approved projects remain incomplete despite numerous assessments and site visits over the years. - Residents expressed concerns regarding the lengthy delays in the implementation of rural electrification projects and the absence of visible progress despite previous commitments made to communities. - Discussions revealed that, in some areas, house wiring had already been completed while electricity poles had not been installed, preventing households from being connected to the electricity grid.	

- Community members further noted that there were instances where poles had been erected; however, households remained without electricity connections.
- Residents highlighted that several beneficiaries continue to wait for electricity despite projects having received approvals and partial implementation.
- Concerns were raised regarding the prolonged timeframe between project approval and project completion, with some communities reportedly waiting for many years to receive the intended benefits.

Coordination Between the Department of Energy and EFL

- Committee Members discussed apparent gaps in coordination between the Department of Energy and Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) regarding the implementation and monitoring of rural electrification projects.
- Concerns were raised regarding the availability and accessibility of project information, particularly relating to project status, implementation timelines, and completion progress.
- It was noted during discussions that the Department appeared to have limited access to project records, while implementation information was primarily maintained by EFL.
- Committee Members questioned whether existing monitoring and reporting arrangements were sufficient to ensure effective oversight of approved projects.
- Discussions highlighted the importance of strengthening communication, reporting mechanisms and project tracking systems between agencies involved in project delivery.

Contractor Performance and Project Delivery

- Significant discussions focused on the performance of contractors engaged to undertake rural electrification works.

- Concerns were raised regarding projects that remained partially completed despite funding having been allocated and implementation activities commencing.
- Community representatives questioned the capacity of contractors to complete projects within expected timeframes.
- Discussions focused on contractor resources, including workforce availability, equipment and machinery required to deliver projects efficiently.
- Committee Members sought clarification regarding procurement processes and the criteria used in awarding rural electrification contracts.
- The Committee also discussed the need for improved monitoring of contractor performance and stronger accountability mechanisms where project delays occur.

Water Supply Challenges

- Community members raised concerns regarding ongoing water supply challenges experienced within Tabataba and nearby communities.
- Residents highlighted the difficulties faced in accessing reliable supplies of clean and treated drinking water.
- Discussions noted the apparent contradiction of surrounding communities facing water shortages despite their proximity to major water infrastructure, including the Ba Water Treatment Plant.
- Community representatives expressed concerns that areas contributing to the broader water supply network continue to experience inadequate access to treated water services.
- Residents indicated a willingness to support implementation efforts by assisting with non-technical works, such as pipe-laying activities, if the relevant authorities could provide the required materials and technical support.

		Community Concerns and Feedback • Residents expressed disappointment that similar concerns regarding electricity and water supply projects have been raised with various Government representatives over a number of years without satisfactory resolution. • Discussions highlighted growing frustration among community members regarding delays in service delivery and the lack of updates on project progress. • Community leaders emphasised the need for Government agencies to prioritise the completion of existing and partially implemented projects before approving or commencing new projects. • It was noted that several outstanding works appear to involve relatively minor extensions or completion activities that could significantly improve living standards for affected residents. Response from Officials • Representatives from the Department of Energy acknowledged the need for greater involvement in the monitoring and oversight of rural electrification projects implemented through EFL. • Officials acknowledged shortcomings in access to project information and records and recognised the need for improved reporting arrangements. • Discussions highlighted the importance of strengthening contractor oversight and ensuring projects are completed within agreed timelines. • Officials advised that certain project delays may be attributed to accessibility challenges, contractor-related limitations and broader project management issues.	
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28 August 2026 (Friday)	Rural Electrification (BA11-18), Vatusui, Ba	Project Background • The Committee conducted a site visit to assess the progress of the Rural Electrification Project in Vatusui Settlement, Ba. • The purpose of the visit was to verify concerns raised by communities regarding delays in receiving electricity despite Government-funded investments in the project. • The Committee met with officials from the Department of Energy, community representatives, and affected residents. • Discussions centred on a rural electrification project intended to serve approximately nine households. Electrification Status • House wiring for affected households has already been completed. • Beneficiaries have completed all required household preparations and are ready to receive electricity connections. • Despite the readiness of households, electricity has not yet been supplied. • The infrastructure required for the project is largely in place. • Community members advised that the final connection works remain outstanding. • The project cannot be energized until the remaining works are completed by Energy Fiji Limited (EFL). Delays in EFL Works • Officials informed the Committee that the remaining works involve connecting the project to the main power line.
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- EFL is required to energize the completed system before electricity can be supplied to households.
- The Committee was advised that the main transformer is expected to become available by December.
- EFL connection works were identified as the only major outstanding component of the project.
- Concerns were raised regarding the excessive waiting period experienced by residents despite substantial completion of project works.

Contractor and Implementation Issues

- Evidence was presented indicating that contractor-related actions may have contributed to implementation delays.
- It was reported that a power pole was relocated from its originally planned location.
- The relocation reportedly created complications affecting project completion.
- Committee Members noted the importance of engaging directly with contractors to establish accountability and gain a clearer understanding of the challenges encountered during implementation.

Community Concerns

- Approximately 11 households were reported to still be waiting for electricity connections.
- Residents expressed frustration that Government funding had already been committed to the project.
- Residents highlighted that house wiring had already been completed.

- Community members questioned why electricity had not yet been supplied despite the works undertaken.
- The Committee noted a disconnect between project implementation activities and the actual delivery of electricity services to beneficiaries.

Oversight and Coordination Issues

- Discussions highlighted the need for stronger monitoring and oversight by the Department of Energy.
- Concerns were raised regarding the effectiveness of project implementation monitoring.
- The Committee stressed the importance of improved communication between the Department of Energy and EFL.
- Members emphasized the need for timely follow-up on outstanding project works.
- The need for stronger project tracking mechanisms and reporting arrangements was highlighted.

Committee Observations

- Significant portions of the project have already been completed.
- Delays in final EFL connection works are the primary reason beneficiaries remain without electricity.
- The situation reflects weaknesses in project coordination.
- The situation also reflects shortcomings in contractor management.
- The Committee noted weaknesses in implementation oversight arrangements.

- The Committee stressed that communities should not experience lengthy delays once house wiring and preparatory works have been completed.

Committee Recommendations

- EFL should prioritise completion of all outstanding connection works.
- EFL should complete the remaining works as soon as possible and within the projected completion timeframe.
- The Department of Energy should strengthen supervision and monitoring of rural electrification projects.
- A detailed progress report should be obtained from EFL.
- The progress report should include outstanding works.
- The report should outline completion timelines.
- The report should identify contractor responsibilities.
- The report should explain the causes of implementation delays.
- A review of contractor performance should be undertaken.
- The review should determine whether project alterations or delays contributed to outstanding issues.
- Coordination between the Department of Energy and EFL should be strengthened through regular reporting and project tracking.
- Priority should be given to completion of partially completed projects before new projects commence.
- Community engagement should be enhanced through regular updates on project progress and expected completion dates.

28 August 2026 (Friday)	Cane Growers Ba and Tavua Consultation Meeting, Veisaru Temple, Ba	• Farmers expressed concerns regarding the ageing population within the sugar industry, noting that a significant number of active growers are between 50 and 70 years of age and that younger generations are showing limited interest in pursuing sugarcane farming as a livelihood. • Discussions highlighted concerns that the absence of a structured succession plan could contribute to a further decline in cane production and the long-term sustainability of the industry. Land Tenure and Lease Arrangements • Farmers identified land lease insecurity as one of the most significant challenges affecting investment and productivity within the sugar industry. • Participants expressed the view that existing agricultural lease arrangements do not provide sufficient certainty to encourage long-term farm development and capital investment. • Discussions focused on the need for longer lease terms and greater security of tenure to support sustainable agricultural production and encourage farmers to invest in improving their farms. Financial Challenges Facing Farmers • Farmers reported increasing production costs and declining returns from sugarcane farming, resulting in growing financial pressures on farming households. • Concerns were raised regarding deductions from cane payments and the financial impact of penalties associated with mill breakdowns and delays in cane processing. • Participants highlighted difficulties in accessing financing and noted that financial constraints continue to affect farm operations and productivity.	
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- Discussions focused on the affordability of agricultural inputs and the increasing costs associated with maintaining sugarcane farms.

Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC)

- Farmers expressed dissatisfaction with the operational performance of the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC).
- Concerns were raised regarding frequent mill breakdowns, delays in cane crushing and overall operational inefficiencies affecting the industry.
- Participants indicated that processing delays often result in reduced cane quality, production losses and financial hardship for growers.
- Discussions highlighted concerns regarding accountability and the effectiveness of industry resources in supporting growers and ensuring the sustainability of the sector.

Declining Industry Productivity and Sustainability

- Stakeholders acknowledged the significant decline in sugarcane production over recent decades and expressed concerns regarding the future viability of the industry.
- Discussions focused on declining productivity levels, reduced profitability and increasing challenges faced by growers throughout the country.
- Participants expressed the view that the traditional sugar export model faces significant challenges and requires reform to remain competitive and sustainable.
- Concerns were also raised regarding the long-term viability of existing milling operations and supporting industry institutions.

Industry Reform and Diversification

		• Discussions centred on the need for transformational change within the sugar industry to improve resilience and long-term sustainability. • The Committee discussed emerging opportunities beyond traditional sugar production, including ethanol production, sustainable aviation fuel, renewable energy initiatives and value-added agricultural products. • Farmers acknowledged the need for industry reform but emphasised that any transition should adequately safeguard grower livelihoods and ensure appropriate support mechanisms are in place. • Participants highlighted the importance of diversification as a means of improving farmer incomes and reducing dependence on traditional sugar markets.	
		Agricultural Theft and Rural Security • Agricultural theft was identified as a major issue affecting farmers across the region. • Farmers reported increasing incidents involving the theft of crops, livestock and other agricultural produce. • Discussions highlighted the negative impact of theft on farmer confidence, productivity and willingness to invest in farming activities. • Participants noted that concerns regarding rural security have discouraged some farmers from pursuing further agricultural expansion and diversification.	
		Farmer Representation and Industry Governance • Farmers advocated for stronger grower representation within industry institutions and decision-making bodies. • Concerns were raised that the views and interests of farmers are not always adequately reflected in industry policies and governance arrangements.	

