



STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Review Report of the Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Report 2021



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
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Table of Acronyms

Acronym	Description
ALTA	Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act
FCCC	Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission
FSC	Fiji Sugar Corporation
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
SCGC	Sugar Cane Growers Council
SCGF	Sugar Cane Growers Fund
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIT	Sugar Industry Tribunal
SRIF	Sugar Research Institute of Fiji

Chairperson's Foreword

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, I am pleased to present the Review Report on the Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Report 2021. This Report reflects the Committee's examination of the Tribunal's performance, governance, accountability, financial management, and service delivery, undertaken through its review of the Annual Report, oral and written submissions, stakeholder consultations, and site visits conducted throughout Fiji's sugar-producing regions.

The Sugar Industry Tribunal occupies an important role within Fiji's sugar industry as the statutory body responsible for administering the Master Award, maintaining the Register of Growers, resolving disputes, overseeing grower-related matters, and promoting orderly relations amongst stakeholders within the industry. Through these functions, the Tribunal contributes to the effective administration of the sector and provides an important mechanism for safeguarding the rights and interests of sugarcane growers while supporting stability within the industry.

In undertaking this review, the Committee adopted a comprehensive approach that extended beyond an assessment of the Annual Report itself. Consultations were held with the Tribunal, industry institutions, stakeholder representatives and sugarcane growers, while site visits enabled Members to obtain firsthand accounts of the challenges confronting the industry and evaluate the effectiveness of existing institutional arrangements. These engagements provided valuable insights into the realities faced by growers and the expectations placed on institutions responsible for supporting the sector.

The Committee acknowledges that during 2021 the Tribunal continued to discharge a number of its statutory responsibilities. The Tribunal oversaw matters associated with the commencement and conclusion of the crushing season, maintained records for 16,913 registered growers, processed grower registrations and transfers, administered registrations relating to ALTA-expired leases, resolved gang disputes, and continued to provide regulatory oversight of matters affecting the sugar industry. The Committee also notes the Tribunal's receipt of an unqualified audit opinion from the Office of the Auditor-General, reflecting compliance with applicable financial reporting requirements.

Notwithstanding these achievements, the Committee identified several significant issues requiring urgent attention. The Committee remains concerned by the continued delay in the submission of Annual Reports, with the 2021 Annual Report only submitted in December 2025, approximately four years after the reporting period. Such delays diminish transparency, weaken accountability, and impede effective parliamentary oversight. The Committee is also concerned that several matters previously highlighted during the review of the Tribunal's 2016 to 2020 Annual Reports remain unresolved. These include the absence of a centralized industry information management system, continued reliance on an outdated Master Award, and broader institutional challenges affecting service delivery and stakeholder confidence.

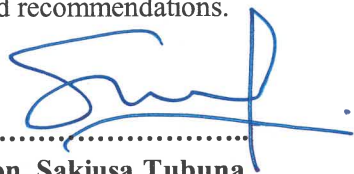
Throughout the review process, farmers and stakeholders consistently expressed concerns regarding delays in dispute resolution, accessibility of Tribunal services, stakeholder engagement, and the Tribunal's responsiveness to issues affecting growers. The Committee further notes concerns regarding land tenure insecurity, fragmented information management systems, and the absence of measurable performance indicators that would enable Parliament and stakeholders to properly assess institutional effectiveness and service delivery outcomes. These concerns highlight the need for stronger accountability mechanisms and improved performance monitoring across sugar industry institutions.

The Committee also notes concerns surrounding the outstanding receivable from the S.K. Trust and the need for greater transparency regarding the financial relationship between the Tribunal and the Trust. Furthermore, stakeholders repeatedly highlighted the need to modernise the legislative and regulatory framework governing the industry. The Committee is of the view that a comprehensive review of the Master Award, the Sugar Industry Act and associated institutional arrangements is necessary to ensure that the sector is supported by a governance framework that is efficient, accountable and responsive to contemporary challenges.

