

MARINE RESOURCES

Fact Sheet

BACKGROUND

Marine resources encompass a wide range of living and non-living materials found in rivers, streams, coastal areas, and offshore seas. These resources hold significant value for both society and biodiversity. Fiji, being a small island developing state surrounded by the Pacific Ocean, highly prioritizes the effective management and utilization of the ocean and its marine resources, which are deeply intertwined with its rich cultural heritage. Fiji has a maritime exclusive economic zone ('EEZ') of approximately 1.28 million square kilometres.

CURRENT STATUS

Offshore fishing and inshore/coastal fishing make up Fiji's marine resource sector. Among the key government programs are the Seaweed Development program, the Freshwater Aquaculture program, the Coastal Fisheries Development program, the Pearl Oyster Research and Development program, and the Makogai Mari-culture Development Centre. Fisheries assessment surveys, the sustainable resource management initiative, and management tools for fish stock replenishment, aim to empower communities and promote sustainable fisheries management.

Agriculture Census 2020 found 29,450 fishing households. Inshore fishing employs 18,906 households (40.8%), offshore fishing 8,536 (18.4%), freshwater fishing 13,139 (28.3%), and fish or fish-related product sales 5,691 (12.3%). 89.9% of fishing households were headed by men and 10.1% by women. In the 2019 Annual Employment Survey, 1,048 people work directly in fishing.

CHALLENGES

1. Need to manage illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU), which threatens fisheries stock.
2. Over time, population growth and rising demand will reduce fish stock.
3. Small-scale fishing groups struggle with the fisheries sector's large capital investment.
4. Climate change is affecting Pacific coastal communities and marine habitats, including Fiji. Ocean warming, acidity, and sea level rise are reducing marine resources affecting fisheries sector.
5. Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji (MSAF) documented and responded to 45 oil discharge incidents. The frequency of oil spills from fishing vessels presents significant challenges to the sustainable governance of the marine resources and ecosystem of Fiji.
6. Congestion at the wharf reduces freight handling efficiency and raises safety risks.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. For more coordinated conservation and enhanced regulation of the fisheries sector to support commercial participation of communities and the sustainable commercialisation of Fiji's marine resources.
2. Innovative site monitoring for marine protected areas like the Lau Seascape to ensure the preservation of both marine and terrestrial ecosystems.
3. Aquaculture has potential for substantial growth to meet the predicted demand for fish. It is seen as a sustainable solution to reduce the strain on offshore and coastal fisheries.

FUTURE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

➤ Improve the Marine Resources Sector:

- ✓ Strengthening the protection and conservation of offshore and inshore marine resources.
- ✓ Support innovative service delivery while fostering a sustainable market environment for offshore and inshore fishing.
- ✓ Fostering collaboration and cooperation in community-led resource management initiatives.
- ✓ Fostering community empowerment through sustainable resource management.
- ✓ Implementing climate change adaptation measures in river, stream, and coastal areas.
- ✓ Develop or strengthen trade agreements with neighbouring countries and regional fisheries bodies.
- ✓ Review the Offshore Management Act.
- ✓ Explore the possibility of conducting a feasibility study to establish a regional processing hub and fisheries port.
- ✓ Discover cutting-edge ICT solutions to combat IUU fishing.
- ✓ Enhance the functioning of fisher cooperatives and associations in Fiji.
- ✓ Improve the shipping industry infrastructure such as wharfs and vessel.
- ✓ Promote aquaculture.
- ✓ Explore innovative financing mechanisms to acquire infrastructure that supports operations of inshore commercialisation including storage facilities, standardized fishing vessel, and fishing holding capacity.
- ✓ Attract investment and promote joint venture investment and stimulate business acquisition of larger vessels, as well as to facilitate fishing in high seas.
- ✓ Ensure the National Spill Contingency Plan (NATPLAN) is consistently upheld.
- ✓ Implement a comprehensive strategy for responding to oil spills at a national level.