		• Discussions highlighted the importance of ensuring that growers have meaningful participation in decisions affecting the future direction of the sugar industry. • Participants supported transparent and representative governance structures within industry organisations.	
		Sugar Cane Growers Fund (SCGF) • Representatives of the Sugar Cane Growers Fund outlined various support services available to farmers. • Discussions covered low-interest loan facilities, mortgage protection insurance, house fire insurance assistance, women's farming support initiatives, loyalty programmes and discount schemes available to eligible growers. • Farmers acknowledged the availability of assistance programmes but noted that greater awareness and accessibility of these services are required. • Concerns were raised regarding the complexity of certain loan application procedures and the need to simplify access to financial assistance programmes.	
		Future of the Sugar Industry • Farmers expressed concern regarding the overall direction and future sustainability of Fiji's sugar industry. • Discussions highlighted the need for long-term strategic planning to address declining productivity, ageing farmers, land tenure challenges and institutional performance issues. • Participants emphasised that maintaining existing arrangements may not be sufficient to reverse the industry's decline and that substantial reforms may be required.	

- Stakeholders reiterated the importance of developing a sustainable, commercially viable and farmer-focused sugar industry capable of supporting future generations.

Ministry of Sugar Industry Annual Report 2021-2022

Key Issues Raised by Farmers

- Growing labour shortages continue to affect sugarcane production, harvesting operations, and farm maintenance.
- The ageing farmer population poses a significant threat to the long-term sustainability of the sugar industry.
- Younger generations are increasingly reluctant to enter the sugar industry, resulting in concerns regarding succession planning.
- Farmers expressed concerns regarding declining cane production and the overall viability of the industry.
- Rising production costs continue to reduce farmers' profitability and returns.
- The lack of attractive incentives for new entrants into the industry has contributed to declining youth participation.
- Farmers highlighted the need for Government intervention to encourage youth engagement in sugarcane farming.
- Concerns were raised regarding land lease insecurity and the impact of short-term leases on farm investment.
- Farmers noted that uncertainty surrounding lease renewals discourages investment in farm development and mechanisation.
- Stakeholders reiterated the importance of secure and longer-term land leases to promote confidence and productivity.

- Participants called for stronger policy measures aimed at improving industry sustainability and farmer welfare.
- The need for diversification within the sugar industry, including alternative agricultural activities and value-added industries, was discussed.
- Farmers supported greater Government assistance for industry modernisation and reform initiatives.

Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Report 2021

Key Issues Raised by Farmers

- Farmers expressed concerns regarding harvesting arrangements and the administration of harvesting assistance programmes.
- Concerns were raised regarding transparency in decisions affecting harvesting rates and payments.
- Stakeholders indicated that important decisions affecting growers are often communicated late or with limited consultation.
- Farmers called for improved engagement between industry institutions and growers prior to major policy decisions.
- Concerns were raised regarding deductions from cane payments.
- Farmers questioned deductions imposed during periods of mill breakdowns and harvesting delays that were beyond their control.
- Participants advocated for greater transparency in the determination of cane payments and industry deductions.
- The need to review and modernise existing industry arrangements and regulatory frameworks was highlighted.

- Farmers discussed the need to review provisions contained within the Master Award to ensure they remain relevant to current industry conditions.
- Stakeholders highlighted the importance of ensuring that growers have greater input into policy and regulatory reforms affecting the industry.
- Greater accountability and communication from industry institutions were identified as priorities.

Sugar Cane Growers Fund Annual Reports 2023 & 2024

Key Issues Raised by Farmers

- Farmers acknowledged the support services currently provided by the Sugar Cane Growers Fund.
- Support programmes discussed included:
 - Low-interest loan facilities;
 - Mortgage protection insurance;
 - House fire insurance assistance;
 - Women's farmer assistance programmes; and
 - Loyalty and discount schemes.
- Farmers raised concerns regarding accessibility to existing support programmes.
- Participants indicated that loan application processes could be simplified to improve access.
- Concerns were raised regarding the Fund's responsiveness to current challenges facing farmers.

		• Farmers questioned whether Fund policies are adequately addressing emerging industry needs. • Stakeholders discussed the need for regular reviews of Fund programmes and services. • The importance of expanding financial support for mechanisation initiatives was highlighted. • Farmers noted that access to financing remains difficult despite existing assistance programmes. • Concerns were raised regarding major investment and expenditure decisions undertaken by the Fund. • Stakeholders called for stronger transparency and accountability regarding the use of grower funds. • Farmers advocated for greater consultation with growers before significant financial decisions are undertaken. • Participants called for stronger farmer representation in decisions affecting the operations and governance of the Fund. Greater awareness and promotion of available support services were also recommended.	
28 August 2026 (Friday)	Cane Growers Consultation Meeting, Wailevu Temple, Rakiraki	Limited Access to Financing for Mechanisation • Farmers highlighted the increasing importance of mechanisation due to ongoing labour shortages. • Participants stated that purchasing sugarcane harvesters remains beyond the financial reach of many farmers.	

- Farmers advised that commercial lending institutions impose financing requirements that are difficult for growers to meet.
- Stakeholders indicated that current financing policies administered through the Sugar Cane Growers Fund do not adequately support cooperative groups wishing to acquire harvesting machinery.
- Farmers stressed that increased mechanisation would reduce harvesting costs and improve overall efficiency.
- It was noted that without access to harvesting machinery, farmers remain dependent on increasingly scarce labour resources.

Labour Shortages and Worker Reliability

- Farmers reported persistent difficulties in recruiting and retaining cane cutters.
- Labour shortages were identified as one of the most significant challenges currently facing the industry.
- Growers stated that labour shortages often result in delayed harvesting operations.
- Participants reported instances where labourers accepted advance payments but subsequently failed to undertake the agreed work.
- Such incidents have reportedly caused financial losses for farmers.
- Farmers noted that labour shortages contribute directly to unharvested cane and reduced production levels.
- Stakeholders emphasized that labour availability has become a major factor affecting profitability and sustainability.

Harvesting Subsidy Arrangements

		• Farmers raised concerns regarding the administration of the Government's harvesting subsidy programme. • Questions were raised about the transparency of subsidy allocation and distribution processes. • Stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction that a portion of the subsidy intended for farmers was reportedly redirected to machine operators. • Growers stated that they were not adequately consulted before changes were made to subsidy arrangements. • Participants highlighted the need for greater transparency regarding how harvesting subsidies are administered. • The importance of timely communication regarding subsidy changes was strongly emphasized.	
		Communication and Transparency Concerns • Farmers expressed dissatisfaction with communication from the Sugar Industry Tribunal. • Concerns were raised regarding the lack of timely information on decisions affecting harvesting rates. • Stakeholders reported that information relating to subsidy arrangements was not adequately communicated to growers. • Participants called for more frequent engagement and consultation with farmers before implementing significant decisions. • Farmers emphasized that improved communication would strengthen trust between institutions and growers.	
		Challenges Facing Farmer Cooperatives	

		• Participants acknowledged the benefits of cooperative arrangements among sugarcane farmers. • Farmers noted that cooperatives provide opportunities for shared ownership of costly harvesting machinery and equipment. • Stakeholders indicated that current financing arrangements make it difficult for cooperatives to secure funding. • Regulatory and policy barriers were identified as limiting the growth and effectiveness of farming cooperatives. • Participants recommended greater support for cooperative-based models to improve mechanisation and reduce operational costs.	
		Sugar Cane Growers Fund Governance Concerns • Farmers raised concerns regarding major asset acquisitions undertaken by the Sugar Cane Growers Fund. • Questions were raised about investment decisions and expenditure priorities. • Stakeholders felt that growers were not adequately consulted before significant financial decisions were made. • Participants called for stronger accountability and transparency within the Fund. • Farmers emphasized the importance of having greater participation in governance matters affecting grower resources and investments.	
		Agricultural Theft and Rural Security • Farmers reported increasing incidents of agricultural theft. • Theft of crops, livestock, and farm equipment was highlighted as an ongoing concern.	

- Stakeholders advised that theft is imposing additional financial burdens on farming operations.
- Farmers noted that repeated theft discourages investment in alternative agricultural activities and diversification efforts.
- Participants called for stronger enforcement measures and improved rural security arrangements.

Stray Livestock Damaging Sugarcane Farms

- Farmers reported substantial damage to sugarcane crops from stray cattle and other livestock.
- Crop destruction caused by roaming animals was identified as a recurring problem.
- Participants advised that previous compensation arrangements for affected farmers no longer appear to be operating.
- Stakeholders expressed concern about the financial losses incurred from crop damage.
- Farmers called for stronger enforcement of livestock control regulations and review of compensation mechanisms.

Declining Productivity and Industry Sustainability

- Farmers reported declining cane yields over recent years.
- Rising production costs were identified as a major challenge affecting profitability.
- Labour shortages, reduced productivity, and operational challenges continue to impact farm returns.