As Fiji's sugar industry continues to face declining cane production, labour shortages, increasing production costs, land tenure uncertainty, an ageing farming population and the need for greater innovation and diversification, the Committee believes that effective, accessible and accountable dispute resolution and regulatory mechanisms remain essential to maintaining confidence, fairness and stability within the sector. The recommendations contained in this Report seek to strengthen governance, improve institutional performance, enhance stakeholder confidence and support the long-term sustainability and resilience of Fiji's sugar industry.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the valuable contributions of my fellow Committee Members, Hon. Premila Kumar, Hon. Semi Koroilavesau, Hon. Alipate Tuicolo and Hon. Kalaveti Ravu, for their dedication and commitment throughout this review process. I also extend my sincere appreciation to the Committee Secretariat for their professionalism and support in the preparation of this Report.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, I commend this Review Report to Parliament and respectfully urge all Hon. Members of this august House to take note of its findings and recommendations.



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Hon. Sakiusa Tubuna
Chairperson

1.0 Committee Membership

Pursuant to Standing Order 109(2)(a) the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs is mandated to look into matters related to economic development, finance, banking and taxation. The members of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs and are as follows:



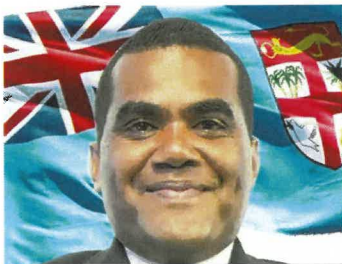
Hon. Sakiusa Tubuna
Chairperson



Hon. Premila Kumar
Deputy Chairperson



Hon. Semi Koroilavesau
Member



Hon. Alipate Tuicolo
Member



Hon. Kalaveti Ravu
Member

1.1 Committee Secretariat

The Committee is supported by a team of Parliament Officers serving as the Committee Secretariat. These officers are appointed and delegated by the Secretary-General to Parliament under Standing Order 15(3)(i). The Secretariat team consists of the following Parliament officers:

- Ms. Awantika Raj – Acting Senior Committee Clerk
- Mrs. Katie Batikawai – Acting Deputy Committee Clerk

Committee contact details.

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2.0 Introduction

The Standing Committee on Economic Affairs ('the Committee'), was referred the Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Report 2021 on Monday, 27th April 2026, pursuant to Standing Order 38(2) of the Standing Orders of the Parliament of Fiji. The Committee was mandated to review these Annual Reports and table its findings to Parliament.

In line with its mandate, the Committee undertook a detailed examination of the report and now presents its findings and observations to Parliament.

2.1 Procedure and Programme

- 2.1.1 The Committee began its review of the Annual Report from 28th July 2026. The review process was agreed upon by consensus among the Committee Members and involved a comprehensive and systematic examination of the reports.
- 2.1.2 Before the formal meetings, the Members of the Committee read and reviewed the 2024 Annual Report. During the Committee deliberations, Members analysed the content of the report, identified key issues, and engaged in in-depth discussions to evaluate the findings. These discussions led to the formulation of the key questions and identification of issues requiring further clarification.

2.2 Oral Evidence Received

- 2.2.1 The Committee received a briefing and public submission from the Sugar Industry Tribunal on 8 September 2026.

2.3 Written Evidence Received

- 2.3.1 A written submission was received from SIT in response to the questions issued by the Committee.

2.4 Site Visits and Stakeholder Consultations

- 2.4.1 The Committee conducted site visits and stakeholder consultations with farmers from **24 August to 4 September 2026** to obtain firsthand insights into the challenges, concerns, and opportunities within the sector.

3.0 Committee Deliberations and Analysis

3.1 Background

The Sugar Industry Tribunal is a statutory body established under the **Sugar Industry Act** and continued under the **Sugar Industry Amendment Act 2015** to promote the efficient development of Fiji's sugar industry and provide mechanisms for the resolution of disputes within the sector. The Tribunal is responsible for administering the Master Award, maintaining the Register of Growers, overseeing matters relating to cane supply and harvesting arrangements, and determining disputes between industry stakeholders, including growers and the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC). It also hears matters relating to the allocation of sugar proceeds and industry obligations, while promoting cooperation, fairness, and accountability across the sugar industry. In carrying out its functions, the Tribunal is supported by the Registrar, the Industrial Commissioner, and the Accountant to the Tribunal.

