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COUNTRY REPORT – TONGA

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Introduction

Forest Area

Tonga has a total land area of 747 square kilometres of which approximately 15 percent is cover with virgin and secondary forest (14%) and commercial exotic and agroforestry forest (1%). The plantation forest on the island of 'Eua accounts to some 1,200 acres dominated by *Pinus caribaea*, *Toona ciliata*, *Sweitenia macrophylla*, *Agathis robusta* and *Terminalia catappa*. Similar species are planted on private farm lands ("'Api 'Uta) using various agroforestry systems particularly boundary planting. Most of the remaining indigenous forest is found in the uninhabited islands and the coastal areas. *Cocos nucifera* is considered a forest species in Tonga as it is the second major source of raw materials for local timber production. It is found all throughout the islands of Tonga.

Policy and Management Objectives

Tonga has no formal forest policy but effort is made to formulate one with the assistance of FAO. Forestry Division (FD) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) operate with the following objectives: to promote replanting of forest and trees of all species; encourage conservation of natural and indigenous trees and plants; promote tree planting for soil improvement; and sustainable management. The forest plantation is owned by the government and most of the milled timber is used locally.

Major Forest Health Problems

Insect and Disease

No major insect pest or diseases was found to have affected Tonga's natural and plantation forests. However, a major eradication of *Leucaena leucocephalla* due to insect attack had a major impact in the local community. Rhinoceros beetle is a major problem on coconut palms nationwide.

Abiotic factors

Hurricane is the major cause of forest health problems while forest fire and drought are of minor effect.

Resource available for Forest Protection

Currently Forestry Division does not have a qualified staff to carry out forest health surveillance duties. Infrastructure is not in place for any FHS activities. MAF Research and Extension (RED) and the Quarantine, Quality and Management Division (QQMD) posse appropriate infrastructure and manpower for FHS but focus is on agricultural crops with minute interest in forest tree species. Effort is made to establish a closer working relationship with these two divisions in order to utilize the existing resources while FD develops its own capacity.

Current Forest Health Surveillance Activities

Surveys

No formal FHS surveys ever taken by the Forestry Division.

Mapping of affected areas

Forestry Division have a GIS mapping facilities in the island of 'Eua. It has been used in other forestry activities but not mapping of infected areas. This can be done by the existing staffs when it is requested.

Quarantine Measures

Legislation and Regulation

The MAF QQMD have appropriate legislation and regulation in place. Currently, Forestry Division plays no part in both the export and import of timber and plant materials. It is anticipated that FD shall build capacity on the current achievement of the QQMD and RED achievements in FHS.

Resources

As mentioned, appropriate infrastructure and human resources are in place with the QQMD and RED. Forestry Division, however, shall build its own capacity in order to give priority to forestry related matters.

Interception of Serious Pest and Diseases

No significant interception of serious pest and diseases to date.