



# Synergistic linkages between green trade and sustainable development in Fiji

Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group

Technical cooperation outcome



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**MSG Secretariat**  
**Secretariat du GFLM**  
Melanesian Spearhead Group | Le Groupe Fer de Lance Mélanésien



# Abbreviations

<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>IFOAM</b>	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
<b>MSG</b>	Melanesian Spearhead Group
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NTM</b>	Non-tariff measures
<b>PGS</b>	Participatory Guarantee System
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SIDS</b>	Small Island Developing State
<b>SPS</b>	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
<b>TBT</b>	Technical Barriers to Trade
<b>VSS</b>	Voluntary Sustainability Standards



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# Glossary

## Synergistic Linkages

Synergistic linkages are connections or relationships between different components, entities, or processes that result in a combined effect greater than the sum of their individual effects. Put more simply, it is ***when multiple elements work together in a way that enhances their overall impact or effectiveness.***

Synergistic linkages might refer to **partnerships** between **companies, government and the international community** where **each partner contributes resources, expertise, or market access**, leading to increased **sales, cost savings, or other benefits** that ***would not be achievable without this coordination.***

In the specific context of the **MSG Green Trade Project**, examples of connections that can lead to **synergistic linkages** include farmers, trading agencies/companies, the governments and the international community engaged in quality infrastructure and market access. Examples in Fiji include strengthening the link between rural areas to regional and global markets by connecting the farmers of ginger with trading agencies that can facilitate access to markets; and collaborating with international organisations that provide training materials and market access information.

## Green Trade

Green trade, while not having a universally agreed-upon definition, broadly **refers to the exchange of goods and services that are produced, marketed, and consumed in a manner that ensures environmental sustainability and economic viability.**

Within the framework of the **MSG Green Trade Project**, green trade specifically encompasses agricultural goods that are produced sustainably. This sustainable production not only minimizes the environmental impact but also supports and reinforces local communities, contributing to their economic and social well-being. By focusing on agricultural goods produced in such a manner, the MSG Green Trade Project aligns closely with the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It particularly emphasizes the objective of “leaving no one behind,” ensuring that the benefits of trade and sustainable agricultural practices are equitably distributed among all stakeholders, including marginalized and vulnerable groups within society.



# Preface

The report on *Synergistic linkages between green trade sustainable development in Fiji* is part of the **Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group** (MSG) project,<sup>1</sup> referred to as the MSG Green Trade Project.

Conducted by UNCTAD and the MSG Secretariat<sup>2</sup>, the objective of the MSG Green Trade Project is to identify and strengthen synergistic linkages between green trade promotion and the Sustainable Development Strategies (SDS) of MSG member States – Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu – in a regionally collaborative manner.

This report was prepared jointly by UNCTAD, the MSG Secretariat and the Government of Fiji and is the final output for Fiji of Phase 1 of the project. Phase 1 comprises all national activities to identify potential synergistic linkages and to promote green trade. This report draws on the Phase 1 activities, notably:

- 1) Organizing a national workshop in Fiji.
- 2) Collecting and publishing Non-Tariff Measures (NTM) data for Fiji.
- 3) Publishing an assessment of Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) for ginger.
- 4) Publishing a guide for exporting ginger from Fiji.

The Phase 1 activities and reports laid the foundation for Phase 2, which entailed the creation of a Subregional Action Plan for Green Trade Promotion at the MSG level.

<sup>1</sup> The project website and project document can be accessed at: <https://unctad.org/project/green-trade-sustainable-development-pacific-small-island-developing-states-melanesian>

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see: <https://msgsec.info/about-msg/>



## Executive summary

This report explores potential synergistic linkages between green trade and sustainable development in Fiji and creates a matrix identifying these links. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Fiji faces specific challenges and opportunities in its pursuit of sustainable development. Smallness, remoteness, a narrow export base, and high exposure to external economic shocks together with global environmental challenges represent exceptional vulnerabilities. Green trade can be an integral element for overcoming some of the challenges and achieving sustainable development. The importance of green trade lies in two areas. First, it opens doors to specialized markets that value sustainability, creating enhanced economic prospects. Secondly, it offers notable social and environmental benefits.

The Fiji Synergistic Linkages Matrix contains three policy recommendations for green trade and describes how green trade can contribute to the country's national sustainable development strategies and further the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This matrix is built on data related to Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) and a comprehensive assessment of Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) for the Fiji ginger sector, developed as part of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Green Trade Project.<sup>3</sup> NTMs, i.e. regulations other than tariffs that can affect trade, and VSS, i.e. voluntary standards setting specific economic, social, and environmental criteria, are identified as instrumental in fostering environmental protection, social inclusion, and economic prosperity. Table 1 presents a summary of the policy recommendations and their expected benefits, which are some of the key insights from this report.



**Table 1**  
**Policy recommendations for Fiji and their expected benefits**

Policy recommendation	Expected benefit
<b>1. Strengthen training and knowledge sharing on NTMs and VSS.</b>	Enhanced understanding and capacity on NTMs and VSS, leading to improved trade transparency and efficiency.
<b>2. Improve trade related data collection and enhance availability of agricultural statistics for the private sector.</b>	Improved decision-making for the government and businesses based on accurate and timely trade related data, leading to better trade and business development outcomes.
<b>3. Review and update trade-related legislations.</b>	Modernised legislations that act as enablers for improving trade, fostering business growth, and ensuring that emerging instruments such as VSS are used and work for sustainable development.

Source: UNCTAD.

