



MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY INTO ECONOMIC SECTORS IN FIJI

- Fiji's Vision 2030 sets a blueprint for the future of economic growth which relies heavily on natural resources. However, declining trends of biodiversity and ecosystem services could put this vision at risk.
- At the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity in September 2020, the Prime Minister of Fiji endorsed the Leaders Pledge for Nature and committed to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030
- A new report assessing the status, trends and threats to biodiversity and ecosystems in Fiji aims to inform policy makers and feed science-policy dialogues to ensure sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity.
- Agriculture and fisheries are priority economic sectors to be engaged in a multi-stakeholder dialogue to mainstream biodiversity in their voluntary commitments for an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

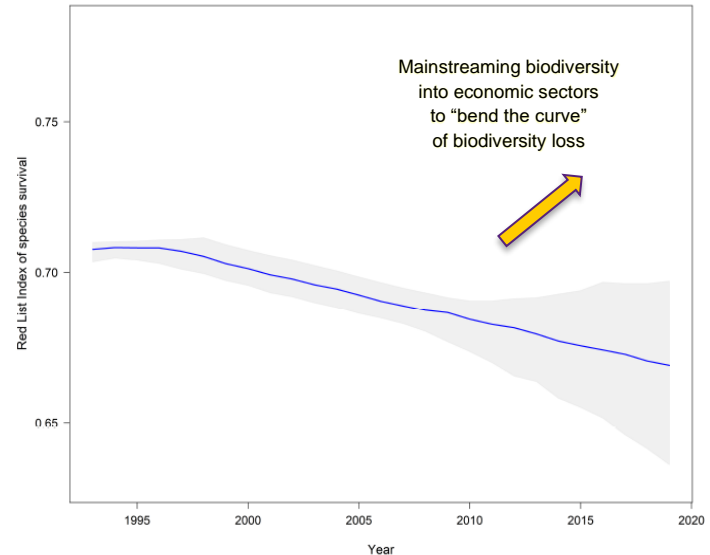


Figure 1: Declining biodiversity trends in Fiji (IUCN Red List Index). Restoring natural habitats and reducing threats to biodiversity are two complimentary ways to reverse the curve of biodiversity decline.

FIJI'S BIODIVERSITY AT RISK

Fiji, spread over 332 islands, falls within the Polynesia-Micronesia Biodiversity Hotspot. The incredible richness of its endemic biodiversity is reflected in its 39 terrestrial Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and the 98 Special, Unique Marine Areas (SUMAs).



Figure 2: Biodiversity-rich rainforest cleared for commercial kava production (Richard Markham)

To preserve this heritage, 23 terrestrial protected areas cover around 50,000 ha, which is 2.7% of Fiji's total land area. More than 50% of the country's inshore marine area, representing 1.77 million ha, is managed by local communities through 149 Locally Managed Marine Areas. These traditional forms of managing marine areas, and their biodiversity, can be quite successful and efficient.

Fiji's economic ambitions as well as the well-being of current and future generations depend heavily on natural resources, both terrestrial and marine. The government has put in place a range of policies, institutions, and legislative frameworks to protect Fiji's natural heritage and to prevent environmental degradation and negative impacts on ecosystems emanating from economic development programmes.

However, the existing measures and their enforcement are not sufficient to protect against the loss of native forest, home to endemic species, and against the overexploitation of marine resources. Species are continuing to decline, putting Fiji's development and people's livelihoods at risk. To support a national dialogue on the conservation of Fiji's diverse natural capital, understanding the status and the root causes of the declining trends of biodiversity and ecosystem services is imperative.

TACKLING ECONOMIC THREATS TO BIODIVERSITY

The BIODEV2030 initiative, implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Fiji, aims to accelerate the mainstreaming of biodiversity into economic sectors which are key to biodiversity (BIO-) and development (-DEV), to ‘*bend the curve*’ of biodiversity decline and promote more sustainable and resilient economies.

In the context of BIODEV2030, a study was conducted to provide a scientific overview and assessment of the main threats to biodiversity and to inform voluntary commitments at national and sectoral levels. This study identifies direct threats with the greatest impact on biodiversity and the economic sectors driving them for prioritisation in engagement through the BIODEV2030 project.

