



PRESS RELEASE

FIJI INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES PROJECT - BAF UNDERTAKES CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

MONDAY 14 SEPTEMBER, 2020

The Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has today launched a week long consultative workshop, in Nadi focussed on putting together a National Invasive Species Framework and Strategic Action Plan.

This is part of the ongoing Global Environment Facility (GEF) 6 funded project aimed to “Building Capacities to Address Invasive Alien Species to Enhance the Chances of Long-term Survival of Terrestrial Endemic and Threatened Species on Taveuni Island, Surrounding Islets and Throughout Fiji”.

The key objective of the workshop is to have all relevant stakeholders and agencies under one roof and prepare an effective and workable document which can serve as a guiding framework for coordinating Invasive Alien Species (IAS) threat and impact reductions. Simultaneously, the workshop is aiming to outline a five (5)-year action plan for implementation of these and related activities in a harmonized manner throughout the country.

There are a few IAS already established in one or more localized locations within Fiji and causing negative impacts in the areas in which they are found, examples of which include the Giant Invasive Iguana (*Iguana iguana*), Asian Subterranean Termite (*Coptotermes gestroi*), American Foulbrood disease (*Paenibacillus larvae*), Varroa mites (*Varroa jacobsoni*), Taro Beetle (*Papuana uniondis*) among other species.

As such, the need to have a document outlining the strategies for controlling, managing and eradicating these pests from our country is more important than ever before. It is necessary to manage IAS threat and ensure impact reductions for the long-term protection of Fiji, its peoples, culture and biodiversity.

The workshop is also an opportune time to for various agencies to discuss, collaborate and look at ways of improving border control in relation to IAS prevention and surveillance into and within Fiji.

In formally opening the workshop, BAF acting Chief Executive Officer Mr. Surend Pratap said for a country like Fiji which is rich and plentiful in its natural biodiversity of flora and fauna, it is imperative to undertake timely measures now to ensure that biodiversity remains protected and sustainable from irreversible damage.

Mr. Pratap said while BAF in consultation with its many stakeholders has been working vigorously in containment of pests which have agricultural and economic impacts, more needs to be done in order to ensure we do not let our guards down at any time when it comes to protecting our resources and biodiversity and minimising risks to the natural scape.

Developing a framework and strategic plan which confronts the issues pertaining to IAS and their management in Fiji is important and much needed now than ever before, Mr. Pratap added.

The key stakeholders attending the workshop include personnel from UNDP, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji, Fiji Police Force, Fiji Revenue and Customs Services, Fiji National University, University of the South Pacific, Nature Fiji, Birdlife international, Conservation International, Fiji Ports Corporation Ltd and Fiji Airports Ltd.

The workshop which is being held at Double Tree Hilton Resort on Sonaisali Island will conclude on Friday 18 September, 2020.

About IAS

Invasive Alien Species (IAS) are amongst the greatest threat to biodiversity in the Pacific Islands region with Fiji being no exception. When an IAS is introduced to any country, over the years it has a significant impact on its natural landscape and biodiversity being without any natural enemies initially to control it.

The introduction of the Giant Invasive Iguana (GII) into Fiji (Qamea and surrounding islands) represents the first established population of this species in the Pacific and is a potential bridgehead to some of the world's most isolated island ecosystems. The GII have already caused significant harm throughout the Caribbean where they are spreading rapidly and have significant detrimental effects, including on native biodiversity, agriculture and tourism sectors.

Hence through the GEF 6 Project, UNDP and assistance from Government, BAF along with all key stakeholders is working towards eradication of the GII from Fiji and ensuring Fiji remains safe from the adverse effects of this particular IAS.

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