Furthermore, green trade policies present potential synergies with the “Leaving no one behind” principle and Fiji's national development priorities of inclusivity through fostering opportunities to enhance rural inclusion, women's empowerment and youth engagement. Nonetheless, several challenges remain and need to be addressed for these synergies to materialize. In particular, many rural communities in Fiji face barriers related to inadequate infrastructure and limited access to markets. Green trade policies may not yield their full potential if rural areas lack proper

<sup>3</sup> See <https://unctad.org/project/green-trade-sustainable-development-pacific-small-island-developing-states-melanesian>





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transportation, storage facilities, and market linkages. In addition, gender inequalities remain pervasive in Fiji and ensuring equitable participation of women in green trade initiatives requires targeted efforts, capacity-building, and policy adjustments to promote gender balance in the sector. Lastly, encouraging the youth to stay in rural areas and actively engage in agriculture and green trade is a complex challenge. Retaining youth in rural areas necessitates a multifaceted approach, which may involve providing them with targeted education, training, and access to modern amenities while preserving their cultural heritage.

The report offers a way forward through specific policy recommendations and a matrix of synergistic linkages, emphasizing the significance of regional integration in the Pacific region and guiding the creation of a sub-regional action plan for MSG countries. The comprehensive approach outlined underscores the potential of green trade as a tool for achieving sustainable development in Fiji, leveraging the strengths of NTMs and VSS while addressing the challenges that are unique to SIDS.





# 1. Introduction

**This report explores potential synergistic linkages between green trade and sustainable development in Fiji and creates a matrix identifying these overlaps. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Fiji faces specific challenges and opportunities in its pursuit of sustainable development. Smallness, remoteness, narrow export base, and exposure to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks come as “unique and particular vulnerabilities” (United Nations, 2012).**

Green trade is an integral element of overcoming some of the challenges and achieving sustainable development. Its importance lies in two areas. First, it opens doors to specialized markets that value “sustainability”, creating enhanced economic prospects. Secondly, it offers notable social and environmental benefits. In this context, Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) and Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) are important. They help in enhancing green trade and aligning it with Fiji’s national sustainable development strategies and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015).

The Fiji matrix of synergistic linkages presents how the policy recommendations, aiming at fostering green trade, can contribute to achieving the country’s national sustainable development plan. The matrix is based on a foundation of data related to NTMs, as well as a comprehensive assessment of VSS for the Fiji ginger sector, both of which were developed as part of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Green Trade Project funded by the United Nations. NTMs and VSS are key instruments to shape the country’s green trade. NTMs, being mandatory trade requirements stipulated in regulations often for public objectives, form the essential framework which enables green trade. Meanwhile, VSS, which are voluntary private standards,

or requirements, set out to meet specific economic, social and environmental metrics, create an extended sphere that increases the value of green trade. Ultimately, NTMs and VSS serve as tools for enhancing environmental protection, social inclusion, and economic prosperity.

Section 2 provides an overview of Fiji’s sustainable development strategies. Based on the confirmed linkage between Fiji’s strategies and the 2030 Agenda, Section 3 examines the potential of Fiji’s NTMs and VSS for promoting green trade and achieving the SDGs, with a specific focus on ginger as an example of the transformative potential of VSS. Section 4 assesses potential opportunities and challenges arising from green trade promotion from the perspective of rural communities and of women and youth, thus highlighting the importance of “leaving no one behind”. Section 5 concludes by pointing the way forward by providing three specific policy recommendations and offering a matrix of synergistic linkages between green trade policy recommendations and the achievement of the country’s sustainable development strategies.

This report was drafted jointly by UNCTAD and the MSG Secretariat, with involvement from the Fiji Government in the process. It incorporates feedback and inputs from participants of the “Fiji national MSG Green



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Trade Project” workshop held in Suva, Fiji, on 12-13 June 2023.

This report also champions the significance of regional integration in the Pacific region. The three policy recommendations and

the matrix of linkages presented in Section 5 – together with similar matrices from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu – were used to guide the creation of a Sub-Regional Action Plan for Green Trade Promotion for MSG countries.



## 2. Fiji's sustainable national development strategy

Fiji's strategy to achieve sustainable development is highlighted in its 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan (NDP). The NDP was developed via a comprehensive nationwide stakeholder consultation process and was launched in 2017. As its first 5-year phase ended in 2021, the plan has entered its second 5-year phase. The review of the first 5-Year NDP and the development of the second 5-Year NDP are ongoing (Republic of Fiji, 2023). The NDP has a forward-looking vision of "Transforming Fiji" and addresses multiple cross-cutting themes related to sustainable development, including climate change, green growth, environment, gender equality, and disability inclusion and governance across the various sections recognising the integrated nature of development (Republic of Fiji, 2019; Ministry of Economy, 2017).

The NDP outlines a framework that encompasses strategic policy planning, new approaches to development and the aspirations of all Fijians. It calls upon the respective ministries in Fiji and the public sector to work together towards realising these goals. The two mutually inclusive and reinforcing approaches proposed in the NDP are (Ministry of Economy, 2017):

**1. Inclusive socio-economic development:** this is to indicate the aspiration to realize all socio-economic rights in the constitution. Inclusivity is at the centre of growth and development, and the benefits of prosperity are aimed to be spread widely to improve the social well-being of all Fijians. The NDP highlights that no one should be left behind regardless of geographical

location, gender, ethnicity, physical and intellectual capability and social and economic status.

**2. Transforming strategic thrusts:** these are forward-looking policy shifts that can expand Fiji's development frontier and support the vision of transforming Fiji. Under this, the NDP highlights that new and emerging growth sectors will be furthered, connectivity within and to the outside world will be improved, new technologies will be embraced, productivity will be maximised, and human capital development will be accelerated. Green growth is expected to be the key guiding principle of this plan.

Table 2. summarises the general orientation of the full 20-Year Development Plan.