The study used the Species Threat Abatement and Restoration (STAR) Metric and threat assessment survey tools to determine what direct threats from human activities were impacting biodiversity at national and local levels (O’Brien et al., 2021). The assessment of direct threats was based on the IUCN-CMP (International Union for Conservation of Nature and the Conservation Measures Partnership) Threat Classification System. These results were complemented by extensive literature reviews and national expert assessments using specialised assessment tool: Expert-based Threat Assessment Tool (EbTAT).

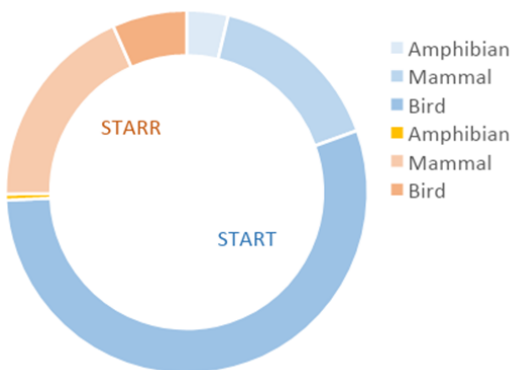


Figure 2: STAR Threat abatement (STAR T) and STAR Restoration (STAR R) scores for 32 species of amphibians, birds and mammals in Fiji on the IUCN Red List

The STAR Threat abatement score component is at least 3 times the Restoration component, which suggests that threat abatement should be prioritised in Fiji to reduce species extinction risk.

Based on the study findings, the conversion of forest to root crop production and pasture are responsible for a number of threats to Fiji’s terrestrial biodiversity. Annual and perennial non-timber crops, logging and wood harvesting, and invasive non-native species/diseases are the three major threats to terrestrial biodiversity. Agricultural & forestry effluents, a consequence of forest loss/fragmentation, is also a major threat to marine ecosystems and biodiversity, also

threatened by the overexploitation of natural resources through fishing and harvesting aquatic resources.

The economic sectors driving these threats were identified as Agriculture and Coastal Fisheries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To effectively conserve Fiji’s biodiversity, the study recommends that:

- **Agriculture and Coastal fisheries sectors are prioritised for engagement** when setting voluntary commitments through BIODEV2030.
- **Agriculture and Coastal fisheries sector focus on the education and community engagement of stakeholders** at all levels including the landowning communities, commercial producers, and sector representatives.
- **An effective protected area network is supported**, the protection of primary native forest is increased and landowners are incentivized to support measures needed for the effective conservation of land.

To support the Government of Fiji to secure a high-level political commitment in the above sectors, the following recommendations are made:

- **Science – Policy Dialogues:** Scientific research and knowledge provides evidence of the important role that biodiversity plays, its multiple values, the cost of inaction, the threats faced and how to reduce threats and restore nature in an equitable and sustainable manner.
- **Multi - Stakeholder Engagement:** When establishing voluntary commitments, engaging stakeholders from communities, government, private sector, research and non-governmental organizations at the national and local levels is critical for ownership and implementation.
- **Sectoral Linkages:** Voluntary commitments can foster enhanced coordination between sectors to facilitate biodiversity mainstreaming and development of integrated biodiversity management plans. This will also contribute to the simultaneous achievement of climate change targets as well as land degradation neutrality.

About BIODEV2030

BIODEV2030 focuses on mainstreaming biodiversity through sector-based commitments emerging from multi-stakeholder dialogue in pilot countries. Funded by the French Development Agency (AFD) the project is being implemented by IUCN, The World-Wide Fund for Nature – France (WWF-France) and Expertise France.

For more information about the project contact:

Ken Kassem: Kenneth.Kassem@iucn.org

Tavenisa Luisa: Tavenisa.Luisa@iucn.org

Reference: O’Brien, M., Moko, N., Watling, D., Segaidina, M., & Morrison, C. (2021). *National Biodiversity Threat Assessment: Ranking Major Threat Impacting Fiji’s Biodiversity*. Suva: IUCN.