

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT
POLICY STATEMENT ON FORESTRY

Name of policy

National policy on forestry for sustainable development

Purpose

To support and encourage the sustainable development of forests in Samoa for their combined environmental, economic, cultural and social benefits for the people of Samoa.

Introduction

The forest is an economic and cultural resource and a source of social benefits to local communities supplying food, wood and medicine. It also offers environmental benefits providing habitats for animals and plants, regulating water resources, providing soil protection and moderating climatic conditions. There are also commercial opportunities based around forests such as ecotourism, bio-prospecting and carbon trading. Samoan forests have offered a sense of spirituality, and are an intimate component of the faaSamoa (Samoan way).

Deforestation is a key environmental issue in Samoa. Increased incidence of environment related problems due to deforestation have been observed in terms of loss of biodiversity, cultural integrity and carbon sinks, increased soil erosion, watershed degradation, and coral reef siltation and degradation. The current total area of forested land is 171,073 hectares (or 60 per cent of the total land area).

The combined impact of uncontrolled exploitation and cyclone damage has depleted the forest resources to the extent that implementation of a holistic integrated approach to forest development and conservation is now urgent. Farm forestry (both for protection and commercial timber production) and vital capacity development should be major elements in support of the rehabilitation process.

A diversification of land use to include more extensive tree planting in farming systems will promote rural economic development by providing an important source of employment and income with a positive social impact. It will assist with restoration of critical water catchment areas and act as a buffer to prevent further encroachment into watershed protection forests.

The policy provides a strong link to the national policy framework. Improved economic and social welfare at the community level is a fundamental focus of the Strategy for the Development of Samoa (SDS) 2005-2007. Creating opportunities at the community level therefore is a key outcome to be pursued. Forestry development is to be intensified to accelerate economic growth:

The community forestry programme will be strongly promoted as an alternative cash crop. Technical support and advice will be provided by the forestry division in areas of caring for the trees as well as explaining the benefits of forestry not only as a potential income source but also its value to the environment and community survival SDS 2005-2007 pp. 17-18.

To achieve a viable forest sector in Samoa all stakeholders need to commit to this policy and take urgent and sustained action over many years.

Forestry vision

In 2025 Samoa will have developed a forestry sector that is a model for Pacific Island nations. Indeed Samoa will be renowned globally as a successful example for other small island developing states seeking to reconcile the twin goals of enhancing livelihoods and environmentally sustainable development.

The Samoan forest sector will have two main components. Firstly a native forests component comprising rehabilitated and healthy forests that have retained the entire complement of their existing terrestrial biodiversity, covering and protecting water catchments, providing traditional medicines and other culturally vital products, landscape and scenic value, being a major attraction for a thriving tourism industry. Native forest management will be primarily directed to improving the livelihoods of rural landowners and communities and in so doing achieve greater social and economic benefits for current and future generations. These forests will contribute to economic growth through generating substantial revenue from:

- Innovative benefit sharing arrangements with multinational pharmaceutical companies from development of novel medicines from several native plant species;
- Provision of clean water which is the basis for thriving bottled water and brewing industries; and
- Ecotourism sector that attracts culturally and environmentally-respectful tourists from around the world.

Native forests will also be vital to the health of the nation through providing ecosystem services including habitats for species of high conservation value and clean water, as well as traditional medicines and nutritionally important wild forest foods and sustaining Samoan culture.

Secondly the planted forestry sector component. This will underpin a vibrant rural sector, and complement agriculture as the major source of employment in rural areas. It will be based on planted agroforests, a major landuse, in lowland Samoa and provide:

- A significant source of timber for domestic uses with specialty timbers grown to provide for diverse end-uses, and
- An export industry based on value adding, especially furniture, carvings and non-wood timber products, including honey, nuts, nonu fruits, bamboo and sandalwood oil.

Niche markets and products will continue to be developed based on the planted agroforests. Many of the non-timber forest product enterprises will be developed and led by women and families. The annual contribution to the national economy will be around S\$60 million with a significant proportion of this being export earnings. Production forestry will have become a substantial sector contributing to Samoa's export earnings and balance of payments.