The NDP is aligned with the SDGs under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Each thematic areas identified in the NDP mainstreams and integrates the appropriate SDGs. 16 SDGs are explicitly integrated into the corresponding 29 strategic priorities of the NDP, while SDG 10 (reduce inequalities), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) and SDG 13 (climate action) are treated as cross-cutting issues across the NDP. Annex 2 shows the alignment between the 29 strategic priorities of the NDP with the 17 SDGs. Further, in line with the goal of the Paris Agreement to achieve climate neutrality and a low-emission world, the Government of Fiji will develop a 2050 Pathway to decarbonize the Fijian economy.

**The NDP has a forward-looking vision of "Transforming Fiji" and addresses multiple cross-cutting themes**





**Table 2**  
**Summary of Fiji’s 20-year National Development Plan**

Section	Key points
<b>INCLUSIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on realizing socio-economic rights, inclusivity in growth and development.</li> <li>• Major goals include a fourfold increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, reducing government debt to 35 per cent of GDP, unemployment rate below 4 per cent, eradicating poverty, and achieving 100 per cent access to clean water and sanitation.</li> <li>• Emphasis on universal access to quality education and high-quality healthcare systems.</li> </ul>
<b>TRANSFORMATIONAL STRATEGIC THRUSTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurturing new and emerging growth sectors.</li> <li>• Improving transport and digital connectivity.</li> <li>• Emphasizing skill development and exploiting the demographic dividend.</li> <li>• Embracing new technology for productivity improvement</li> <li>• Building vibrant cities and towns alongside a stronger rural economy.</li> </ul>
<b>SPECIFIC INITIATIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment in infrastructure like roads, airports, ports.</li> <li>• Modernizing educational and healthcare facilities.</li> <li>• Enhancing agriculture and fisheries.</li> <li>• Empowering women in development.</li> <li>• Protecting culture, heritage, and natural environment.</li> <li>• Maintaining national security.</li> </ul>
<b>COSTING AND FINANCING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The plan involves over 50 billion Fijian dollars of government investment over 20 years, utilizing domestic revenues, international resources, and private sector partnerships.</li> </ul>

Source: UNCTAD summary based on Fiji Ministry of Economy, 2017.



## 3. Fiji's NTMs and VSS for green trade and sustainable development

In Fiji, the MSG Green Trade Project collected data on NTM and conducted a VSS assessment on ginger. These two activities shed light on the state and characteristics of NTMs and VSS existing in the country. The NTMs and VSS have contributed to shaping the country's trade practices. Good design, implementation and monitoring of NTMs and VSS can ensure that Fiji's trade becomes greener and more aligned with the sustainable development priorities under the NDP and the 2030 Agenda. For example, NTMs and VSS hold the promise to increase the attractiveness of Fiji's primary exports, such as ginger products, to sustainability-conscious markets, facilitating the promotion of green exports, stimulating inclusive economic growth, and endorsing environmental and social sustainability. The following subsections will explore the current state and, more importantly, the potential of NTMs and VSS in these regards.

### 3.1 The potential for NTMs

NTMs are policy measures, other than tariffs, that can potentially affect international trade (UNCTAD, 2010). According to the methodology of UNCTAD's NTM data collection, which was rolled out in Fiji under this MSG Green Trade project, NTMs are considered to be mandatory and substantive requirements stipulated in regulatory documents. For example, NTMs include sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, technical barriers to trade (TBT) and quantitative restrictions, fees and charges. Therefore, NTMs and VSS complement each other by addressing different aspects of trade requirements.

NTMs can provide significant opportunities for Fiji to align its trade practices with the

sustainable development goals. On the one hand, NTMs can be designed and implemented in ways that directly support sustainable development objectives. For instance, quality requirements for imported medicines protect public health and emission level requirements for imported cars help prevent air pollution, thereby supporting SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) respectively. These measures have great leverage because Fiji is highly dependent on imported machinery, vehicles, energy and pharmaceuticals. Moreover, NTMs could be particularly relevant for Fiji's ginger sector, where maintaining high standards of production could facilitate access to international niche markets and promote sustainable practices within the industry.

However, it is important to note that while NTMs hold potential for advancing sustainable development, their design and implementation need to be carefully managed. Poorly designed or implemented NTMs can create trade distortions, increasing the cost of trade, and potentially having negative impacts on sustainable development. With tariff liberalization, NTMs have risen as the main obstacle to trade. NTMs are three times more restrictive to trade than tariffs (UNCTAD, 2013). Therefore, it is critical to ensure that NTMs are transparent, non-discriminatory, and do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade.

UNCTAD conducted NTM data collection of Fiji for the first time under this MSG Green Trade project. It examined regulatory documents that were active at the end of 2021. The study identified 388 NTMs from 79 regulations governed by 25 different ministries and departments effective at

**Slightly fewer than two thirds of NTMs in Fiji (61 per cent) have positive and direct linkages to SDGs.**



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the time of writing in 2023.<sup>4</sup> Below is the summary of NTMs in Fiji.

- 288 measures targeted imported products.
- 100 measures targeted export products.
- The largest group of NTMs is SPS and TBT measures (264 measures), such as requirements on hygiene, quality, production, post-production, transport, storage, labelling, packaging, inspection, testing and certificate. Quantitative restrictions, such as quotas and prohibitions, are the second-largest category (48 measures), and fees, charges, and taxes come third (25 measures).
- 5 per cent of NTMs apply horizontally to all products. For example, rules related to customs control, customs declaration, and correct trade description.