3.2 Summary of SIT Annual Report 2021 Performance and Achievements

- **Crushing Season Oversight:** Approved the commencement and termination dates for the Lautoka, Rarawai and Labasa mills following consultations with key industry stakeholders, ensuring the orderly commencement and closure of the 2021 crushing season.
- **New Grower Registrations:** Processed 125 new grower registration applications and approved 73 new registrations, while maintaining the Register of Growers.
- **Transfer and Amendment Applications:** Processed 343 transfer applications, approved 279 transfers, and managed 6,841 registration-related matters, including estate cases, delivery changes, and registration amendments.
- **ALTA Expired Lease Registrations:** Issued 95 new registrations on ALTA-expired leases, including 53 registrations for incoming iTaukei landowner tenants and 42 registrations for new Indo-Fijian tenants.
- **Industrial Dispute Resolution:** Successfully heard and determined the dispute between the Sugar Research Institute of Fiji (SRIF) and the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC), affirming compliance with statutory obligations under the sugar industry framework.
- **Gang Dispute Resolution:** Resolved all 77 gang disputes referred to the Industrial Commissioner during 2021, with no outstanding cases remaining at year-end.

- **Cane Pricing Oversight:** Determined a final cane price of \$71.66 per tonne from sugar and molasses proceeds. Following a Government top-up of \$13.34 per tonne, growers ultimately received \$85.00 per tonne of cane for the 2021 season.
- **Support to Growers:** Maintained records for 16,913 registered sugarcane growers across Fiji's sugar belt and continued oversight of grower registrations, land tenure matters, and cane delivery arrangements.
- **Employee Welfare Funds Administration:** Oversaw four employee welfare and benefit funds that provided financial assistance and loan support to sugar industry workers and members during the year.
- **Governance and Accountability:** Received an unqualified audit opinion from the Office of the Auditor-General, confirming that the financial statements fairly presented the Tribunal's financial position and complied with applicable financial reporting requirements.

4.0 Committee Findings

The Committee conducted a thorough review of SIT 2021 Annual Report and public submission from SIT. The following findings are presented for the attention of Parliament:

4.1 Delayed Submission of Annual Reports and Weak Statutory Compliance

The Committee remains concerned that the Sugar Industry Tribunal (SIT) continues to experience significant delays in the submission and publication of its Annual Reports. While the Committee had previously recommended the timely submission of reports, the SIT 2021 Annual Report was only submitted in December 2025, approximately four years after the reporting period. Such delays undermine transparency, accountability and effective parliamentary scrutiny.

4.2 Weak Dispute Resolution and Accessibility of Tribunal Services

The Committee notes concerns raised by growers and industry stakeholders regarding delays in dispute resolution, slow determination of complaints, and limited responsiveness by the Sugar Industry Tribunal. The Sugar Cane Growers Council advised that delays in Tribunal hearings and rulings remain a frequent concern among growers, while farmers questioned the effectiveness of the Tribunal in resolving disputes affecting growers, harvesters and contractors in a timely manner. Concerns were also raised regarding the accessibility of Tribunal services and the need for stronger enforcement of Tribunal decisions.

4.3 Lack of Centralised Information Management and Industry Coordination

The Committee previously recommended the establishment of a centralized database for all sugar sector entities. During consultations, both SIT, and other sugar sector stakeholders reiterated concerns regarding fragmented information systems, duplication of records, weak information sharing and poor coordination among industry institutions. The Committee found no evidence that a centralized information management system has been implemented since its previous review.

4.4 Land Tenure Insecurity Continues to Affect Grower Confidence

The Committee found that land tenure insecurity remains one of the most significant concerns raised by growers. Farmers consistently highlighted uncertainty surrounding lease renewals, increasing lease premiums, and the absence of long-term security, which discourages investment in farm development and productivity improvements. The Committee further noted that no sitting tenants received new registrations on ALTA-expired leases during 2021.

4.5 Outdated Master Award and Legislative Framework

The Committee previously found the Master Award to be outdated and no longer fit for purpose. The SIT Annual Report 2021 demonstrates that the Tribunal continues to administer industry operations under the existing Master Award; however, no evidence was provided that a comprehensive review had been undertaken. Farmers, industry stakeholders and the Sugar Cane Growers Council consistently raised concerns that the Master Award, the Sugar Industry Act and related legislation no longer reflect current industry realities, including mechanisation, harvesting practices, cane quality management and payment arrangements.

