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PLASTIC WASTE FREE ISLANDS

Synthesis of Plastic Pollution Policies

Fiji



Current status of the country

Fiji is an archipelago in the southwest Pacific Ocean, consisting of 322 islands, a third of which are permanently inhabited. Fiji is one of the most developed Pacific island economies. Approximately 50% of Fiji's population lives in urban areas. In 2018 Fiji had a population of 883,483. Suva, the capital, is one of only two cities in the Pacific, with more than 100,000 inhabitants.

In 2019, Fiji was the most popular tourist destination in the Pacific, welcoming a 40% share of all tourists to the Pacific region. In total, 894,389 visitors and 74,837 cruise passengers were recorded.

Fiji imported more than US\$ 145 million in plastic and rubber goods, predominantly from China and other Asian countries,

Australia, New Zealand and Thailand in 2018. Simultaneously it exported almost US\$ 7 million of plastics and rubber, mainly to Samoa, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, New Zealand and Vanuatu.

International relations

Fiji is a member of the United Nations (UN), Pacific Community (SPC), Pacific Forum Secretariat (PIF), International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), Commonwealth (re-joined in 1997 after a 10-year lapse) and Commonwealth (re-joined in 1997 after 10-year lapse), International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and PRIF.

Policy measures

In 2019, the Department of Environment produced the new waste management policy document – the National Waste Management and Pollution Control Strategy and Action Plan 2019–2029 (NWMPCS), which is currently in draft form.

It aims to provide a 10-year strategic framework related to waste. According to the NWMPCS, there is inconsistency in [existing laws across various agencies](#), leading to inefficient standards and services. Furthermore, the lack of clear delineation between service delivery and environmental enforcement creates self-regulation and potentially undermines public confidence in the regulatory and environmental protection framework.

Roles and responsibilities

The primarily responsible government body for the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of policies and legislation for national solid, liquid, and hazardous wastes management and air and water pollution control is the Department of Environment (DoE) under the Ministry of Waterways and Environment. The Department is also responsible for the operational management of Fiji's main landfill through private contractual arrangements. In other urban areas of Fiji, solid and hazardous waste management is the responsibility of the 13 town and city councils. Waste collection services are the responsibility of the town and city councils in rural and peri-urban populated areas.

Waste management situational analysis

Naboro Sanitary Landfill is the only disposal site that satisfies environmental standards entirely. There is a tipping fee for disposal. Furthermore, Fiji has three controlled disposal sites with restricted access and five authorized open disposal sites. Waste pickers operate on several disposal sites. However, remote and rural areas are still frequently without a [waste collection service](#).

Waste management budget and levies

The national waste management budget is allocated by the Department of Environment, the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Health. The Department of Environment has an annual waste management budget that includes solid waste, e-waste and hazardous waste US\$ 230,000. The Ministry of Health also has a waste and pollution management budget of US\$ 50,000 annually.

These governmental entities have responsibility for solid waste management (SWM) in Fiji. The SWM budget in Fiji derives from several revenue streams, which include tipping fees, levies, taxes, licences, fines and sales of compost and recyclables.

Resource recovery and recycling

The recycling market in Fiji consists of six active private companies. These businesses have been collecting and shipping recyclables for more than 20 years, and larger hotels have contracts to collect their recyclables (PET bottles, cartons, and aluminium cans). As a result, waste recycling rates doubled in Lautoka and increased eightfold in Nadi over the past years. Another recent initiative, the establishment of the Waste Management Resource Recycling Association (WMRRA), demonstrates increased efforts toward a sustainable recycling industry in Fiji. However, the association has still not been formalised and is currently awaiting approval from the Department of Environment.

Legislation - Plastic ban

In the last several years, Fiji has developed and amended several Acts addressing the top-priority plastic products associated with the environmental degradation of single-use plastics, including thin plastic bags, Styrofoam, plastic containers, straws, cups and utensils. The recent Climate Change Bill 2019 has comprehensively addressed most of the disposable plastic items of environmental concern.

In 2007 Fiji regulated the plastic bottle permit for facilities that import or manufacture plastic bottles. This amendment was followed by the introduction of the container deposit regulation in 2011, which also defines requirements for a product stewardship plan, deposit scheme and refund scheme. However, **deposit and refund schemes and product stewardship have yet to be implemented.**

A plastic bag levy has been in place since 2017. However, none of these regulations specifically banned plastic products until the Environment Management Act 2019 prohibits plastic bags, stating that it is an offence to manufacture, sell, supply, or distribute them. This legislation was further supported by the Climate Change Bill 2019, which **bans single-use plastic bags, polystyrene and single-use containers, straws, cups and utensils.**

Waste disposal by sectors

Roughly 140,000 tonnes of solid waste are disposed of in Fiji annually, of which around 15,000 tonnes are plastics. It is estimated that **25% of imported plastic was leaked** or held in long-term reservoirs away from landfills in Fiji, equating to 4,877 tonnes.

Plastic represented 8% of household waste disposal (75,400 tonnes/year) and 14% commercial waste (48,000 tonnes/year). Tourists generate seven times more plastic waste per person per day than households, of which 6% was polystyrene. Land-based accommodation accounts for 94% of plastic waste disposal by the tourism sector. The fisheries sector contributed to plastic waste with 5.4 tonnes of PET and 2 tonnes of polypropylene.