		• Stakeholders expressed concern about the long-term sustainability of sugarcane farming under existing conditions. • Participants warned that many growers are questioning the future viability of remaining in the industry. Support Services Provided by the Sugar Cane Growers Fund • Representatives outlined various support programmes currently available to growers. • These services include low-interest loan facilities. • Mortgage protection insurance schemes are available for eligible farmers. • Farm support financing programmes are provided through the Fund. • Welfare and insurance-related assistance schemes are also available. • While these services were acknowledged, stakeholders indicated that greater accessibility and alignment with current industry challenges are required. • Particular emphasis was placed on expanding support for mechanisation initiatives. Committee's Key Observations • Farmers continue to face multiple interconnected challenges affecting productivity and profitability. • Labour shortages remain a critical issue across the industry. • Mechanisation support is insufficient to meet current industry needs. • Communication gaps exist between institutions and farmers. • Financing opportunities for cooperatives remain limited.	
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- Agricultural theft and stray livestock continue to negatively affect farming operations.
- Declining cane yields and production levels are affecting farmer confidence.
- Farmers are increasingly seeking practical solutions that improve efficiency and reduce operational costs.

Ministry of Sugar Industry Annual Report 2021-2022

Key Issues Raised by Farmers

- Growing labour shortages continue to affect sugarcane production, harvesting operations, and farm maintenance.
- The ageing farmer population poses a significant threat to the long-term sustainability of the sugar industry.
- Younger generations are increasingly reluctant to enter the sugar industry, resulting in concerns regarding succession planning.
- Farmers expressed concerns regarding declining cane production and the overall viability of the industry.
- Rising production costs continue to reduce farmers' profitability and returns.
- The lack of attractive incentives for new entrants into the industry has contributed to declining youth participation.
- Farmers highlighted the need for Government intervention to encourage youth engagement in sugarcane farming.
- Concerns were raised regarding land lease insecurity and the impact of short-term leases on farm investment.
- Farmers noted that uncertainty surrounding lease renewals discourages investment in farm development and mechanisation.

- Stakeholders reiterated the importance of secure and longer-term land leases to promote confidence and productivity.
- Participants called for stronger policy measures aimed at improving industry sustainability and farmer welfare.
- The need for diversification within the sugar industry, including alternative agricultural activities and value-added industries, was discussed.
- Farmers supported greater Government assistance for industry modernisation and reform initiatives.

Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Report 2021

Key Issues Raised by Farmers

- Farmers expressed concerns regarding harvesting arrangements and the administration of harvesting assistance programmes.
- Concerns were raised regarding transparency in decisions affecting harvesting rates and payments.
- Stakeholders indicated that important decisions affecting growers are often communicated late or with limited consultation.
- Farmers called for improved engagement between industry institutions and growers prior to major policy decisions.
- Concerns were raised regarding deductions from cane payments.
- Farmers questioned deductions imposed during periods of mill breakdowns and harvesting delays that were beyond their control.
- Participants advocated for greater transparency in the determination of cane payments and industry deductions.

- The need to review and modernise existing industry arrangements and regulatory frameworks was highlighted.
- Farmers discussed the need to review provisions contained within the Master Award to ensure they remain relevant to current industry conditions.
- Stakeholders highlighted the importance of ensuring that growers have greater input into policy and regulatory reforms affecting the industry.
- Greater accountability and communication from industry institutions were identified as priorities.

Sugar Cane Growers Fund Annual Reports 2023 & 2024

Key Issues Raised by Farmers

- Farmers acknowledged the support services currently provided by the Sugar Cane Growers Fund.
- Support programmes discussed included:
 - Low-interest loan facilities;
 - Mortgage protection insurance;
 - House fire insurance assistance;
 - Women's farmer assistance programmes; and
 - Loyalty and discount schemes.
- Farmers raised concerns regarding accessibility to existing support programmes.
- Participants indicated that loan application processes could be simplified to improve access.

		- Concerns were raised regarding the Fund's responsiveness to current challenges facing farmers. - Farmers questioned whether Fund policies are adequately addressing emerging industry needs. - Stakeholders discussed the need for regular reviews of Fund programmes and services. - The importance of expanding financial support for mechanisation initiatives was highlighted. - Farmers noted that access to financing remains difficult despite existing assistance programmes. - Concerns were raised regarding major investment and expenditure decisions undertaken by the Fund. - Stakeholders called for stronger transparency and accountability regarding the use of grower funds. - Farmers advocated for greater consultation with growers before significant financial decisions are undertaken. - Participants called for stronger farmer representation in decisions affecting the operations and governance of the Fund. - Greater awareness and promotion of available support services were also recommended.	
29 August 2026 (Saturday)	Rural Electrification (RA02-18), Lau Settlement, Rakiraki	Project Background	

- The Committee undertook a site visit to Lau Settlement, Nalawa, Ra to assess the status of the Rural Electrification Project intended to provide electricity access to **36 households**.
- The Committee met with community members, local representatives, and relevant stakeholders to understand the reasons for the prolonged delay in implementation.
- Residents advised that the initial application for electricity was submitted in **2018**.
- Approval for the project was only communicated under the **2025-2026 Programme**, resulting in an approximate **seven-year delay** between application and approval.
- The estimated project cost is approximately **\$680,000**.
- The Committee was informed that project funding has already been approved through the relevant Government processes.

Delays in Project Delivery

- Residents expressed frustration regarding the lengthy delay in the implementation of the project.
- Community members noted that despite receiving assurances that the project had been approved and funded, little progress has been made.
- The Committee noted that residents had waited approximately seven years before receiving confirmation that the project was approved.
- Concerns were raised that approval processes and implementation timelines were excessively lengthy for a basic service delivery project.

Funding and Implementation Issues

		• Residents were advised that project funding had already been allocated and transferred through the appropriate channels. • Despite funding being available, physical implementation remains slow. • Concerns were raised regarding the inability to translate approved funding into completed works on the ground. • The Department of Energy reportedly advised that all requirements on its part had already been completed. • Discussions suggested that implementation bottlenecks may exist elsewhere within the project delivery framework.	
		Status of Physical Works • Preliminary project activities have commenced, including vegetation clearing and corridor clearing. • Residents confirmed that major infrastructure works have not yet commenced. • Community members stated that contractor presence on-site has been infrequent. • Residents reported receiving little to no communication on anticipated completion timelines. • Concerns were raised regarding the slow pace of physical implementation despite funding availability.	
		Contractor Capacity and Performance Concerns • The Committee was informed that the contractor responsible for the project is simultaneously undertaking other rural electrification projects in nearby areas. • Stakeholders questioned whether the allocation of multiple projects to a single contractor had impacted delivery timelines.	

- Concerns were raised that contractor workload may have reduced the contractor's ability to adequately service all assigned projects.
- Discussions highlighted that contractor capacity limitations may be contributing to implementation delays.

Land Access Issues

- The Committee confirmed that landowners have already granted consent for the project.
- Community members strongly refuted any suggestion that land access issues were causing the delay.
- Residents stated that all necessary permissions and clearances had already been provided.
- The community indicated its willingness to assist in facilitating project completion.
- The Committee concluded that land access is not an obstacle to the implementation of the project.

Stakeholder Coordination Issues

- Evidence gathered during the site visit suggested weak coordination among relevant stakeholders.
- Stakeholders identified included the Department of Energy, Energy Fiji Limited (EFL), contractors, local administrative offices, and community representatives.
- Residents indicated that project information provided by different agencies was often inconsistent.
- Community members expressed concern about receiving assurances without clear implementation schedules.

		• The Committee noted that communication processes require significant improvement.	
		Rural Electrification Management • Committee Members questioned whether EFL has a dedicated unit responsible for managing rural electrification programmes. • Concerns were raised that rural electrification projects may be administered within broader operational structures. • Members discussed whether this arrangement contributes to implementation delays and inadequate project monitoring. • Concerns were also raised regarding insufficient reporting on the performance of rural electrification projects.	
		Monitoring and Accountability Issues • The Committee noted longstanding concerns regarding the lack of detailed reporting on rural electrification projects. • The Committee found that monitoring and accountability mechanisms appear inadequate. • Discussions highlighted gaps in project tracking systems. • The lack of detailed progress reporting makes it difficult to properly assess project performance and effectiveness. • Members considered the need for stronger oversight measures and clearer project reporting requirements.	
		Local Level Monitoring • The Committee observed that local administrative and development coordination mechanisms could play a stronger role in project monitoring.	

		• Discussions highlighted opportunities for local officials to identify implementation issues earlier. • Community representatives indicated that many project issues are only identified when parliamentary site visits are conducted. • The Committee noted that stronger local monitoring could help prevent prolonged delays. Committee Observations • The Committee observed that community expectations remain high regarding access to electricity services. • Residents expressed eagerness to receive electricity connectivity as soon as possible. • Members observed that prolonged project delays have negatively affected public confidence in Government-funded development programmes. • The Committee noted that similar concerns have been repeatedly encountered during rural electrification site visits. • Members considered these recurring issues indicative of broader systemic weaknesses in project management, stakeholder coordination, monitoring, and communication. • The Committee emphasized that implementing agencies should proactively identify and resolve project challenges rather than relying on parliamentary site visits to uncover deficiencies. Key Matters Raised by the Committee • Reasons for the seven-year delay between application and approval. • Reasons for delays despite approved funding being available.	
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		• Slow commencement of physical project works. • Contractor capacity and workload concerns. • Weak coordination among agencies involved in project delivery. • Lack of dedicated oversight for rural electrification projects. • Inadequate reporting, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms. • Limited local-level monitoring and escalation mechanisms. The need for stronger governance and implementation arrangements for rural electrification programmes.	
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ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

Date & Day	Institution / Site Visited & Address	Concerns Raised During the Visit/Consultation	Committee's Comments (if any)
31 August 2026 (Monday)	Rural Electrification TAVE01-25 – Bouma Village to Lavena Village	Grid Extension and Electrification - EFL confirmed that technical surveys and assessments for grid extension have been completed. - Quotations, applicant details, and technical documentation have been submitted to the Department of Energy for consideration. - The proposed grid extension project remains pending due to funding approval requirements. - The estimated cost of extending electricity services to the affected communities is approximately \$1.9 million. - Significant capital investment is required to connect remote communities to the national grid.  Solar Home System Concerns - Beneficiaries raised concerns regarding prolonged delays in the installation of approved solar home systems. - Some households had paid the required contributions approximately one year ago but were still awaiting installation.	