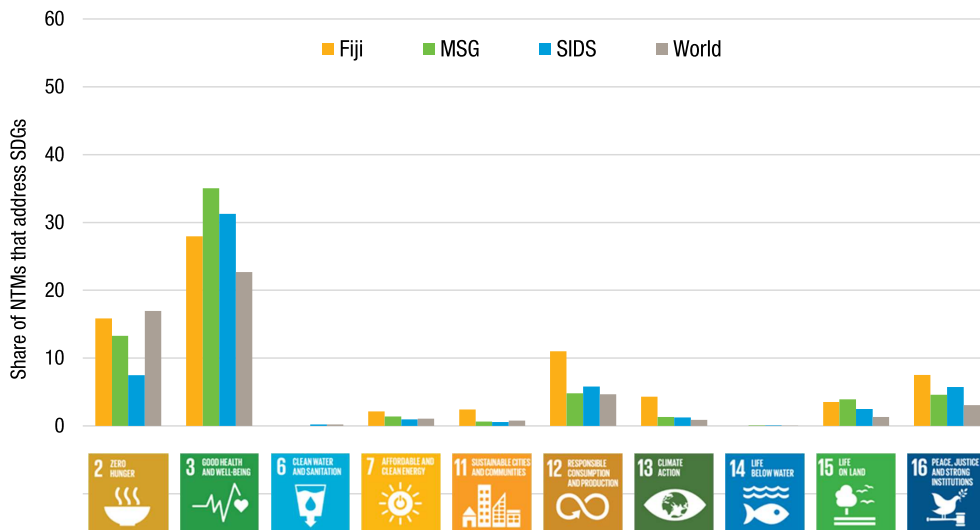
- Based on the number of regulations, the most regulated product groups are specific type of foods for export: animals and animal products; plants and plant products; and hazardous wastes and chemicals.
- Based on the number of regulations, the least regulated product groups are fertilizer and cultural artifacts.

Slightly fewer than two thirds of NTMs in Fiji (61 per cent) have positive and direct linkages to SDGs.<sup>5</sup> This share is higher than the average share of MSG member States, SIDS and the world that are respectively, 57 per cent, 48 per cent and 46 per cent.

Figure 1 provides detailed analysis. It illustrates what per cent of Fiji NTMs are linked to each SDG. It is important to note that one NTM may be linked to one or multiple SDGs. The average share of MSG member States, SIDS and the world are included as reference.



**Figure 1**  
**Share of NTMs that address SDGs**



Source: UNCTAD and UN ESCAP calculation, October 2023.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> UNCTAD also identified 3 NTMs that had been repealed before end-2021 and 3 NTM that were supposed to be repealed in 2022. Including these repealed NTMs, UNCTAD identified 394 NTMs in total. They were from 80 regulations and governed by 25 different ministries and departments.

<sup>5</sup> The methodology of calculating the share of NTMs that are linked to the SDGs takes only the NTMs under Chapters A to F and P into account. The NTMs under Chapters G to O are excluded from the calculation. In Fiji, 372 NTMs under Chapter A to F and P were used for the calculation. (see UNCTAD, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> The methodology was developed between UN ESCAP and UNCTAD and the calculation was undertaken by UN ESCAP based on the NTM data collected by UNCTAD.





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The figure illustrates that:

- 28 per cent of Fiji NTMs directly support SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) by ensuring the safety and information disclosure of food and medicines, thus supporting the fight against diseases including non-communicable ones, and reducing mortality levels. They also contribute to controlling the use of narcotic drugs and alcohol and implementing the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.
- 16 per cent of NTMs directly support SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). Most of them are SPS measures, especially conformity assessment requirements such as the need for a certificate on animals, plants, fish and products thereof. These NTMs help ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices.
- 11 per cent of NTMs directly serve SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), for instance by regulating ozone depleting substances and the products using such substances in the pursuit of implementation of the Montreal Protocol. Fiji is one of the earliest countries in the MSG region to introduce specific measures to regulate plastic bags and plastic bottles. The share of NTMs linked to SDG 12 in Fiji is around double the share in the three reference groups.
- Besides SDG 12, the shares of NTMs linked to the following SDGs are higher in Fiji compared to the reference groups, although the figures are small in absolute terms:
  - o SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) by controlling the flow of arms, explosives, radioactive materials and biological and toxic weapons.
  - o SDG 13 (Climate Action) by imposing an environment and climate adaptation levy on certain imported products, among others.
  - o SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) by specifying trade standards of biodiesel fuel and ethanol fuel.

The detailed analysis of Fiji's NTMs has revealed several potential areas where Fiji can further promote green trade and synergistically support sustainable development through good NTMs:

- Regarding food that is imported to Fiji for the domestic market, it is regulated by Part 4 of the "Food Safety Act 2003", which covers all aspects of foodstuffs in Fiji. Reviewing the effectiveness of this general approach to regulating food quality and safety for the people in Fiji would be worthwhile. Additional product specific measures could complement the general approach and support SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). In the cases of other developing countries, including other Pacific SIDS, they sometimes resorted to product specific standards in the CODEX Alimentarius and adopted them as part of their regulations. This could be an option for Fiji. As of end 2021, Fijian legislation referred to the CODEX Alimentarius only with respect to the rule of naming the food, under the Food (Control) Regulation Order 2007. Fiji could consider adopting certain product specific standards from the CODEX Alimentarius into its own legislation.
- Fiji manages the quality and safety of food that is exported abroad through regulations that apply to certain products or product groups. For example, the "Fruit Export and Marketing Act 1906" regulates the export of fruit and includes vegetables, trees, plants shrubs and roots. The option of adopting the product specific standards from the CODEX Alimentarius would fit in well with this regulatory structure.
- All other MSG member States and many other countries have general measures to control the export and import of cultural artefacts. Fiji does not have any general regulations dedicated to cultural artefacts. Instead, its measures to regulate the trade of cultural artefacts are all specific and detailed. For example, the "Customs (Prohibited Imports and Exports) Regulations 1986" controls the export of "all artifacts made from whales tooth"(Office of Attorney-General, 2021). Introducing some general measures



prohibiting trade in cultural artefacts could reduce the risk that cultural artefacts not falling under any of the specific cases would be traded in an uncontrolled way. They can support the preservation of cultural heritage, one of the targets under SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

- As Figure 2 showed, Fiji does not have any NTMs that are linked to SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitization). Albeit small, some countries in the reference groups of SIDS and the world have put in place such NTMs. Fiji could consider establishing TBT measures to ensure water efficiency of certain machines, baths, sinks, water basins and other sanitary parts to support this SDG.