4.6 Institutional Effectiveness and Stakeholders Confidence

The Committee notes concerns raised by growers and industry stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of the Sugar Industry Tribunal in meeting the current needs of the sugar industry. Stakeholders questioned whether the Tribunal remains fit for purpose under its existing structure and raised concerns regarding its leadership, succession planning arrangements, accessibility of services, stakeholder engagement and the timely resolution of disputes affecting growers. The Committee is concerned that these issues may undermine grower confidence in the Tribunal's ability to effectively carry out its statutory functions.

4.7 Outstanding Receivable from SK Trust

The Committee noted that the Tribunal's 2021 Financial Statements recorded an outstanding receivable of \$11,646 from the S.K. Trust, which remained unchanged from the previous reporting period. The Committee was unable to determine from the Annual Report the nature of this receivable, its recoverability, or the status of the arrangement between the Tribunal and the Trust.

4.8 Absence of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Monitoring Institutional Performance

The Committee notes that during its review of the Consolidated Review Report of the Sugar Industry Tribunal 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 Annual Reports, it had previously identified the absence of Key Performance Indicators across sugar industry institutions, including the Sugar Industry Tribunal, and recommended the development of measurable performance indicators to assess institutional effectiveness and sector outcomes. However, the Committee found that the Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Report 2021 continues to report operational activities and statistical outputs without identifying any formal KPIs, performance targets, service standards, or measurable outcomes against which the Tribunal's performance can be assessed.

5.0 Committee Recommendations

The Committee makes the following recommendations to enhance SIT's performance, transparency, and accountability to Parliament and to the people of Fiji:

5.1 Timely Compliance with Reporting Requirements

The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Sugar and the SIT establish clear reporting timelines and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that Annual Reports are submitted and tabled within statutory deadlines. Failure to meet reporting requirements should be appropriately addressed through strengthened accountability measures.

5.2 Strengthen Dispute Resolution Services

The Committee recommends that the Ministry responsible for Sugar undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Sugar Industry Tribunal, focusing on improving the timeliness of dispute resolution, accessibility of services, stakeholder engagement and enforcement of Tribunal decisions.

5.3 Fragmented Data Management and Lack of Industry Information Integration

The Committee recommends that the Ministry responsible for Sugar lead the development of an integrated sugar industry information management system accessible to all relevant institutions, including SIT, FSC, SCGE, SCGC and SRIF, to improve data sharing, policy coordination, reporting and service delivery.

5.4 Promote Greater Security and Certainty for Growers

The Tribunal should work collaboratively with relevant authorities, landowners, and industry stakeholders to strengthen land lease arrangements and support transparent and equitable registration and lease-related processes. Consideration should be given to negotiating longer lease terms, including the review of the current 30-year lease period, to provide greater security and certainty for growers, encourage long-term investment in cane farming, and promote the sustainable development of the sugar industry.

5.5 Review and Modernise the Regulatory Framework

The Committee recommends that the Ministry responsible for Sugar undertake a comprehensive review of the Master Award and relevant sugar industry legislation in consultation with growers, industry institutions and key stakeholders to ensure that the regulatory framework remains relevant, responsive and supportive of a modern sugar industry.

5.6 Institutional Reform and Strengthened Industry Oversight

The Committee recommends that Government review the institutional structure of the Sugar Industry Tribunal to improve efficiency and service delivery within the sugar industry. The Committee further recommends that consideration be given to establishing the Tribunal as a dedicated unit under the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission (FCCC), led by an officer with appropriate expertise in the sugar industry to oversee Tribunal functions and effectively address industry-related matters.

5.7 Strengthening Governance and Accountability of the SK Trust Fund

The Committee recommends that the Tribunal provide greater clarity on the disclosure of its financial relationship with the S.K. Trust, including the nature of the outstanding receivable, steps taken towards recovery, and the status of any ongoing arrangements between the two entities.

5.8 Development and Implementation of Key Performance Indicators

The Committee recommends that the Ministry responsible for Sugar, in consultation with the Sugar Industry Tribunal and other sugar industry stakeholders, develop and implement a comprehensive Key Performance Indicator (KPI) framework for the Tribunal and other relevant sugar sector institutions. The framework should establish clear performance targets and measurable indicators relating to dispute resolution timeframes, stakeholder engagement, service delivery, operational efficiency, compliance with statutory reporting requirements, and industry development outcomes.