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

		• Community members expressed frustration over the lack of progress and delayed service delivery. • Approximately \$75,000 was reportedly paid to the Department of Energy for solar installations since October last year, however installations remain outstanding. • Concerns were raised regarding the suitability and long-term effectiveness of installing solar systems in high rainfall and rain-prone areas. • Finding: Consideration should be given to the practicality and sustainability of placing solar systems in rain-prone regions where sunlight availability may be limited for prolonged periods.  Existing Power Supply Capacity • EFL advised that current electricity generation capacity on Taveuni is sufficient to meet existing demand and support planned grid expansions. • Existing generation infrastructure includes: ○ 1 MW Solar Farm. ○ 500 kW Battery Energy Storage System. ○ 700 kW Hydroelectric Facility. ○ Two 2 MW Diesel Generators.	
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ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

		 Future Energy Development • EFL acknowledged that future increases in electricity demand will require additional generation investments. • Potential future energy developments include: ○ Additional solar generation capacity. ○ Expansion of battery storage systems. ○ Upgrading existing hydroelectric infrastructure.  Hydroelectric Development Opportunities • Opportunities exist to further develop hydroelectric generation in Taveuni. • EFL indicated that studies are being considered to assess: ○ Enhancement of the current hydro scheme. ○ Development of upstream hydro installations. ○ Expansion of dam capacity. ○ Feasibility of mini-hydro systems along existing waterways. • Committee Members observed that hydroelectric expansion may provide a more sustainable, reliable, and cost-effective long-term solution for Taveuni.	
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ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

		 Information on Proposed Large Hydro Project • References were made to a larger hydroelectric development proposal intended to serve multiple communities. • Detailed documentation and feasibility studies were not available during the site visit. • The Committee requested that all relevant reports and technical assessments be provided for review.  Community Feedback and Communication • Community members highlighted limited communication regarding the status of their applications and projects. • Concerns were raised regarding uncertainty surrounding project timelines and completion dates. • Communities requested more regular updates from responsible agencies regarding funding approvals and implementation schedules.  Committee Observations • Delays in funding approvals continue to affect the timely implementation of rural electrification projects. • Delays in solar installation projects have negatively impacted beneficiary confidence in the programme.	
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ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

		• There is a need for stronger coordination between EFL and the Department of Energy to improve project delivery. • Renewable energy development remains strategically important for improving energy security and reducing reliance on diesel generation. • Improved stakeholder engagement and transparent reporting mechanisms are required to keep communities informed of project progress.	
31 August 2026 (Monday)	EFL Visit to Mua Solar PV Power Station	Renewable Energy Infrastructure • The Committee was informed that electricity generated from the 1 MW Solar Photovoltaic (PV) System, 500 kW Battery Energy Storage System, and hydroelectric generation is supplied directly into the Taveuni electricity grid. • The solar farm contributes significantly towards reducing dependence on diesel-generated electricity. • Renewable energy infrastructure is playing an important role in supporting Fiji's clean energy transition.  Battery Energy Storage System • The battery energy storage system serves as a critical backup during periods of low solar generation. • Battery storage supports electricity supply during:	

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

- Night-time operations;
- Cloudy weather conditions; and
- Periods of reduced solar generation.

- Discussions highlighted the increasing importance of battery storage in ensuring grid stability and energy reliability.
- Additional battery storage capacity may be required to maximize renewable energy utilization in the future.



Solar Performance and Weather Conditions

- Members noted that weather patterns vary significantly across different parts of Taveuni.
- Concerns were raised regarding communities located in areas with:
 - Frequent rainfall;
 - Heavy cloud cover; and
 - Reduced sunlight exposure.
- Questions were raised on whether solar home systems are the most suitable long-term solution for communities in rain-prone locations.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

		• Members observed that solar systems may provide only an interim solution in areas with limited solar resources. • Finding: Concerns remain regarding the installation of solar systems in rain-prone areas where prolonged cloudy conditions may affect system performance and reliability.  Feasibility Studies and Due Diligence • The Committee emphasized the importance of undertaking comprehensive feasibility studies before selecting electrification technologies. • Members stressed that investment decisions should be supported by: ○ Technical assessments; ○ Environmental considerations; ○ Cost-benefit analysis; and ○ Long-term community needs. • Concerns were raised that communities may be contributing financially towards solar installations without sufficient assessment of alternative options. • The Committee emphasized the need for evidence-based decision-making in rural electrification projects.	
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ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

		 Hydroelectric Development Opportunities • EFL advised that preliminary studies have been conducted to assess water flow levels and hydropower potential in certain communities. • Members noted that hydroelectric generation may provide a more reliable and sustainable solution in areas where solar performance is affected by weather conditions. • The Committee encouraged further investigations into hydroelectric opportunities before substantial resources are committed to solar technologies in certain locations. • Discussions highlighted the importance of exploring diversified renewable energy solutions.  Maintenance and Asset Management • EFL advised that a structured maintenance programme is in place for the solar farm. • Maintenance activities include: ○ Daily operational monitoring; ○ Weekly inspections; ○ Monthly solar panel cleaning; ○ Quarterly maintenance works;	
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ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

		○ Six-monthly servicing; and ○ Annual maintenance assessments. • Regular vegetation control and panel cleaning are undertaken to maintain system efficiency and energy production.  Cyclone Resilience and Disaster Preparedness • The Committee was informed that the solar facility has been designed to withstand Category 5 Cyclone Standards. • Appropriate structural foundations and panel securing systems have been incorporated into the design. • Discussions highlighted the importance of maintaining strong disaster preparedness and risk management measures for renewable energy assets.  Community Awareness and Communication • The Committee observed that some communities view solar installations as a permanent solution to electrification challenges. • Members stressed the need for clearer communication regarding: ○ Benefits of solar technology; ○ Limitations of solar systems;	
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ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

		○ Alternative renewable energy options; and ○ Long-term energy planning decisions. • Communities should be fully informed regarding the rationale behind technology selection and investment decisions.  Committee Observations • Renewable energy developments have significantly contributed towards reducing reliance on traditional fuel sources. • Electrification solutions should be tailored to local environmental and geographical conditions rather than applying a uniform approach across all communities. • Long-term sustainability, reliability, and value for money should remain key considerations in public investments. • Battery energy storage systems will continue to play a critical role in Fiji's renewable energy future. • Greater consideration should be given to hydroelectric options in communities where climatic conditions may reduce solar system effectiveness.	
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ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

		There is a need for greater transparency regarding the criteria used to determine electrification solutions for rural communities.	
31 August 2026 (Monday)	Rural Electrification TAVE02-17 – Drekeniwai and Burotu Settlement	 Rural Electrification Project Status - An application covering 52 households was approved under the Rural Electrification Programme. - The project includes house wiring works and connection preparations prior to electricity supply being provided to households. - Community members welcomed the approval but expressed concerns regarding the lengthy waiting period for implementation.  House Wiring Works - The house wiring contract was awarded to Quality Electric. - Contractor mobilisation was expected to commence in September. - House wiring was identified as the final stage before meter installation and grid connection. - Residents sought assurance that wiring works would begin within the communicated timeframe.	

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

		 Delays and Completion Timeline • No definitive project completion date was provided during the discussions. • Project implementation remains dependent on: ○ Contractor availability and workload; ○ Availability of electrical materials; ○ Shipping schedules; ○ Transportation and logistics; and ○ Supply chain constraints. • Officials advised that similar projects have generally required several months to complete. • Community members requested clearer timelines and regular progress updates.  Material Supply Challenges • Delays in the procurement of electrical materials have affected project implementation. • Materials requiring procurement include: ○ Electrical cables;	
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ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

		○ Wiring; ○ Meter boxes; and ○ Associated electrical equipment. • Transportation of materials to maritime and remote communities presents additional challenges. • Shipping delays were identified as a contributing factor affecting project delivery.  Landowner Consent Issues • Several households were not included in the original approved list due to the absence of required landowner consent documentation. • Affected households have since obtained the necessary consent and submitted the required documents. • Officials confirmed that these applications will be considered in a future phase of the programme. • Residents requested that outstanding applications be processed without further delay.  Eligibility Requirements • Officials reiterated that landowner consent remains a mandatory requirement for electrification assistance.	
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ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NORTHERN DIVISION SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Monday 31 August 2026 – Friday 4 September 2026

		• Lack of consent documentation was identified as the principal reason for exclusion from the initial project scope. • Community members were encouraged to ensure all supporting documents are submitted during the application process.  Technical Limitations • The standard house wiring assistance programme generally applies to households located within approximately 295 to 300 metres of an existing electricity supply line. • Households located beyond this distance may require a separate grid extension application. • Technical requirements such as voltage drop limitations and additional infrastructure needs can affect eligibility.  Community Concerns • Residents raised concerns regarding prolonged delays in accessing electricity services. • Community members expressed the need for better communication regarding project progress and expected connection dates.	
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ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

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		• Beneficiaries highlighted the importance of electricity access for improving living standards, education, and economic opportunities. 👁️ Committee Findings and Observations • The Committee noted that the project has progressed beyond the approval stage and moved into implementation. • Delays are largely associated with: ○ Material procurement challenges; ○ Contractor workload and capacity; ○ Shipping and transportation constraints; and ○ Administrative requirements. • There is a need for regular engagement with beneficiaries to provide updates on implementation progress. • Rural and maritime communities continue to face unique logistical challenges that can affect the timely delivery of electrification projects. • The Committee acknowledged the cooperation of residents and local leaders in supporting project implementation and ensuring the submission of required documentation. • Finding: Greater transparency on project timelines, contractor work schedules, and material procurement status	
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		is required to manage community expectations and improve confidence in project delivery. Finding: Households that have since met the landowner consent requirements should be prioritised for assessment under the next phase of the Rural Electrification Programme.	
31 August 2026 (Monday)	EFL Visit to Taveuni Hydro Power Station	 Renewable Energy Generation and Supply - Taveuni's electricity supply is primarily generated through renewable energy sources. - The island's power generation system consists of: - Hydroelectric generation; - Solar photovoltaic generation; and - Battery energy storage systems. - Diesel generators are generally utilised only during: - System faults; - Maintenance periods; and - Emergency situations. - Approximately 95% of Taveuni's electricity demand is supplied through renewable energy sources.	