### 3.2 The potential for VSS

VSS have emerged as useful governance tools for global value chains, by addressing related sustainability concerns towards advancing sustainable development (Marx et al., 2022). VSS can support economic, social and environmental goals. For example, VSS are often linked to higher wages and benefit from a price premium often benefitting the producers in developing countries. Due to their environmental requirements such as the avoidance of certain pesticides, they can contribute to environmental related SDGs. Over the past decade, the use of VSS has grown for many products, resulting in considerable growth in the share of the global market covered by VSS. For example, around 25 per cent of global cocoa production and 16 per cent of global cotton production is certified by some sustainability standard (Bissinger et al., 2020). According to the International Trade Centre Standards Map,<sup>7</sup> there are currently around 329 VSS operating across the globe, of which 53 are being used in Fiji. Some examples of VSS active in Fiji are the

Aquaculture Stewardship Council; Fairtrade International; Forest Stewardship Council; Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations; and Pacific Organic Standard.

Recent research conducted on 232 VSS indicates that – depending on the specific requirements of a VSS, they have the potential to significantly contribute to SDG 12 (Responsible Production and Consumption), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 1 (No Poverty) (Bissinger et al., 2020; Schleifer et al., 2022).

With respect to VSS on organic products, studies on the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) Standard (Version 2)<sup>8</sup> have demonstrated its potential to address SDGs 2, 6, 8, 12, and 15 (Kosolapova et al., 2023). IFOAM is the “Global umbrella organization of organic agriculture”. Although national and regional organic standards differ, substantive requirements across various organic standards tend to be largely similar. The potential impact of the IFOAM Standard, one of the most prominent organic standards, on the SDGs implies that the existing organic standards in Fiji, such as the Pacific Organic Standard would have similar impact on the SDG.

1. Advance SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by supporting agricultural productivity, farmers’ livelihoods, and sustainable food production.
2. Advance SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) by improving water quality and water-use efficiency.
3. Advance SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by promoting ethical practices and labour rights.

<sup>7</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.standardsmap.org/en/identify?origin=Fiji>

<sup>8</sup> Standard document available at: <https://www.ifoam.bio/our-work/how/standards-certification/organic-guarantee-system/ifoam-standard>

**There are currently around 329 VSS operating across the globe, of which 53 are being used in Fiji.**

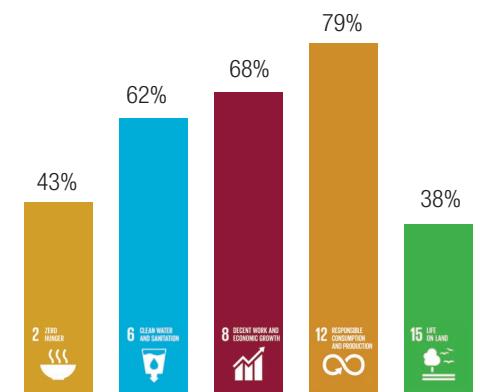


4. Advance SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by supporting environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste.
5. Advance SDG 15 (Life on Land) by supporting sustainable forest management, conservation of forests, and biodiversity protection.

Figure 2 illustrates the extent to which the requirements prescribed in the IFOAM address selected SDGs.



**Figure 2**  
Average degree of coverage of selected SDGs with IFOAM Standard



Source: Kosolapova et al. (2023).

The IFOAM organic standard is important for Fiji because Fijian growers seek to differentiate their products as organic. In Fiji, the reported organic agricultural land is 30,194 hectares, which represents over 7 per cent of total agricultural land, a relatively high proportion. The majority of organic production is carried out for export purposes. In 2021, organic exports from Fiji to the European Union were around 43 metric tons an increase of 15 per cent compared with 2020 (Willer et al., 2023). There has also been a growth in the participatory guarantee system (PGS) of certification. The growth of PGS and improved recognition of the value of organics has also contributed to a rise in farmers' markets and supply agreements. Samoa, Niue, Cook Islands and Fiji now have certified produce sold through farmers' markets. Fiji also has 135 PGS-certified farmers supplying vegetables to the country's

only organic restaurant Tukuni, established by the Foundation for Rural Enterprises and Development (FRIEND) (Willer et al., 2023). Considering this, Fiji can leverage VSS requirements to align its development priorities with the SDGs. By adopting VSS, Fiji can achieve the dual objectives of improving national prosperity by increasing exports and farmer's revenue, while also contributing to sustainable development and protecting the environment.

Considering this, Fiji can leverage VSS requirements to align its development priorities with the SDGs. By promoting sustainable development and protecting the environment, VSS can enhance the quality of exports and increase revenues, thereby improving the well-being of its people.

The MSG Green Trade Project's work on the Fiji ginger sector, particularly on organic certification, identified that the growth in organic produce is due to two factors. First, there is a considerable existence, growth and acceptance of the PGS in Fiji, indicating that to get a third-party certification, farmers will only need to make minimal modifications. Secondly, local producers are aware of the importance of organic certification and the benefits that it can bring. Support from the exporters could encourage the producers further in their endeavours to obtain certification.

Further, the project identified that there is an interest among producers to get certification as they perceive that it would provide access to the niche organic market and to customers demanding organic products. The producers believe that it would enable sustainable production, which can lead to long term economic viability of the farm. However, research also indicated that the ginger value chain faces several obstacles with respect to becoming certified, preventing a larger uptake of organic certification. Such challenges include time-consuming certification processes; export regulations; cost of certification; limited access to information; and lack of proper training to build capacity to get organically certified.