Key gaps and recommendations

**All sectors:
Lack of waste segregation and recycling.**

Implement container deposit legislation (CDL) or an extended producer levy system to capture other recyclable material.

It is essential to implement the overdue Environment Management (Container Deposit) Regulations 2011, which addresses deposit and refund schemes and product stewardship. IUCN strongly suggests that the government financially supports recycling initiatives through a Container Deposit Levy (CDL) system. A Deposit Return System ensures 1) that plastic bottles that are currently going to the landfill are collected and sent for recycling; 2) bottles that leak into the environment are reduced. Given that PET is one of the main items lost to the environment, implementing a container-related initiative, such as a CDL, could place a value on plastic PET bottles and prevent leakage. It has been assumed that a CDL achieves approximately 80% recovery on the containers destined for leakage. Besides, implementing a CDL system could provide additional income, employment opportunities and waste management solutions to the overall solid waste management systems. In addition, a system such as CDL, Advance Recycling Fee (ARF), Advance Disposal Fee (ADF), and an affordable user-pay system can be implemented. CDL collection bins should be accessible, especially for fishing marinas located considerable distances from the main city areas. A special retrieval program for fishing nets should be implemented to prevent abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear.

Implement legislation and associated best practice guidelines to establish compulsory source segregation and disposal of recyclables.

All sectors should conduct source segregation to ensure organics and plastics are recovered. The waste separation will decrease the volume of waste in the landfill, increase its lifespan, and decrease leakage into the environment.

Tourism facilities are not encouraged to segregate waste. Therefore, implement source segregation at tourist locations such as air and seaports, tourist attractions and accommodation. Encouraging the use of reusable materials in tourist accommodation facilities could further reduce waste going to landfills. For example, single-use toiletries should be replaced with refillable containers. Besides, hotels and resorts could install water-refilling stations and ban single-use plastic water bottles. A licensing system should be implemented, where only hotels and resorts with effective waste reduction and management practices get a licence renewal.

Household and commercial sector: Lack of waste collection service and formal disposal sites in rural areas.

Collection services should be extended to rural and remote areas.

Unlike waste collection in urban areas, which seems to be quite efficient, collection in rural and remote areas of Fiji is problematic. Almost half of Fiji's population resides in rural areas, which creates considerable potential for plastic leakage from rural areas. In rural settlements, backyard burial and open burning are standard practices, mainly when the residents are unable or unwilling to transport their waste to the nearest council waste disposal site. Piling or stacking full garbage bags outside households or on the roadside is also potentially problematic, especially in rural areas. Although garbage bins can be purchased for only FJ\$ 12, they have often been considered items of value and therefore attractive to thieves. For this reason, garbage bins are still not an entirely efficient receptacle in many parts of Fiji. Extending the collection services to additional rural areas and islands would lead to more significant quantities of recyclable materials being captured.

Tourism sector: No legislation, policies or strategies require the tourism industry to minimise the amount of single-use plastics used on a daily basis and source-segregation.

Requirement of a waste management plan to obtain a license.

Large businesses, including airlines, hotels and resorts, are not required to separate or recycle the substantial quantities of plastic waste brought into Fiji for international tourist services. A licensing system should be implemented, where only hotels and resorts with effective waste reduction and management practices get a licence renewal. Make waste management a condition for a permit or licence to operate a hotel and resort, strengthening the implementation of legal provisions under the National Waste Management Act 2010.

Fishing Sector: There are currently no guidelines for the marking of fishing gear.

Implement an ID system for fishing gear and reporting/tracking/recovery of lost gear through the current fishing licences.

Developing a fishing-gear recapture scheme to financially incentivise fishers to retain and surrender damaged and/or lost fishing gear for recovery. A compulsory tracking method for fishing gear should be implemented for all gear that poses a danger to marine life and traffic (i.e., nets, mobile FADs, fish traps). In addition, all lost gear should be reported. These schemes should be implemented using a gear ID and recovery system as a requirement for a fishing licence. A detailed waste management plan should also be part of the conditions for a fisheries licence. It is vital that Saint Lucia adheres to and remains compliant with the waste regulations of MARPOL.



Conclusions

Several PICs are investigating the viability of establishing a regional recycling hub (Scoping Study for the Regional Recycling Network for the Western and Eastern Pacific Region) whereby recyclable material from several PICs can be collated. This reduces the significant challenge of moving materials to external markets, mainly due to low trade volumes and low international market values, by increasing economies of scale and bargaining power. Samoa's private recycling sector is more developed than in other PICs and Caribbean SIDS and forms a solid foundation to expand further and develop plastic waste recycling practices.

IUCN strongly suggests that the government financially supports recycling initiatives through a Container Deposit Levy (CDL) system.

Using the above gaps and recommendations, Fiji should consider prioritising and assessing the costs and benefits of each recommendation and its potential for impact. Implementation of the recommendations listed here should be the first set of priorities for the country. Although the detailed report listed many more, those in this summary are deemed by IUCN to be the most important and will yield the best results for each of the three sectors.

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