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		 Hydroelectric Facility Operations • The hydroelectric project was funded by the Government of China at an estimated cost of approximately \$21 million. • Construction of the facility was completed over approximately three years. • The project included: ◦ Hydroelectric generating facilities; ◦ Transmission infrastructure; and ◦ Grid expansion works. • The hydro facility remains a critical asset supporting energy security and reducing dependence on diesel generation.  Increasing Electricity Demand • EFL advised that electricity demand on Taveuni has steadily increased as more communities and households are connected to the grid. • The hydro station is currently operating close to its maximum generation capacity of approximately 700 kilowatts. • Existing generation is supported by:	
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		○ 1 MW solar generation; ○ Battery energy storage systems; and ○ Backup diesel generation. • Current infrastructure will require expansion to accommodate future energy demand.  Future Energy Requirements • EFL projections indicate that electricity demand on Taveuni could increase to between 3 MW and 5 MW within the next five to ten years. • Growth in demand is expected to result from: ○ Ongoing rural electrification projects; ○ Population growth; and ○ Increased economic activity. • Strategic investment in additional generation capacity will be necessary to meet future demand.  Potential for Hydroelectric Expansion • EFL advised that opportunities may exist to expand hydroelectric generation through infrastructure upgrades and improvements.	
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		• Committee Members noted that hydroelectric expansion may provide a more sustainable and cost-effective solution than increased reliance on diesel generation. • Further technical assessments and feasibility studies will be required to determine expansion opportunities.  Water Resource Utilisation • Members observed that substantial volumes of water used for hydroelectric generation are discharged downstream after electricity generation. • Discussions highlighted the potential for collaboration between Energy Fiji Limited and the Water Authority of Fiji. • Consideration could be given to utilising discharged water to support community water supply projects in nearby areas. • Finding: Opportunities may exist to integrate hydroelectric infrastructure with community water supply initiatives to maximise public benefits from existing resources.  Technical Capacity and Workforce Development • The Committee was informed that EFL has invested in specialised training programmes for technical personnel. • Staff responsible for operating and maintaining hydro and solar infrastructure have received overseas technical training.	
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		• Ongoing capacity-building initiatives are undertaken to support the reliable operation of renewable energy systems. • Committee Members commended the technical knowledge and competence of operational staff.  Contractor Capacity and Project Delivery Challenges • EFL advised that there is a limited pool of locally based electrical contractors available to undertake electrification works. • Key challenges identified included: ○ Limited contractor capacity; ○ Contractors declining larger projects; ○ Delays in project implementation; ○ Poor workmanship in some cases; and ○ Failure by some contractors to complete assigned works. • Contractor-related challenges continue to affect the timely delivery of rural electrification projects. • Finding: Contractor availability and performance remain significant constraints affecting rural electrification delivery, particularly in remote and maritime areas.	
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		 Inter-Agency Coordination • A recurring concern raised during the visit was the need for stronger coordination between EFL and the Department of Energy. • Committee Members observed inconsistencies in: ○ Project reporting; ○ Information sharing; ○ Communication processes; and ○ Project implementation oversight. • These issues have contributed to delays and uncertainty in some rural electrification projects. • Finding: Improved communication and coordination mechanisms between EFL and the Department of Energy are required to enhance project delivery, accountability, and stakeholder confidence.  Committee Observations • The Committee commended EFL's successful operation of a renewable energy-based electricity system that has significantly reduced reliance on fossil fuels.	
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		• The hydroelectric facility continues to play a vital role in ensuring energy security for Taveuni. • Future growth in electricity demand will require proactive planning and investment in additional renewable generation capacity. • Hydroelectric expansion should be further explored as a long-term and sustainable energy solution. • Contractor management, quality assurance, and project monitoring mechanisms require strengthening. • Greater collaboration between EFL and the Department of Energy will be essential to improve implementation of rural electrification programmes. • Continued investment in technical training and workforce development will support the long-term sustainability of renewable energy infrastructure on Taveuni.	
1 September 2026 (Tuesday)	Rural Electrification SA01-26 – Korolevu & Drano Village Rural Electrification SA02-26 – Bucalevu & Navakaka Village	⚡ Rural Electrification Project Status • The Committee reviewed the progress of rural electrification projects being implemented by the Department of Energy and Energy Fiji Limited (EFL).	

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Rural Electrification SA09-23 –
Waivula Village

- Several rural electrification projects have completed surveys, technical designs, assessments and quotations and are ready for implementation.
- A number of projects have received approvals but remain pending due to funding constraints.
- Communities continue to await electricity connections despite projects reaching advanced planning stages.

Funding Challenges

- Insufficient government funding was identified as the principal obstacle affecting project implementation.
- Several approved projects have remained outstanding for a number of years despite being technically ready to proceed.
- Some project quotations submitted as early as 2020 have yet to be actioned due to budget limitations.
- Delayed funding approvals have significantly affected project rollout and service delivery to rural communities.

Escalating Project Costs

- The Committee noted that original project estimates are no longer reflective of current market conditions.

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		• Inflation and increasing infrastructure costs are expected to have significantly increased project expenditure requirements. • Updated quotations and revised project costings are required to accurately determine funding needs.  Incomplete Network Infrastructure • High-voltage transmission infrastructure has already been installed in some locations. • However, low-voltage reticulation networks required to connect villages and households remain incomplete. • Communities remain without electricity despite network infrastructure being located nearby. • Completion of low-voltage networks is necessary before household connections can proceed.  Household Electrification Delays • House wiring and customer connection works cannot commence until low-voltage infrastructure is completed and energised. • Residents continue to experience delays in accessing reliable electricity services.	
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		• Project implementation delays have affected community expectations and development opportunities.  Phased Project Implementation • Some electrification projects have been implemented in phases due to limited funding availability. • Initial works have been completed in certain areas while subsequent phases remain on hold awaiting funding support. • Communities have expressed concerns regarding uncertainty surrounding project completion dates.  Project Monitoring and Management • The Committee identified the need for improved tracking of completed, ongoing and pending rural electrification projects. • Better visibility of project status would support planning, budgeting and prioritisation processes. • Accurate records would improve transparency and accountability in project implementation.  Importance of Rural Electrification • Reliable electricity is essential for improving the quality of life in rural communities.	
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		• Electrification supports: ○ Economic development; ○ Educational opportunities; ○ Improved household wellbeing; ○ Community services; and ○ Social development. • The Committee recognised the importance of accelerating electrification projects to support rural development objectives.  Committee Findings • Finding: Several rural electrification projects are implementation-ready but remain delayed due to funding constraints. • Finding: Some project quotations have remained outstanding since 2020, highlighting the need for urgent funding intervention. • Finding: Existing high-voltage infrastructure is underutilised where low-voltage reticulation works have not been completed.	
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		- Finding: Updated project costings are required to reflect current construction and infrastructure costs. - Finding: A consolidated assessment of funding requirements is necessary to address the backlog of pending projects. - Finding: Improved coordination between Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) and the Department of Energy is essential to improve project implementation and monitoring. - Finding: Increased budget allocations and alternative funding sources should be explored to accelerate rural electrification across affected communities. - Finding: Completion of low-voltage distribution networks should be prioritised in areas where high-voltage infrastructure has already been established.	
2 September 2026 (Wednesday)	Rural Electrification SA01-18 – [DAWARA] Vunidawamoli, Natuvu & Natua Rural Electrification SA07-18 – Waisali Village & Settlements	Vunidawamoli Electrification Project - The project quotation was received in 2022. - The project consists of 112 applicants. - Approximately 60 houses have been wired, with works currently in progress. - The contract was awarded to Moons Electronic.	