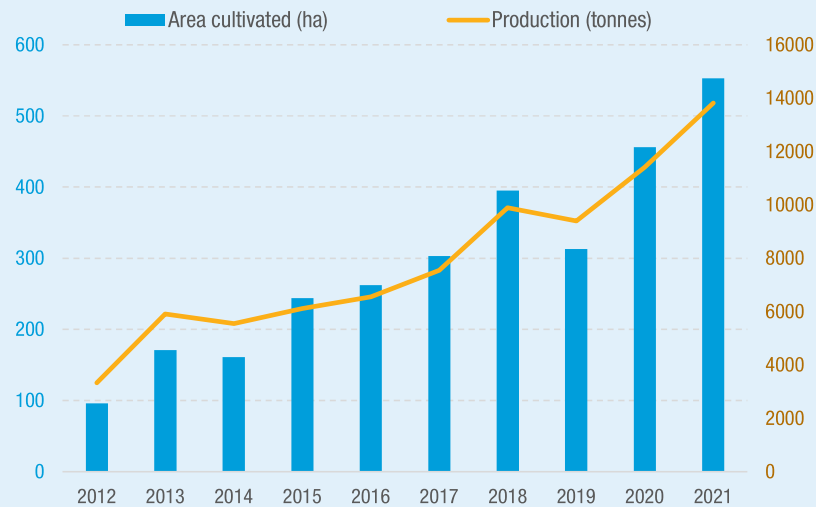


**Box 1**

**VSS and the ginger sector in Fiji**

Ginger production in Fiji started around the 1950s and gained importance, given its potential to provide food and income benefits while improving employment for farmers. There are currently 717 ginger growers in Fiji, 611 of which are registered in the central areas of Navua, Namosi, Naitasiri, Rewa, and Tailevu. The growth in the production of ginger in Fiji can be seen in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**  
**Production data of ginger in Fiji 2012-2021**



Source: UNCTAD analysis using FAO data.

Ginger is also one of the fast-growing export commodities of Fiji, with exports to Australia, New Zealand, the European Union, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Canada (British High Commission Suva, 2022). Based on UN COMTRADE data, the trade value of ginger (neither crushed nor ground) was US\$ 3,046,745 in 2021 compared to US\$ 1,830,164 in 2020 and US\$ 586,316 in 2019. Significant increases were observed in exports to Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands.

Fresh ginger has been designated a high-priority commodity by the Fijian government to access Australian markets. At present, Fiji is allowed to export fresh mature ginger to Australia for further processing, subject to specific import regulations. Fiji also exports processed ginger to Australia (sugar-preserved, brine-preserved, and ginger powder, among others) (Sharma et al., 2021; Sun Fiji, 2016; Biosecurity Australia, 2007).

VSS certified ginger, particularly organic, is also gaining importance as a high-value commodity, and is being developed by the Ministry of Agriculture together with the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism of Fiji (Kate, 2017). Recognising the potential of ginger, the government of Fiji allocated 1 million Fijian dollars (approximately US\$ 450,000) in fiscal year 2017-2018 for the development of the industry (Fiji Sun, 2017). This development fund aims to support farmers with land preparations and producing seedlings and agro-inputs (Kate, 2017).



## 4. Synergistic linkages in green trade: Leaving no one behind

There are synergistic linkages between green trade promotion through NTMs and organic certification on the one hand and Fiji's national sustainable development strategies on the other. These linkages are particularly evident from the perspective of "Leaving No One Behind", an overarching principle of the SDGs, which resonates with Fiji's priorities of inclusive socio-economic development. This section explores the interplay between green trade and rural communities, women's empowerment, and youth engagement, underscoring their significance within the context of Fiji's sustainable development framework, where inclusivity is paramount.

First, rural communities are central to green trade promotion. Rural communities represent 44 per cent of Fiji's population and play a pivotal role in agriculture, which accounts for 14.5 per cent of the country's GDP. Promoting green trade through NTMs and organic certification in agriculture can hence significantly contribute to achieving SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). It can also support the sector in moving beyond subsistence agriculture towards more professionalization and diversification and enhance trade opportunities through increased food security and quality. Green trade promotion in agriculture can hence be a leverage for socio-economic development of rural communities, in line with Fiji's national development priority 2.10 "Expanding Rural Economy" (Fiji Ministry of Economy, 2017).

Secondly, green trade policies can further encourage women's empowerment and help achieve Fiji's national development priority 1.9 "Women in Development". These policies can generate economic

opportunities enhancing both their participation as well as revenues and encouraging skill development. In ginger production more specifically, organic certification and the ensuing benefits can empower women, especially as they tend to play a more prominent role in primary processing compared to other agricultural tasks (FAO, 2020). Certification can also support their professionalization in other skill areas such as administrative and management tasks. In addition, green trade policies can open up opportunities for women's participation in higher value processing activities.

Thirdly, the promotion of green trade in agriculture presents synergies with engaging youth for the future. The youth play a vital role in innovation such as adopting VSS and implementing sustainable production practices through their energy, adaptability, and digital proficiency. Youth participation can hence contribute to the diversification of agriculture by exploring new crop varieties, markets, and value-added agricultural activities. Their engagement not only benefits the agricultural sector and their long-term economic opportunities but also aligns with Fiji's national development priority 1.8 "Youth and Sports Development". Green trade policies can hence foster opportunities for engaging and empowering the youth by calling for adaptation and innovation.

