

The Fijian Government Ministry of Forests 2017-2018 Budget Highlights

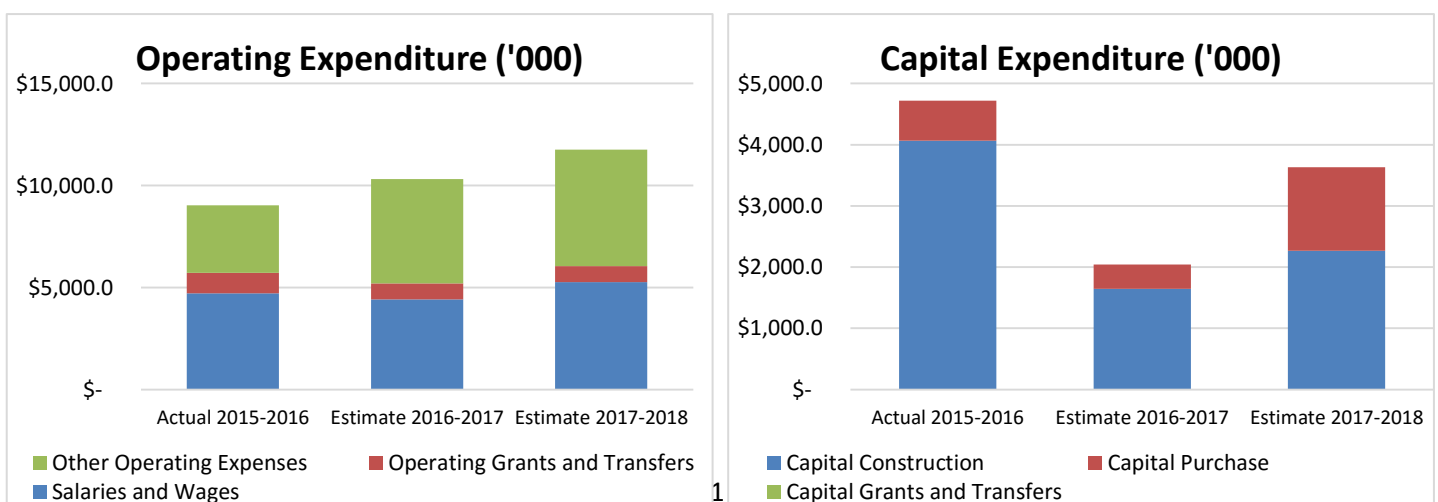
The Ministry of Forests is responsible for promoting the sustainable use of Fiji's forestry resources by working with industry partners, landowners and the general public to effectively manage Fiji's forests. The Ministry oversees the enforcement of relevant laws and regulations, ensures the conservation of forest resources, issues forest licenses and provides extension support services.

Fiji Pine Limited and Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited manage the majority of pine and mahogany plantations in Fiji, respectively. Current statistics indicate that timber production is heavily reliant on plantation wood species with over 80 percent of products made from mahogany and pine.

The Ministry implements the Fiji Forest Policy Statement 2007 which promotes sustainable forest management practices to balance forest development with economic, environmental and socio-cultural needs. In addition, the National Plantation Policy (currently in draft) will set the parameters that govern the set-up and operations of plantations in the private sector.

The Forest Management Strategy promotes forest ecosystem management by better integrating forest resource uses, boosting ecosystem capacity, and increasing the role of forests in improving the livelihoods of ordinary Fijians and in combating climate change.

The total budget for the Ministry of Forests in 2017-2018 is **\$16.0 million**, comprising **\$11.8 million** for operating expenditure, **\$3.6 million** for capital expenditure and VAT of **\$0.6**.



The increase of **\$3.2 million** in the Ministry's 2017-2018 Budget is mainly attributed to:

- an increase in operating expenditure due to salary adjustments as part of Civil Service Reforms; and
- an increase in capital expenditure due to the purchase of value-adding machines and portable sawmilling equipment.

New Initiatives

- \$250,000 is allocated for the reforestation of indigenous species. The focus will be on replanting lands that historically held forests but have since disappeared or are slowly disappearing due to deforestation or natural disasters.
- \$722,000 is allocated for the purchase of machines, specifically a loader and bulldozer for the extraction of matured pine logs in the Maritime Provinces. This will also strengthen the Ministry's capacity building needs by ensuring that staff has proper machinery for training.

Ongoing Initiatives

- Strengthening support services and widening the scope of research & development through:
 - Upgrading of Office and Quarters: refurbishes existing institutional infrastructure, such as offices and departmental quarters at stations in Nasinu, Vunimaqo and Lololo. This will enhance the level of service delivery to the people and the quality of extension support by divisional forestry officers (\$320,000).
 - Research & Development of Wood & Non-Wood Species: provides accurate and quality technical information on both wood and non-wood properties encouraging diversification and value-adding (\$150,000).
 - Utilisation of Wood: provides funding for research and encourages product development methodologies to transform waste hardwood (crown, roots, branches and stump) from mahogany, indigenous wood and some lesser known species into finished wood products. A total of 77 people have been trained in wood utilisation and 11 small business groups have been formed since 2014 for this purpose (\$350,000).

- Reforesting degraded forests and promoting sustainable forest management through:
 - Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD Plus): funds work with development partners to develop sites around the country that will be ready to access carbon markets by 2020 (\$400,000).
 - Sandalwood Development Programme: revives sandalwood plantation forests and maximises potential economic opportunities for farmers. The matured selling price is \$80-\$100 per kg of wood and takes 15 to 20 years to reach commercial maturity (\$100,000).
 - Reforestation of Degraded Forests: supports and promotes sustainable forest management practices and the restoration of degraded forests (\$500,000).
 - Upgrading of Colo-i-Suva Forest Park: completes the upgrade of the Forest Park into a highly productive and valuable forest resource. This will enhance park services as a key attraction for both locals and tourists. The number of patrons has increased annually, with 15,733 visitors in 2013, 24,878 visitors in 2014, 25,724 visitors in 2015 and 44,000 visitors in 2016 (\$200,000).
- Supporting community-based forestry schemes through:
 - Pine Woodlot Logging Package: supports the Narocake (Gau) and Cicia Pine Schemes by supplying logging and sawmilling equipment to harvest matured pine plantation for home construction. This assistance will also expand to other maritime islands, including Kadavu (\$342,000).
 - Purchase of Equipment for Lakeba Pine Scheme: supplies value adding machines to improve the quality of finished products and complement the existing portable sawmills. Lakeba Island has the largest pine scheme in Fiji covering an area of 1,573ha (300,000 cubic meters) with approximately two million pine trees planted under this scheme (\$300,000).