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		• Funding for the project was released in July 2023. • The tender was subsequently awarded to Moons Electronic in 2025. • The project is expected to be completed by September 2026. • Community members sought clarification regarding the time lapse between funding approval and project implementation. Wasali Electrification Project • The Wasali project is expected to be completed by December 2026. • Concerns were raised regarding contractor requirements for accommodation and logistical support within the village. • Villagers raised concerns about various implementation and communication issues affecting project progress. • It was noted that contractors should make their own arrangements in accordance with contract requirements and project obligations. • Community members highlighted concerns regarding the contractor's interaction with village resources. Nabalebale Electrification Project	
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		• Full payment for the project has already been made to Energy Fiji Limited (EFL). • The contractor engaged for the works is Tanoa Electrical. • The tender has been awarded and project implementation is expected to proceed in accordance with contractual timelines. • Officials advised that penalty provisions apply where contractors fail to complete works within the agreed timeframe. Contractor Management Issues • Concerns were raised regarding delays in mobilisation and implementation by some contractors. • Members were advised that contractual penalties may be imposed where contractors fail to meet project delivery deadlines. • Greater monitoring and oversight of contractor performance was identified as necessary to ensure timely project completion. Village Governance and Coordination • Concerns were raised regarding coordination and communication between government agencies and villages.	
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		• It was suggested that the iTaukei Affairs Board/Ministry should play a greater role in coordinating communication and implementation of development projects within villages. • Improved engagement with village leadership structures was identified as important for project delivery and stakeholder management. Community Resource Management • Concerns were raised regarding the use of village resources during project implementation. • It was emphasised that trees and other natural resources within village boundaries belong to the village and landowners. • Contractors should not remove or utilize village resources without prior approval from the relevant landowners and village authorities. Nakilini Community Concerns • Community members advised that they are willing to pay for electricity services and connections. • Residents requested clear information regarding: ○ The application process; ○ Eligibility requirements;	
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		○ Connection procedures; and ○ Associated costs. • Community members expressed a strong interest in being connected to the electricity network and requested assistance in progressing their applications. 🗨️ Committee Findings • Finding: The delay between funding approval and project implementation requires further examination to improve project delivery efficiency. • Finding: Stronger contractor monitoring mechanisms are required to ensure adherence to project timelines. • Finding: Community engagement and communication should be strengthened throughout all stages of project implementation. • Finding: Greater involvement of the iTaukei Affairs framework may assist in coordinating development projects in rural villages. • Finding: Clear guidance should be provided to communities such as Nakilini on the process and requirements for obtaining electricity connections.	
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		Finding: Contractors must respect village resources and obtain appropriate approvals before utilizing any community-owned assets.	
3 September 2026 (Thursday)	Rural Electrification LAB14-15 – Naua, Drawa & Lutukina Settlement	⚡ Project Status and Funding - Government funding of \$269,752 for the Naua Settlement Rural Electrification Project was paid to Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) on 30 May 2022. - Despite funding being released, the project took approximately three years to reach its current stage. - The electrification infrastructure has now been connected to the main grid; however, some household connections remain outstanding. - Members stressed that once funding is disbursed, implementation should proceed within a reasonable timeframe and tangible results should be delivered to communities. - The key concern raised was that funds had been provided, but project delivery and service outcomes were significantly delayed. 🔧 Contractor Performance and Capacity Issues	

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		• The project was initially awarded to Tanoa Electrical. • Members were informed that the contractor's engagement was subsequently terminated. • It was noted that the contractor was undertaking works in Mali and Vorovoro Island, impacting its capacity to deliver the project on schedule. • Following the contractor's termination, EFL assumed responsibility for undertaking and progressing the project. • EFL advised that contractor shortages remain a challenge within the Northern Division. • Members were informed that only approximately three contractors operate within the Labasa area for rural electrification projects. • Contractors undertaking multiple projects simultaneously continue to contribute to implementation delays.  Lack of Monitoring and Oversight • Serious concerns were raised regarding the lack of a formal monitoring system for rural electrification projects. • Members noted that projects are funded and approved but are not consistently monitored until completion.	
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		• The Department of Energy was reported to rely largely on reports from EFL rather than independent field verification. • It was suggested that Provincial Administrators (PAs), Roko Tuis and other local government officials should be actively involved in monitoring project implementation. • Members observed that there is currently no structured system to monitor project progress from funding approval to project completion.  Weak Coordination Between Agencies • Members identified a lack of coordination between agencies involved in rural electrification projects. • Concerns were raised that internal divisions of the Department of Energy often organise meetings independently, resulting in fragmented communication. • Local Department of Energy representatives are frequently unaware of project progress and implementation updates. • EFL reporting is submitted directly to Headquarters in Suva, limiting information flow to officers operating in the field. • Local Department of Energy officers, Provincial Offices and Divisional Offices are not consistently included in project reporting and updates.	
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		 Proposal for Joint Monitoring Visits • It was proposed that Roko Tuis, Provincial Administrators, Department of Energy officials and EFL representatives undertake joint monitoring visits to project sites. • Joint inspections would strengthen: ○ Monitoring and accountability; ○ Community engagement; ○ Information sharing; and ○ Early identification of project challenges. • Members agreed that a collaborative approach would improve project implementation and reporting.  Community Communication Concerns • Community members were not adequately informed of the Parliamentary Committee's visit. • Communities reported receiving limited information regarding project status, expected completion dates and implementation challenges. • Poor communication has contributed to frustration and misconceptions regarding Government commitment to rural electrification.	
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		 Outstanding Electrification Applications • Several nearby communities, including Naua, Nakacagi and Natua, have electrification applications that remain outstanding. • Some projects have received quotations but remain unfunded, while others have expired due to implementation delays. • Members highlighted the need to prioritise long-standing applications and address electrification backlogs.  Balelawa Electrification Project • Members were informed that the Balelawa Electrification Project dates back to 2017. • The original quotation has now expired. • The estimated project cost is approximately \$1.4 million. • Concerns were raised regarding prolonged delays and the need for updated quotations and funding consideration.  Committee Findings • Finding: Funding was released in 2022; however, project implementation and delivery did not occur within a reasonable timeframe.	
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		• Finding: There is a lack of effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms for funded rural electrification projects. • Finding: Local Department of Energy representatives are not consistently informed of project reporting submitted directly to EFL Headquarters. • Finding: Stronger coordination is required between EFL, the Department of Energy, Provincial Offices, Divisional Offices and local stakeholders. • Finding: Joint monitoring visits involving EFL, the Department of Energy, Provincial Administrators and Roko Tuis should be institutionalised to improve oversight. • Finding: Contractor shortages and contractor performance issues continue to affect the timely delivery of rural electrification projects. • Finding: The primary issue identified is not the allocation of funding, but the timely implementation, monitoring and completion of funded projects. • Finding: Long-outstanding projects such as Balelawa require urgent review, updated costing and prioritisation. • Finding: Improved community communication is necessary to maintain public confidence in Government development programmes.	
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		Finding: Greater accountability should be applied to ensure that projects funded through public resources are completed within approved timelines.	
3 September 2026 (Thursday)	Meeting with Seaqaqa Cane Growers - At Police Bure	 Retention of the Ministry of Sugar - Farmers strongly supported retaining a dedicated Ministry of Sugar rather than merging it with the Ministry of Agriculture. - It was emphasized that the sugar industry requires specialised policy attention due to its economic significance and unique challenges. - Participants stressed that leaders and decision-makers within the sector should possess practical knowledge and experience in the sugar industry.  Low Cane Prices and Profitability Challenges - Farmers expressed concerns that current cane prices are insufficient to cover production costs. - Rising costs continue to place financial pressure on growers, including: - Labour costs; - Harvesting expenses; - Fuel costs;	

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		○ Fertiliser costs; ○ Transportation costs; ○ Land lease payments; and ○ Farm machinery expenses. • Many growers indicated that profit margins have continued to decline in recent years.  Labour Shortages • Labour shortages were consistently raised as one of the most significant challenges facing the sugar industry. • Farmers reported difficulties in securing sufficient labour for planting, maintenance, harvesting and loading activities. • Large volumes of cane reportedly remain unharvested due to labour constraints. • Participants strongly supported greater mechanisation to address workforce shortages.  Mechanisation and Farm Modernisation • Farmers called for increased access to modern harvesting and farming equipment.	
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		• Greater investment in mechanisation was viewed as critical to improving productivity and reducing reliance on manual labour. • There were requests for improved access to: ○ Tractors; ○ Harvesters; ○ Trucks; and ○ Modern farm implements. [Meeting wi...rs seaqaga Word]  Sugar Cane Growers Fund (SCGF) • Farmers acknowledged the support provided by the Sugar Cane Growers Fund (SCGF). • Concerns were raised that existing loan limits are inadequate to purchase modern agricultural equipment. • Calls were made for: ○ Increased loan ceilings; ○ More flexible lending conditions; ○ Lower interest arrangements; and ○ Additional financial assistance programmes.	
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		 Land Tenure and Access to Agricultural Land • Farmers highlighted concerns regarding long-term security of agricultural leases. • Concerns were raised that productive cane land is increasingly being converted to non-agricultural purposes. • Stakeholders stressed that secure land tenure is necessary to encourage long-term investment and maintain production levels.  Sugar Mill Operations and Efficiency • Participants expressed concerns regarding the age and condition of existing sugar mills. • Frequent mill breakdowns and operational stoppages were reported to impact harvesting schedules and farmer returns. • Farmers called for: ○ Modernisation of mill infrastructure; ○ Improved maintenance programmes; and ○ Greater operational efficiency.  Industry Diversification and Value-Added Production	
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		• Stakeholders supported moving beyond the production of raw sugar. • Opportunities identified included: ○ Refined sugar production; ○ Ethanol production; ○ Sustainable aviation fuel; and ○ Other value-added sugar products. • Farmers indicated that diversification would strengthen industry sustainability and create additional revenue streams.  Infrastructure Challenges • Farmers raised concerns regarding poor infrastructure in cane-growing areas. • Key issues included: ○ Poor road conditions; ○ Inadequate water supply systems; and ○ Gaps in rural electrification services. • These challenges continue to increase farm operating costs and affect productivity.	
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		 Financial Pressures on Farmers • Farmers highlighted ongoing difficulties in meeting loan repayment obligations. • Delays in cane payments were reported to create cash-flow challenges. • Stakeholders requested that lending institutions adopt more flexible arrangements for farmers experiencing financial hardship.  Accountability and Government Assistance • Participants acknowledged Government assistance programmes supporting the sugar industry. • Concerns were raised regarding: ○ Programme administration; ○ Monitoring of assistance; ○ Effectiveness of subsidies; and ○ Delivery of intended outcomes. • Farmers stressed the importance of ensuring assistance reaches intended beneficiaries and achieves measurable results.	
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		👁️ Committee Findings • Finding: Labour shortages remain one of the primary challenges affecting sugar production and harvesting activities. • Finding: Current cane prices and rising production costs continue to affect farmer profitability. • Finding: Increased mechanisation is required to improve productivity and address labour constraints. • Finding: Existing SCGF loan limits may not adequately meet the capital requirements of modern farming operations. • Finding: Land tenure security remains critical to sustaining long-term investment and production within the sugar sector. • Finding: Modernisation of sugar mills is necessary to improve efficiency and minimise disruptions to harvesting operations. • Finding: Diversification into value-added sugar products presents opportunities to improve industry resilience and profitability. • Finding: Improvements to rural infrastructure, particularly roads, water supply and electrification, would support increased productivity in cane-growing communities.	
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		• Finding: Greater accountability and monitoring of government-supported programmes are necessary to ensure effective use of public resources. • Finding: Stakeholders remain committed to the sugar industry but believe substantial reforms are required to secure its long-term sustainability and competitiveness.  Ministry of Sugar Industry • Strong support was expressed for retaining a dedicated Ministry of Sugar Industry. • Farmers opposed the merging of the sugar portfolio with other ministries, noting that the industry requires specialised attention and focused policy direction. • Concerns were raised that the sugar industry may lose prominence if managed under a broader agricultural framework. • Farmers stressed that decision-makers within the Ministry should possess practical knowledge and experience of the sugar industry. • Calls were made for the Ministry to play a stronger role in monitoring industry agencies and ensuring accountability for industry outcomes.	
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		• Farmers requested greater engagement between the Ministry and cane-growing communities.  Sugar Cane Growers Fund (SCGF) • Farmers acknowledged the assistance provided through SCGF loan facilities. • Concerns were raised that loan limits are insufficient given the rising cost of farm machinery and equipment. • Farmers requested an increase in loan ceilings for: ○ Tractors; ○ Mechanical harvesters; ○ Cane trucks; ○ Farm implements; and ○ Land development activities. • Interest rates and repayment arrangements were raised as concerns by some farmers. • Farmers requested more flexible repayment options, particularly during poor crop seasons. • Concerns were raised regarding delays in loan approvals and processing.	
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		• Calls were made for SCGF to expand assistance programmes to attract younger farmers into the sugar industry.  Sugar Industry Tribunal (SIT) • Farmers raised concerns regarding delays in the resolution of cane industry disputes. • Issues relating to cane contracts, land tenure disputes, and industry grievances were highlighted. • Concerns were expressed regarding accessibility of Tribunal services, particularly for farmers in remote areas. • Farmers requested more awareness and education about the role and functions of the Tribunal. • Calls were made for faster processing and determination of disputes affecting farmers. • Stakeholders emphasised the importance of maintaining an independent Tribunal to safeguard the rights and interests of growers. • The need for stronger enforcement of Tribunal decisions was also raised during discussions.	
3 September 2026 (Thursday)	EFL Visit - Seaqaqa Solar Site	Discussion The Committee conducted a site visit to the proposed renewable energy development site at Korovuli, Seaqaqa to inspect the project	