6.0 Sustainable Development Goals

The Committee noted that, unlike the previous review period where no Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were captured, the SIT Annual Report 2021 demonstrates alignment with several SDGs through its programs and activities.

SDG 1: No Poverty

The Tribunal contributes to poverty reduction by supporting the livelihoods of 16,913 registered sugarcane growers and ensuring fair cane payment arrangements within the industry. For the 2021 season, growers received a total cane payment of \$85.00 per tonne, including a Government top-up of \$13.34 per tonne. In addition, employee welfare and social security benefit funds provided financial assistance and loans to sugar industry workers and members during the year.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

The Tribunal maintains and reports data on gender participation within the sugar industry, contributing to greater transparency and awareness of gender representation. In 2021, there were 2,146 female growers, representing approximately 12.7 per cent of all registered growers. The report also highlights female participation in sugarcane production and land tenure arrangements across various forms of land ownership.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

The Tribunal supports economic growth by promoting stability, fairness, and efficiency within the sugar industry. During 2021, the Industrial Commissioner processed 157 gang transfer applications, 74 gang amalgamation and formation applications, and resolved 77 gang disputes, helping to maintain orderly labour arrangements and harmonious industrial relations across the sector.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

The Tribunal contributes to the sustainability of Fiji's sugar industry through oversight of the annual crushing season and coordination of key industry processes involving the Lautoka, Rarawai, and Labasa mills. The Tribunal also played an important oversight role in matters involving the Sugar Research Institute of Fiji (SRIF), supporting research and innovation within the sector.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

The Tribunal contributes to reducing inequalities by maintaining equitable oversight of grower registrations, land tenure arrangements, and ALTA-expired lease registrations. In 2021, it issued 95 new registrations on ALTA-expired leases, including registrations to both incoming iTaukei landowner tenants and Indo-Fijian tenants, while continuing to monitor participation across different ethnic groups and land tenure systems within the industry.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

This is the area where the Tribunal's contribution is most significant. The Tribunal was established to provide accessible and efficient dispute resolution mechanisms within the sugar industry and to uphold the provisions of the Sugar Industry Act and the Master Award. During 2021, all 77 gang disputes referred to the Industrial Commissioner were resolved, and the Tribunal issued determinations on industry disputes, including the SRIF and FSC matter. The Tribunal also received an unqualified audit opinion from the Auditor-General, demonstrating sound financial accountability and institutional governance

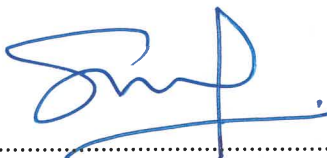
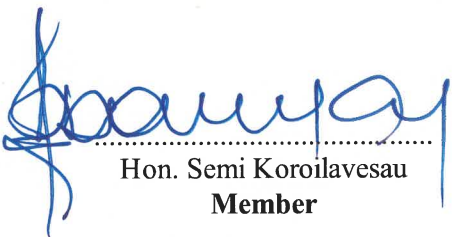
7.0 Conclusion

The Standing Committee on Economic Affairs acknowledges the role of the Sugar Industry Tribunal in promoting fairness, accountability, and effective dispute resolution within Fiji's sugar industry. Through its review of the Tribunal's 2021 Annual Report and consultations with stakeholders, the Committee noted the Tribunal's continued efforts in carrying out its statutory responsibilities.

The Committee is of the view that strengthening dispute resolution mechanisms, enhancing stakeholder awareness, and improving the Tribunal's institutional capacity will contribute to a more responsive and effective organisation. However, the Committee is of the view that this role could be effectively undertaken by other agencies such as FCCC. The Committee trusts that the findings and recommendations contained in this Report will assist the Sugar Industry Tribunal in better serving sugarcane growers and supporting the long-term sustainability and development of Fiji's sugar industry.

8.0 Committee Members' Signatures

We, the undersigned Members of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, agree with the contents of this report.

 Hon. Sakiusa Tubuna Chairperson	
 Hon. Premila Kumar Deputy Chairperson	 Hon. Semi Koroilavesau Member
 Hon. Alipate Tuicolo Member	 Hon. Kalaveti Ravu Member
 	

9.0 Annexure

Published evidence

Written evidence, transcripts and supporting documents can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link:

<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-economic-affairs/>