

Fiji

Fiji Continues to Lead International Climate Action with Launch of Comprehensive Low Emissions Development Strategy

Fiji has adopted a detailed development plan that could see the Pacific Island country soak up more carbon than it emits by 2050. Fiji's Low Emissions Development Strategy was launched at the UN climate conference held in December 2018 in Katowice, Poland.

"No Pacific Island nation has ever undertaken such a thorough or comprehensive study on an economy-wide, low-carbon development strategy," said Fiji's Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama at the launch.

Every sector of the Fijian economy, from fishing and food production to transport and education, was examined for carbon emission reductions potential with a view of ensuring equitable, green, and sustainable growth.

While Fiji emits only a small amount of carbon—2.4 million tons of CO₂ annually—it is very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, especially sea level rise and ever stronger and frequent severe weather. In February 2016, Cyclone Winston killed 44 people, left many thousands homeless, devastated the country's infrastructure, and caused damage equal to one third of Fiji's GDP.

The Low Emission Development Strategy (LEDS) aims to support international climate action by reducing Fiji's emissions while growing the economy and doing so in a way that benefits all sectors of society.

During the launch, the prime minister praised the Global Green Growth Institute for helping Fiji put the strategy together: "But we haven't done this on our own. And I want to pay particular tribute to the Global Green Growth Institute for the technical expertise," Bainimarama said.

The Ministry of Economy engaged GGGI to support the LEDS in early 2018, and a workplan was jointly developed to complete the LEDS by November 2018, including a comprehensive process for conducting stakeholder consultations, preparing economy-wide low-emission scenarios, and identifying priority policies and mitigation actions. Over a seven-month period, two national workshops, nine sector-specific consultations, and more than 50 bilateral consultations were undertaken with technical experts, other government agencies, the private sector, and civil society for the development of the Fiji LEDS.



GGGI in Fiji: Supporting the newly launched Low Emissions Development Strategy

GGGI's overall role included supporting the design of the LEDS, the stakeholder consultation process, extensive modeling and scenario development, and the compilation of the LEDS, including significant attention to the issues of environmental and social co-benefits of the LEDS, adaptation, capacity building and governance, and related issues.

The LEDS team developed four scenarios based on funding, ranging from business as usual to very high ambition. The carbon emission scenarios become progressively more ambitious depending on Fiji's ability to secure outside international financing. The most ambitious one requires billions of dollars in international support: Fiji could reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2041 and from then on produce negative emissions, with its forests and mangroves drawing down the amount of carbon already in the atmosphere.

"We looked at everything: cooking, heating, marine transport, domestic aviation, agriculture, forestry, tourism, and the waste sector. And we looked at blue carbon—how coastal mangroves could help absorb carbon," said Katerina Syngellakis, GGGI's Pacific region representative.

The LEDS also encapsulates the creation of green jobs, ensuring access to affordable energy and increasing Fiji's resilience to climate impacts while enhancing biodiversity.

"Aside from financing, the main challenges are raising awareness and building capacity. It will be a complete transformation of the economy and involves behavioral and practical changes, such as how farmers manage their farms, how architects and engineers build new buildings, how each of us travels to work," added Syngellakis.

Schools and universities will need to focus on ecology, engineering, science, and sustainability and provide training for careers in renewable energy and other emerging technologies and sectors.

The Fiji LEDS addresses the call of Article 4, Paragraph 19 of the Paris Agreement whereby state parties are to formulate and communicate long-term greenhouse gas emission development strategies in pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

"Given the iterative nature of the Paris Agreement, climate plans like the Fiji LEDS are essential for developing enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDC," said Nilesh Prakash, head of Climate Change & International Cooperation of the Fijian government.

The Fijian government submitted its enhanced NDC to the UNFCCC in February 2019, becoming the eleventh country, and only the third developing country to do so.



GGGI in Fiji: Increasing access to renewable energy and creating green jobs