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		area and receive briefings from project representatives and stakeholders regarding the proposed solar energy development. Discussions focused on project ownership and management, land allocation, environmental approval requirements, generation capacity, battery storage infrastructure, climate change considerations, and project implementation timelines. Project Ownership and Management The Committee was informed that the project is being developed through private sector investment and forms part of ongoing efforts to expand renewable energy generation capacity. Project stakeholders advised that technical oversight and project management responsibilities are currently being led by a Japanese project manager representing the investors. It was noted that strong collaboration between investors, technical experts, and relevant authorities will be essential to ensure successful project implementation and delivery. Project Scope and Land Allocation Project representatives briefed the Committee on the proposed site boundaries and land allocation arrangements. The Committee was informed that the development area extends from the existing power plant towards the southern section of the site and continues to the creek boundary. It was further noted that certain portions of land, including an existing residential property, will be excluded from the project area and managed separately under an alternative lease arrangement. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of clearly defining and demarcating all project boundaries prior to the	
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		commencement of construction activities to avoid future land-related disputes. Environmental and Regulatory Approvals The Committee was advised that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process is currently underway as part of the project's regulatory approval requirements. Stakeholders noted that land permitting processes are progressing and are anticipated to be completed by January. Subject to the completion of all relevant approvals and permits, site preparation and construction activities are expected to commence shortly thereafter. The Committee noted that compliance with all environmental, regulatory, and permitting requirements remains a critical prerequisite for project implementation. Generation and Battery Storage Capacity The Committee received a detailed briefing on the proposed generation and energy storage capacity of the facility. It was noted that the solar energy project is expected to generate approximately 12 megawatts (MW) of electricity during daylight hours. In addition, the project will incorporate a 6 MW battery storage system designed to store excess energy generated during the day for distribution during evening periods and other non-generating hours. Stakeholders advised that the proposed generation capacity is significantly larger than similar projects currently operating within neighbouring areas	
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		and will substantially contribute towards meeting regional electricity demand while strengthening energy security. Climate Change Considerations The Committee and stakeholders discussed the increasing impacts of climate change on infrastructure development and energy planning. Concerns were raised regarding changing rainfall patterns, weather variability, and other climate-related risks that may affect long-term project sustainability. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of incorporating climate resilience measures into project planning, engineering design, and operational frameworks to ensure the infrastructure remains resilient and adaptable to future environmental challenges. Project Implementation and Delivery The Committee was informed that, following the completion of all necessary regulatory approvals and permitting processes, the project is expected to proceed to construction and implementation phases. Stakeholders indicated that the anticipated project completion period is approximately 12 months following commencement of construction works. The importance of maintaining regular project monitoring, reporting mechanisms, and stakeholder engagement throughout implementation was highlighted to ensure that project milestones and delivery targets are achieved. Committee Observations	
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		In concluding discussions, the Committee noted that the proposed renewable energy development represents a significant investment in sustainable energy infrastructure and has the potential to improve electricity reliability, strengthen regional energy security, and contribute towards national development objectives. The Committee further noted that successful implementation will depend on the timely completion of environmental and regulatory approvals, finalisation of land and lease arrangements, effective coordination among stakeholders, sound environmental management practices, and the incorporation of climate-resilient infrastructure measures throughout the project lifecycle.	
3 September 2026 (Thursday)	Rural Electrification LAB36-18 – Dradramea & Korolevu Settlements, Seaqaqa	⚡ Long-Standing Rural Electrification Application • Community applications for electricity access date back to 1999. • Residents have been pursuing electrification for more than 20 years. • Approximately 55 households remain without electricity despite the presence of nearby power infrastructure. • Community members expressed frustration over the lengthy delays and repeated follow-ups without implementation. 💰 Funding Constraints	

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		• The project has been technically assessed and costed by Energy Fiji Limited (EFL). • The estimated cost of the project is between \$940,000 and \$1 million. • No current budget allocation exists for the project. • Funding remains the primary reason for the delay in implementation. • Community members questioned why the project continues to remain outstanding despite years of assessments and consultations.  Escalation of Project Costs • Members were informed that project costs have increased significantly over time. • Rising prices of materials, transportation and construction services have contributed to higher project costs. • Continued delays are expected to result in further cost escalations. • Members noted that delays in funding approvals create greater financial pressure on future project implementation.  Infrastructure Requirements	
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		• The project requires substantial network extensions and infrastructure development. • Required works include: ○ Installation of additional power poles; ○ Extension of 11kV high-voltage lines; ○ Installation of a transformer; ○ Construction of low-voltage distribution lines; and ○ Household service connections. • EFL advised that existing nearby power lines cannot simply be extended due to voltage drop and technical limitations.  Previous Community Contributions • Community members advised that payments and contributions had previously been made towards electrification works. • Concerns were raised that historical records relating to those payments could not be properly accounted for due to administrative changes over time. • Residents requested clarification regarding the status of previous financial contributions.	
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		 Landowner and Easement Issues • The project will require consent from affected landowners and cane farmers. • Easement agreements and access approvals must be secured prior to the commencement of construction works. • Early engagement with stakeholders was identified as necessary to avoid future delays.  Lack of Clear Implementation Timeline • Neither EFL nor the Department of Energy was able to provide a definitive commencement date for the project. • No completion timeframe has been established. • Implementation remains dependent on future funding allocations and procurement processes.  Community Concerns • Residents expressed dissatisfaction with repeated surveys and consultations that have not resulted in project implementation. • Community members requested clear information regarding: ◦ Whether the project will be funded;	
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		○ When works will commence; and ○ The expected completion timeline. • Concerns were raised regarding growing uncertainty and declining confidence in government development programmes.  Committee Findings • Finding: Dradramea Settlement has been waiting for rural electrification for more than two decades despite multiple applications and assessments. • Finding: Funding constraints remain the principal obstacle preventing project implementation. • Finding: Continued delays have significantly increased project costs from original estimates. • Finding: Repeated assessments without implementation have contributed to community frustration and reduced confidence in project delivery. • Finding: Greater transparency is required regarding project prioritisation, funding decisions and implementation schedules.	
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		- Finding: Long-outstanding projects should be prioritised to prevent further cost escalation and prolonged hardship for communities. - Finding: Early engagement with landowners and cane farmers is necessary to ensure that land access requirements do not delay future implementation. - Finding: Stronger coordination between the Department of Energy, Energy Fiji Limited (EFL), Divisional Offices, Provincial Authorities and the Commissioner's Office is required to improve project monitoring and delivery. - Finding: Communities should receive regular updates on the status of their applications, funding approvals and project timelines to improve transparency and manage expectations. - Finding: A national review of long-pending rural electrification projects should be undertaken to identify projects requiring urgent funding and implementation support.	
4 September 2026 (Friday)	Meeting with Labasa Cane Growers at FSC Training Room.	 Sugar Industry Remains Important but Faces Significant Challenges Farmers strongly emphasised that the sugar industry remains a critical contributor to Fiji's economy and rural livelihoods.	