Issues, constraints and opportunities

Issues

- Low income levels and job opportunities in rural areas;
- Unrealised potential for sustainable, economic development of rural lands;
- Merchantable timber from indigenous forests almost totally exhausted;
- Wastage of scarce and valuable indigenous timber resources;
- Lack of a sustainable balance between production and resource conservation in the forestry sector;
- Clearance of forests for agricultural uses;

- Impact of invasive species on native forests;
- Limited community responsibility for their forest resources;
- Low strategic importance of forests;
- Weak and unclear governance over forested lands; and
- Land tenure (ownership and usage rights).

Constraints

- Limited farm inputs – capital and labour;
- Information for decision-making lacking;
- Lack of access to suitable improved planting materials (quality seeds or seedlings of recommended tree species); and
- Under-pricing and under-valuing of forest products and resources.

Opportunities

- To diversify the economic base of Samoa, especially from rural enterprises and forestry;
- Enhance rural livelihoods through better use of forest resources;
- For farmers to take a leadership role in the development of farm forestry;
- For value adding to forest products;
- To enhance biodiversity conservation; and
- To increase carbon sequestration.

Forest sector roles

Key stakeholders with definition of roles:

National government – to establish the policy and enact forestry legislation. It shall ensure the provision of adequate resources (e.g. trained staff, equipment, funds) to implement the policy.

rural communities - to decide how forest resources are to be managed for sustainable and equitable development.

Private sector growers (farmers) – to plant, maintain and manage trees planted on their own farm lands. They will decide on rotation lengths and harvest times based on relevant market information. They will receive the full farm-gate market price for their crop of timber and non-timber products.

Traditional chiefs and orators – to help to promote the development of the agroforestry sector by encouraging relevant land use practice and where possible resolve any associated land disputes, introducing village laws if necessary.

Forests and forest products industry – to negotiate with farmers and landowners areas for timber harvesting and plantation development respecting existing regulations in force and protected, conservation and watershed areas. They will operate in accordance with the code of logging practice. The industry should develop value adding timber processing facilities and seek markets for Samoan timber and forest products. They should assist the Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment (MNRE) with forest and forest products research. They should provide advice to government on the needs and opportunities for development of the forest industry.

Tourism operators – to assist the conservation of native forests and the management of national parks to support ecotourism.

MNRE - including the Forestry Division (FD), to implement the policy and the forestry legislation in close cooperation with Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries (MAF) and other agencies for areas related to planting trees in the farming system. MNRE will approve utilisation operations agreements and ensure that the logging code is implemented. It will

collect information about forest resources, conduct forest research, and facilitate (together with MAF) the development of farm agroforestry and commercial plantations. It will provide advice on forest conservation, protected areas and national parks.

Other national government institutions - MNRE will cooperate with other national government agencies such as MAF, Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Labour (MCIL), Ministry of Women, Community & Social Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade (MFAT), Ministry of Education, Sport & Culture, Samoa Tourism Authority, Office of the Attorney General, Samoa Water Authority, Electric Power Authority, Ministry of Works, Transport & Infrastructure, National University of Samoa (NUS), and Research & Development Institute of Samoa to implement the various conservation, production and industry development strategies contained in this policy. The forest industries will be supported by the MOF, MCIL and MFAT to strengthen the enabling environment for the sustainable development of forests and, in the case of research agencies, to explore value added forest products and services.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – to clearly defined objectives and strategies will be encouraged to work closely with MNRE to promote sustainable forest management, the development of farm forestry and conservation enterprises and the conservation of the nation's forest resources.

Goals and principles

The policy aims to benefit society as a whole in perpetuity. Implementation of the policy will enable local people to benefit directly from sustainable forest management, promote equitable distribution of costs and benefits and combine conservation and livelihoods. It is guided by the following principles:

- Ecological sustainability;
- Social and gender equity;
- Individual and collective responsibilities (that is, both customary landowner rights and national interests to be considered);
- Community based management;
- Economic efficiency;
- Good governance and transparency; and
- Observance of forest related international treaty obligations.