While green trade policies present potential synergies with the "Leaving no one behind" principle and Fiji's national development priorities of inclusivity through fostering opportunities to enhance rural inclusion, women's empowerment and youth engagement, several challenges remain and need to be addressed for these synergies to materialize. In particular, many rural

**Green trade policies may not yield their full potential if rural areas lack proper transportation, storage facilities, and market linkages.**



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communities in Fiji face barriers related to inadequate infrastructure and limited access to markets. Green trade policies may not yield their full potential if rural areas lack proper transportation, storage facilities, and market linkages. Addressing these deficits is crucial to unlock the benefits of green trade for these communities. In addition, gender inequalities remain pervasive in Fiji and ensuring equitable participation of women in green trade initiatives requires targeted efforts, capacity-building, and policy adjustments to promote gender balance in the sector. Lastly, encouraging youth to stay in rural areas and actively engage in agriculture and green trade is a complex challenge. Many young people migrate to urban centres in search of better economic

opportunities and modern lifestyles. Retaining youth in rural areas necessitates a multifaceted approach, which may involve providing them with education, training, and access to modern amenities while preserving their cultural heritage.

By addressing these challenges and embracing inclusivity, green trade in Fiji can become a pivotal tool for enhancing rural livelihoods, empowering women, and engaging the youth in shaping a more sustainable and equitable future, while advancing the nation's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals and its "Leaving No One Behind" principle, as well as achieving national development priorities.



## 5. The way forward – three policy recommendations

Sections 2 and 3 discussed how Fiji can employ NTMs and VSS to enhance green trade, while also supporting the sustainable development priorities set forth in the NDP and aligning with the country's own sustainable development strategies. Additionally, section 4 examined the interaction between green trade promotion and its effects on rural communities, women, and youth, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges. This section makes three key policy recommendations for promoting green trade through NTMs and VSS and identifies how these can synergize with efforts to achieve the goals of Fiji's 5 Year and 20 Year National Development Plans. A more comprehensive version can be found in Annex 1.

### Policy areas and specific recommendations for action

#### I. Strengthen training and knowledge sharing on NTMs and VSS

##### Alignment with national development priorities:

This recommendation aligns with Fiji's national development priorities, particularly those related to 1.0 "Inclusive Socio-economic Development", 1.4 "Food and Nutrition Security", 2.5 "Modernising the business regulatory environment", 2.6 "Micro, small, and medium enterprises development", 2.10 "Expanding Rural Economy", 2.12 "Non Sugar Agriculture" and 2.17 "enhancing international trade and foreign relations".

##### Expected benefit:

Enhanced understanding on NTMs and VSS will support businesses to better navigate international trade rules and policy makers to design more well-suited legislations. This can result in more efficient and transparent trade processes.

##### Which bodies/organizations can help:

- In Fiji: Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, Biosecurity Authority Fiji, Fiji Revenue and Customs Service
- Other regional and international organizations: UNCTAD, WTO, FAO, SPC, PIFS

#### II. Improve trade related data collection and enhance availability of agricultural statistics for the private sector

##### Alignment with national development priorities:

This recommendation aligns with Fiji's national development priorities related to 1.4 "Food and nutrition security", 2.5 "Modernising the business regulatory environment", 2.6 "Micro, small, and medium enterprises development", 2.10 "Expanding the rural economy", 2.12 "Non-sugar agriculture", 2.17 "Enhancing international trade and foreign relations" and 2.18 "Information and communication technology".

**Enhanced understanding on NTMs and VSS will support businesses to better navigate international trade rules and policy makers to design more well-suited legislations.**



**Expected benefit:**

Accurate and up-to-date agricultural statistics can significantly improve decision-making processes for both government bodies and private sector organizations. For government, this information is crucial for effective policy formulation and resource allocation, particularly in the agriculture sector. For businesses, availability of precise statistics can lead to better planning and forecasting, thus optimizing trade operations and supporting business development. Overall, this will foster a more efficient, sustainable, and competitive agriculture sector.

**Which bodies/organizations can help:**

- In Fiji: Fiji Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji Revenue and Customs Service, Biosecurity Authority Fiji, Ministry of Commerce.
- Other regional and international organizations: SPC, MSG Secretariat, ESCAP.

**III. Review and update trade-related legislation**

**Alignment with national development priorities:**

This recommendation aligns with Fiji's national development priorities related to 1.11 "National security and the rule of law", 2.5 "Modernising the business regulatory environment", 2.6 "Micro, small, and medium enterprises development" and 2.17 "Enhancing international trade and foreign relations".

**Expected benefit:**

Updating and modernizing trade-related legislation will make it more relevant to today's economic landscape. Observing best practice in other countries and reference to international standards may help. Good regulations can act as a catalyst for improving trade operations and fostering business growth by removing barriers to trade and introducing more enabling regulations. Additionally, updated laws will facilitate the emergence of new economic sectors, such as those focusing on niche markets and including those using VSS, thereby diversifying the economic base and increasing resilience against market fluctuations.

**Which bodies/organizations can help:**

- In Fiji: Office of the Attorney General, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Agriculture
- Other regional and international organizations: WTO, UNCTAD, FAO, SPC, PIFS

Table 3 presents the synergistic linkages in matrix form, outlining how the policy recommendations create synergistic linkages with Fiji's national development priorities.

By integrating these policy recommendations into the strategy for implementing the sustainable development plan, Fiji can harness the potential of NTMs and VSS to advance its development priorities, foster sustainable practices, and create an enabling environment for green trade that aligns with the SDGs.





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**Table 3**

### Matrix of synergistic linkages between green trade policy recommendations and the Fiji national development priorities

	Policy recommendation	Strengthen training and knowledge sharing on NTMs and VSS	Improve data collection and enhance availability of agricultural statistics for the private sector	Review and update trade-related legislations
1.0.	Inclusive socio-economic development	X		
1.1.	Water and sanitation			
1.2.	Energy			
1.3.	Housing development			
1.4.	Food security and nutrition	X	X	
1.5.	Education			
1.6.	Health and medical services			
1.7.	Social inclusion and empowerment			
1.8.	Youth and sports development			
1.9.	Women in development			
1.10.	Culture and heritage			
1.11.	National security and the rule of law			X
2.0.	Transformational strategic thrusts			
2.1.	Modernising land transport			
2.2.	Inter-island network			
2.3.	Domestic air service			
2.4.	International connectivity (Airports and sea ports)			
2.5.	Modernising the business regulatory environment	X	X	X
2.6.	Micro, small, and medium enterprises development	X	X	X
2.7.	Manufacturing and commerce			
2.8.	Financial services			
2.9.	Sustainable cities and towns			
2.10.	Expanding rural economy	X	X	
2.11.	Sugar			
2.12.	Non sugar agriculture	X	X	
2.13.	Fisheries			
2.14.	Forestry			
2.15.	Mining			
2.16.	Tourism			
2.17.	Enhancing international trade and foreign relations	X	X	X
2.18.	Information and communication technology		X	

Source: UNCTAD creation.