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		• The industry continues to support thousands of farmers, workers, transport operators and businesses. • Stakeholders agreed that the industry should be sustained but requires urgent reform to address declining productivity and profitability. • Concerns were raised regarding the ongoing financial challenges faced by Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) and its continued reliance on Government support. • Farmers expressed concern that cane production has continued to decline across many farming districts.  Ministry of Sugar Industry • Farmers strongly supported retaining a dedicated Ministry of Sugar Industry. • Concerns were raised that the sugar industry requires specialised attention and should not lose priority within Government. • Farmers stressed that industry leadership should possess practical knowledge and experience of the sugar sector. • Questions were raised regarding the effectiveness of the Ministry's oversight and coordination role.	
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		• Stakeholders called for stronger monitoring of industry agencies and programmes. • Farmers requested more regular engagement and consultations between the Ministry and sugarcane growers.  Rising Costs and Low Farmer Returns • Farmers advised that cane prices have not increased proportionately with rising production costs. • Major cost pressures identified included: ○ Harvesting costs; ○ Transportation costs; ○ Labour shortages; ○ Fertiliser costs; ○ Farm input costs; ○ Fuel costs; ○ Machinery costs; and ○ Land lease expenses. • Many farmers stated that current returns are insufficient to make farming financially sustainable.	
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		• Some farmers indicated that profit margins continue to decline despite increases in production efforts.  Sugar Pricing Transparency • Farmers repeatedly raised concerns regarding a lack of transparency in the cane payment system. • Concerns included: ○ Cane payment calculations; ○ Sugar pricing formulas; ○ Revenue distribution mechanisms; and ○ FSC operational costs. • Farmers requested regular disclosure of: ○ Sugar sale prices; ○ Export earnings; ○ Market performance; ○ Revenue received; and ○ How proceeds are distributed within the industry. • Stakeholders stressed that increased transparency would improve trust and confidence in the industry.	
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		 Sugar Industry Tribunal (SIT) • Farmers expressed strong dissatisfaction regarding the effectiveness of the Sugar Industry Tribunal (SIT). • Concerns raised included: ○ Slow dispute resolution processes; ○ Delays in addressing farmer complaints; ○ Inadequate mediation services; and ○ Limited responsiveness to industry disputes. • Farmers indicated that disputes involving harvesters, contractors and growers often remain unresolved for extended periods. • Questions were raised regarding whether the Tribunal remains fit for purpose under its current structure. • Stakeholders called for a comprehensive review of the Tribunal's functions and performance. • Farmers emphasised the importance of maintaining an effective and independent dispute resolution mechanism.  Sugar Cane Growers Fund (SCGF)	
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Farmers acknowledged the important role of the Sugar Cane Growers Fund (SCGF) in supporting growers.• Concerns were raised regarding:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Loan interest rates;○ Accessibility of financing;○ Lending conditions; and○ Processing requirements.• Some farmers perceived that the Fund had become more focused on revenue generation than farmer support.• Farmers requested:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Reduced interest rates;○ Increased loan ceilings;○ More flexible repayment arrangements; and○ Greater support for diversification activities.• Participants encouraged the Fund to expand assistance programmes that support farm development and mechanisation. | |
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 **Land Issues and Lease Security**

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		• Land tenure uncertainty remains a major concern for farmers. • Issues raised included: ○ Rising lease premiums; ○ Lease renewal delays; ○ Uncertainty over long-term access to agricultural land; and ○ Limited engagement with landowners. • Farmers stressed that secure land tenure is critical for long-term investment and sustainable production. • Stakeholders called for greater involvement of landowners in future industry planning processes.  Weak Coordination Among Sugar Institutions • Concerns were raised regarding duplication of roles among: ○ Ministry of Sugar Industry; ○ Sugar Industry Tribunal; ○ Sugar Cane Growers Fund; ○ Sugar Cane Growers Council; and ○ Fiji Sugar Corporation.	
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		• Farmers noted a lack of coordination among industry institutions. • Participants stated that poor coordination contributes to inefficiencies and delays in service delivery. • Calls were made for better collaboration and information-sharing across all industry stakeholders.  Sugar Research and Extension Services • Farmers questioned the effectiveness of the Sugar Research Institute of Fiji (SRIF). • Many farmers reported limited awareness of research findings and improved cane varieties. • Concerns were raised regarding the gap between research activities and practical benefits reaching growers. • Farmers requested stronger extension services and farmer outreach programmes.  Youth Participation and Labour Challenges • Farmers expressed concern that young people are increasingly reluctant to enter the sugar industry. • Factors contributing to declining youth participation include: ○ Low profitability;	
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		○ High operating costs; ○ Labour-intensive farming practices; and ○ Uncertainty about the future of the industry. • Stakeholders suggested targeted incentives to encourage youth participation in agriculture.  Mechanisation and Modernisation • Greater mechanisation was identified as a priority for industry sustainability. • Farmers requested increased support for: ○ Harvesters; ○ Planters; ○ Tractors; ○ Fertiliser applicators; and ○ Other modern farming equipment. • Mechanisation was viewed as essential to addressing labour shortages and improving productivity.  Diversification and Industry Development	
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- Farmers supported diversification opportunities but stressed that any alternative crop production must be market-driven.
- Participants cautioned against encouraging crop substitution without secure markets.
- Diversification opportunities discussed included:
 - Ethanol production;
 - Renewable energy;
 - Value-added sugar products; and
 - Other cane-based industries.

Committee Findings

- Finding: The sugar industry remains a critical sector but requires significant structural and institutional reforms.
- Finding: Farmers strongly support retaining a dedicated Ministry of Sugar Industry.
- Finding: Greater transparency is required in cane payment calculations, sugar pricing and revenue distribution.
- Finding: The effectiveness and relevance of the Sugar Industry Tribunal should be reviewed.

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		• Finding: Lending policies and interest rates under the Sugar Cane Growers Fund should be reassessed to better support farmers. • Finding: Weak coordination among sugar sector institutions is affecting service delivery and farmer confidence. • Finding: Research findings and extension services must reach farmers more effectively. • Finding: Mechanisation and technological improvements are essential to address labour shortages and improve productivity. • Finding: Land tenure and lease security continue to be major barriers to industry growth. • Finding: A long-term industry strategy focusing on profitability, efficiency, investment, sustainability and youth participation is required to secure the future of Fiji's sugar industry.	
4 September 2026 (Friday)	Rural Electrification LAB17-18 – Navakuru & Suweni Settlements	Project Status and Progress • The Parliamentary Committee conducted a site visit to assess the implementation progress of the Navakuru Rural Electrification Project.	

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		• Discussions focused on project completion, electrical safety, contractor performance, and community concerns. • Significant progress has been made towards project completion. • Residents expressed strong support for the project and welcomed the prospect of receiving electricity services. • Community members emphasized the importance of timely completion, given the lengthy wait for electrification services.  Electrical Safety Concerns • Committee Members observed that a number of electricity meter boxes had been installed at relatively low heights. • Concerns were raised that the positioning of some meter boxes may present safety risks, particularly for children. • Questions were raised regarding compliance with electrical safety standards and approved installation specifications. • Officials advised that the Electrical Inspector would undertake inspections before final commissioning. • Any installations found to be non-compliant would be required to be rectified before final approval is granted.	
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		 Contractor Performance and Accountability • Community members raised concerns regarding the quality of some installations completed by the contractor, Macuata Electrical. • Members stressed that all defects and non-compliant work should be rectified prior to project handover. • Concerns were raised regarding the need for stronger supervision and monitoring of contractors throughout project implementation. • The Committee highlighted that contractors should be held accountable for ensuring that all works meet required technical and safety standards. • Quality assurance mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure public funds deliver quality infrastructure outcomes.  Project Completion Timeline • Residents sought clarification on when electricity services would become operational. • Project representatives advised that works are expected to be completed before Christmas. • Community members requested confirmation of final connection dates and commissioning schedules.	
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		• The Committee emphasized the importance of meeting the committed timeline to maintain public confidence in Government-funded projects.  Community Benefits and Expectations • Residents expressed appreciation for the project and recognised its potential benefits to the community. • Access to electricity is expected to: ○ Improve household living conditions; ○ Enhance safety and security; ○ Support educational activities for students; ○ Improve communication and access to information; and ○ Contribute to community development and economic opportunities. • Beneficiaries expressed anticipation towards receiving reliable electricity services after many years of waiting.  Communication and Community Engagement • Residents requested more frequent communication regarding project progress and implementation schedules.	
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		• Concerns were raised regarding limited information on outstanding works and expected connection dates. • Community members indicated that regular updates would assist in managing expectations and improving public confidence. • The Committee stressed the importance of maintaining transparency throughout project implementation.  Committee Findings • Finding: The Navakuru Rural Electrification Project is nearing completion and has received strong community support. • Finding: Electrical safety concerns relating to meter box installations require immediate inspection and rectification. • Finding: Some meter boxes may not comply with recommended installation standards and should be reviewed by the Electrical Inspector. • Finding: Stronger contractor supervision and quality assurance measures are necessary to ensure compliance with technical specifications. • Finding: All defective works should be rectified before final certification and project handover.	
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		• Finding: Improved communication between contractors, implementing agencies and beneficiaries is required throughout project implementation. • Finding: The project completion deadline should be strictly adhered to in order to maintain public confidence and deliver intended benefits to households. • Finding: A post-project evaluation should be conducted to assess community satisfaction, safety compliance and project outcomes. • Finding: Rural electrification projects continue to play a significant role in improving living standards and supporting rural development objectives.	
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