Key objectives and strategies

1. Communities and landowners

| Objectives | Strategies |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promote the sustainable development of Samoa's forests in partnership with all stakeholders to provide greater social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits for current and future generations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Encourage increased community, landowner and private sector participation in the sustainable development of the forest sector ➤ Empower resource owners through knowledge and skills development ➤ Support communities in forest resource planning to identify areas for protection and production ➤ Trade local forest resources on international carbon markets in the long-term ➤ Establish a legal framework to enable the trading of carbon credits and conditions conducive to reforestation programmes |

Forest conservation

| Objectives | Strategies |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Protect and conserve biological, germplasm, cultural, historic and other non-timber forest values for the benefit of present and future generations ○ Rehabilitate degraded lowland forests ○ Conserve protective coastal forests, especially mangrove ecosystems, and restrict any non-sustainable use of them ○ Set aside government lands and encourage the dedication of customary lands for national parks and reserves ○ Protect designated water catchment areas through a combination of preventive protection measures and rehabilitation of degraded areas ○ Reflect the real value of indigenous forest in the levies paid on logging for commercial purposes ○ Unsustainable indigenous forest logging and clearing for commercial purposes to cease. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Deliver awareness and education programmes ➤ Establish and manage national parks, national reserves and conservation areas with landowner participation and encourage dedication of customary lands for national parks and reserves ➤ Prohibit logging in national parks and reserves ➤ Monitor the protected areas and prosecute and seek compensation for unlawful activities ➤ Undertake strategic assisted natural forest restoration of degraded and <i>merremia</i>-covered lowland forests ➤ Strengthen the management of information on forest resources ➤ Prepare inventories of Samoa's forestry resources and map or record such resources ➤ Use the SamFRIS database for planning sustainable management of Samoa's forests ➤ Develop sustainable forest indicators for monitoring ➤ Assist communities with sustainable forest management planning ➤ Improve management and output of agricultural land and regenerate degraded agricultural land to reduce need for continuing clearance ➤ Investigate possibilities for wild harvest of organic species from virgin and regenerating forest to provide alternate income source ➤ Promote leisure and other values of forests e.g. ecotourism ➤ Identify potential environmental impacts before any new timber licenses are issued or new plantations are established ➤ Update and enforce the code of logging practice ➤ Establish appropriate pricing of forest products in line with real market value and enforce new pricing structure which takes into account the different species and qualities of timber ➤ Exempt tree plantations from paying government royalties ➤ Review regulations on log scaling and the penalties for the theft or under measurement of logs ➤ Integrate forestry programmes with development in other sectors |

Plantation and farm forestry

| Objectives | Strategies |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish and maintain at least 4,000 ha of commercial plantations (including farm forestry plantings) to provide a future sustainable annual yield of 20,000 m³ of high value timber. ○ Establish farm forestry as a viable commercial enterprise that can be integrated with existing and new cash crops and livestock ○ Further develop the commercial coconut timber industry ○ Provide for a renewable source of fuelwood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop economically viable agroforestry systems on farms, including on-farm plans, emphasising both the service function and production values of trees in the farming system ➤ Promote the establishment of private plantations of commercial timber species ➤ Make government lands available for plantation forests ➤ Promote and facilitate partnerships between private sector and customary landowners for sustainable management of plantation forests ➤ Develop financial and other incentives for agroforestry ➤ FD to identify, develop and source adequate quantities of high quality seed of tree species of high value recommended for planting by farmers ➤ Promote and support private sector and community seedling nurseries ➤ Provide advice to landowners about the importance, value, uses and technical management of trees ➤ Develop a strong and effective partnership between FD, MAF and relevant NGOs to deliver appropriate technical and market information and support services to farmers and the private sector ➤ Strengthen the agroforestry capacity of the FD in collaboration with MAF ➤ Strengthen the FD's in-house training capabilities ➤ Strengthen the FD's research capabilities ➤ Encourage the utilisation of coconut timber and facilitate the development of appropriate saw milling and processing techniques ➤ Develop coconut products such as virgin coconut oil, coir and juice to provide ongoing income before coconut trees are harvested |