**\$2.00**

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## Annex 1: Policy recommendations

**Table 4**  
**Policy recommendations for Fiji**

Objective	Policy recommendation	Workplan steps	Responsible entities	Expected benefit
<b>I. Strengthen policymaking and business decisions in organic trade through a comprehensive understanding of Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) and Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS).</b>	1. Strengthen training and knowledge sharing on NTMs and VSS.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explore various modes of training and knowledge sharing (e.g., workshops, manual, peer learning groups) that are appropriate to the audience (private sector and/or Government).</li> <li>2. Collaborate with organizations such as UNCTAD, WTO, FAO, SPC, PHAMA Plus, PIFS to integrate and share online training materials.</li> <li>3. Facilitate knowledge exchange programs with international experts in the field.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Coordinating Entity:</b> Ministry of Commerce</p> <p><b>Involved Entities:</b> Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Education Biosecurity Authority Fiji Fiji Revenue and Customs Service</p> <p><b>International and Regional organizations:</b> UNCTAD, WTO, FAO, SPC, PIFS</p>	Enhanced understanding and capacity on NTMs and VSS, leading to improved trade transparency and efficiency.
<b>II. Enhance informed decision-making in the agricultural sector by ensuring the availability, accessibility, and regular updating of agricultural statistics</b>	2. Improve trade related data collection and enhance availability of agricultural statistics for the private sector.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Add a dedicated section on the Fiji Bureau of Statistics website for agriculture-related statistics.</li> <li>2. Conduct more frequent periodic surveys and data collection initiatives to continually update farm registries, export data, and production statistics.</li> <li>3. Launch a campaign to promote the new dedicated section among private sector entities, farmers, and relevant stakeholders, highlighting the benefits of utilizing the data.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Coordinating Entity:</b> Fiji Bureau of Statistics</p> <p><b>Involved Entities:</b> Ministry of Agriculture Fiji Revenue and Customs Service Biosecurity Authority Fiji Ministry of Trade</p> <p><b>International and Regional organizations:</b> SPC, MSG Secretariat, ESCAP</p>	Improved decision-making for the government and businesses based on accurate and timely trade related data, leading to better trade and business development outcomes.
<b>III. Facilitate Decision-making by Streamlining NTMs and VSS for Policymakers and the Private Sector</b>	3. Review and update trade-related legislations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Undertake a comprehensive review of existing trade-related laws, for instance the Pesticide Act 1971.</li> <li>2. Align the laws with current international standards and ensure they protect the population effectively but are also enablers for new areas (exports of VSS products for instance).</li> <li>3. Collaborate with legal experts and international organizations to draft and amend necessary legislations.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Coordinating Entity:</b> Office of the Attorney General</p> <p><b>Involved Entities:</b> Ministry of Commerce Ministry of Justice Ministry of Agriculture</p> <p><b>International and Regional organizations:</b> WTO, UNCTAD, FAO, SPC, PIFS</p>	Modernised legislations that act as enablers for improving trade, fostering business growth, and ensuring that emerging instruments such as VSS are used and work for sustainable development.

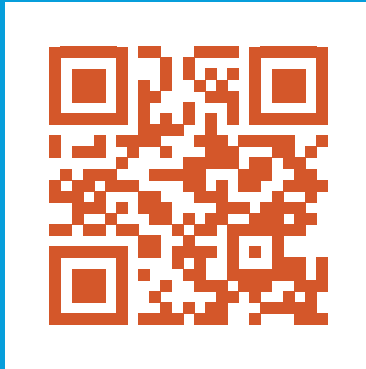


## Annex 2: Fiji's national development priorities and the SDGs

**Table 5**  
**Mapping of the national development priorities of Fiji with the SDGs**

SDG		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
National development priority																		
1.0.	Inclusive socio-economic development																	
1.1.	Water and sanitation						X											
1.2.	Energy							X										
1.3.	Housing development											X						
1.4.	Food security and nutrition		X															
1.5.	Education				X													
1.6.	Health and medical services		X	X														
1.7.	Social inclusion and empowerment	X									X	X						
1.8.	Youth and sports development								X			X						
1.9.	Women in development					X			X		X							
1.10.	Culture and heritage								X			X						
1.11.	National security and the rule of law											X					X	
2.0.	Transformational strategic thrusts																	
2.1.	Modernising land transport									X								
2.2.	Inter-island network									X								
2.3.	Domestic air service									X								
2.4.	International connectivity (Airports and sea ports)									X								X
2.5.	Modernising the business regulatory environment									X								
2.6.	Micro, small, and medium enterprises development								X	X								
2.7.	Manufacturing and commerce								X	X								
2.8.	Financial services								X		X							X
2.9.	Sustainable cities and towns	X					X	X				X						
2.10.	Expanding rural economy	X					X	X			X							
2.11.	Sugar		X															
2.12.	Non sugar agriculture		X															
2.13.	Fisheries														X			
2.14.	Forestry															X		
2.15.	Mining												X					
2.16.	Tourism								X									
2.17.	Enhancing international trade and foreign relations																	X
2.18.	Information and communication technology									X								X

Source: adapted from Republic of Fiji (2019).



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