Industry development

| Objectives | Strategies |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Utilise forest products to provide economic and employment growth ○ Expand capacity for production of value added timber products for export markets ○ Develop a well-trained, skilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish forestry advisory and technical committees with industry representation ➤ Government to overcome disincentives which currently constrain investment in the forestry sector including secure access to land and financial and administrative bottlenecks ➤ Samoa to allow export and import of processed |

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| <p>work force in all aspects of the forestry and forest products industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Control and support the development of mobile sawmills consistent with principles of sustainable forest management | <p>timber in a manner which promotes maximum economic efficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ministry of Revenue to review taxation arrangements to promote farm forestry over the unsustainable exploitation of the natural forest resource ➤ Consider duty concessions for equipment and machinery to be used for farm forestry development and value adding processing ➤ Consider import of logs and flitches to be free of duty if they are to be processed into value-added products for export ➤ Government to monitor the levels of timber imports into Samoa with the aim of supporting the continued development of domestic processing of high value products ➤ Promote market development of tree products and new value added markets will be sought by the private sector with assistance of FD, MCIL and industry associations ➤ Deliver a comprehensive campaign to educate people about new market opportunities for forestry products ➤ FD to develop standards for seasoning of timber and grading by species and end use with standards to be consistent with those used in the region ➤ Draft new regulations for timber seasoning and grading in consultation with the forest industry ➤ Strengthen technical training courses in timber processing, joinery and furniture-making at the NUS Technical Institute ➤ Draft new legislation to cover the control and management of mobile sawmills ➤ Facilitate viable harvesting and transportation systems for farm forest products |
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Forest administration

| Objectives | Strategies |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure the sustainable management of Samoa's forests and the development of the forestry sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ MNRE to review and update the Forestry Act and Regulations to ensure that they are consistent with the policy ➤ Strengthen MNRE capacity and allocate resources to ensure that forest administration is efficiently carried out ➤ MNRE to advise the minister on forest policy, legislative matters and sustainable forest |

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| | <p>management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ FD to incorporate guidelines for fire protection into the conservation and management of native and plantation forests ➤ FD to set targets for monitoring the implementation strategies in this policy ➤ MNRE to seek donor assistance to support the development of farm forestry programmes ➤ FD to support the formation of a farm forestry groups ➤ Samoa to participate in relevant international and regional forestry initiatives and programmes which assist Samoa to achieve sustainable forest development |
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Implementation

The MNRE will facilitate the implementation of the policy in line with the government priorities and available resources. Many of the strategies are expected to take a number of years to fully implement. The government will seek donor assistance where appropriate to assist with the implementation of the forest policy. The MNRE will monitor the national forest policy implementation and it will be reviewed every three years.

Definitions

sustainable development means promoting development at a rate and in such a way as to ensure that the quality of the environment and the supply of resources is maintained and, wherever practicable, enhanced to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations.

carbon credits are certificates awarded to countries that are successful in reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. For trading purposes, one credit is considered equivalent to one tonne of CO₂ emissions. Such a credit can be sold in the international market at the prevailing market price. There are two exchanges for carbon credits: the Chicago Climate Exchange and the European Climate Exchange.

farm forestry refers to any commercial tree production on farmland. It includes private timber plantations undertaken on land for single purpose production and the commercial planting of trees where there is some degree of planned integration with conventional agriculture (agroforestry).

value adding is the processing of timber or primary forest products into higher value finished products.

Related national policies

National water resources strategy 2007-2017 (2007)

National biosafety framework (2004)

Code of logging practice (2003)

National biodiversity strategy and action plan (2001)

National land use planning policy (2001)

National water resources policy (2001)

National environment and development management strategies (1993)

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