



# Doing Business in Fiji Islands

## Location

The Fiji Islands includes approximately 330 islands (100 inhabited) making up 18,376 square kilometres of land. It is located north of New Zealand and northeast of Australia. Almost all of the population and economic activity are located on the two main islands – Viti Levu (10,429 square kilometres) and Vanua Levu (5,556 square kilometres).

The Capital Suva is one of two cities in the Fiji Islands, the other being Lautoka, it is perhaps the most cosmopolitan amongst the South Pacific Nations. Suva is comprised of over 300,000 people from a total population of just under 860,000 made up of indigenous Fijians (50%), Indian descent (46%), and the remainder Rotumans, Chinese, Europeans and other Pacific Islanders. English is the official language with Fijian and Hindi spoken by most people.

## Government

Fiji gained its independence from Britain in 1970 and is a sovereign democratic state with a Westminster system of government. There is an elected House of Representatives with 71 members and the Upper House which consists of 32 members. The Bose Levu Vakaturanga (Great Council of Chiefs) plays a considerable role in Fijian society and in decision making. The President is elected by the Great Council of Chiefs for a five year period with the current President H.E Ratu Josefa Iloilovatu Uluivuda.

The Fiji Islands has undergone several major political upheavals. These have been followed by significant changes in the Constitution. In 1990 a new Constitution was drafted and promulgated following several past coups. The principal difference between this and the 1970 independence Constitution was the inclusion of additional safeguards for indigenous Fijian interests: in particular, a majority of the seats in the House of Representatives were reserved for Fijians. It also required that the Prime Minister be an ethnic Fijian. The current

## At a Glance:

**Population:** 853,445 (2006)

**Land Area:** 18,333 square kilometres

**EEZ:** 1,290,000 square kilometres

**Political Status:** independent nation since 1970

**GNP:** US\$2, 281 million (2004)

**Major Industries:** sugar cane, tourism, gold mining, fishing and forestry

**Merchandise Exports (Value):** USD\$508 million (2006)

**Major Exports:** garments; sugar; gold; fish; textile yarns, fabrics and made up articles; molasses and coconut oil

**Merchandise Imports (Value):** USD\$1,645 million (2006)

**Major Imports:** manufactured goods; machines, transport equipment; mineral fuels; food and live animals; and chemicals

**Currency:** Fiji Islands Dollar

Head of the Government and interim Prime Minister is Commodore Bainimarama. The Constitution allows for three courts, the High Court, Fiji Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court; all of which are independent of the executive or any other authority and the subordinate courts.

## Economic Profile and Performance

Fiji's economy grew by an estimated 3.4% in 2006 averaging 2.4% growth since 2000. Although there was a decline in tourist numbers (from 549,900 in 2005 to 545,000 in 2006), reasonable growth was achieved. Construction powered forward at 12.3%, driven by major government projects as well as hotels and resorts. The electricity and water sector expanded by 5.0%. The agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sector grew by 3.9% as sugarcane production rose by 9.3%, and as both forestry and fisheries activity continued rising. However, the quality of sugarcane itself in 2006 was inferior to that of the previous year, and raw sugar production grew at the slower rate of 7.3%. Growth of 4-5% was recorded for services including transport and communications.

Following the loss of preferential access to some export markets over recent years, the steep decline of the clothing industry continued in 2006, with production dropping by 25%. In contrast, mineral water production for export expanded further. The nominal and real effective exchange rates of the Fiji dollar appreciated by 0.1% and 0.6%, respectively, in the year to December 2006. Monetary tightening and exchange rate stability contributed to moderate average inflation of 2.5% in 2006. The budget deficit was estimated at 2.9% of GDP if sales of government assets are included in revenues and 3.6% if asset sales are excluded. Imports (in US dollar terms) grew by 12.7% in 2006, while exports fell by 1.8%. The surplus on the services and transfers accounts climbed, with the increase primarily due to personal remittances, but this was insufficient to offset the broadening trade gap. The current account deficit widened to an estimated 24.4% of GDP from 15.6% in 2005.

## Economic Outlook

The official forecast is that GDP will contract by 2-4% in 2007. Tourist arrivals are now forecast at 514,000 down 5.7% from 2006. However, accommodation capacity was earlier expected to increase by up to 1,500 new rooms in 2007-2008 as new hotels were completed. Elsewhere, it is assumed that clothing production for export will decline only marginally in 2007 and about 1% growth in sugarcane and raw sugar production is forecast.

The loss of gold export earnings in 2007 and a decline in clothing exports will be only partly offset by rises in exports of mineral water, sugar, and fisheries and forestry products. If the marketing efforts persuade visitors to stay longer and spend more, tourism earnings may not fall in lockstep with lower tourist numbers.

The current account deficit is forecast to narrow to 12.6% of GDP. Foreign reserves, which fell further to \$449 million in February 2007, will remain under pressure through the year, but tight fiscal and monetary policies should contribute to financial stability. Inflation is expected to remain moderate at about 3%. And the economy is seen emerging from recession in 2008, with growth of 1.3%.

Source: ADB Asian Development Outlook 2007

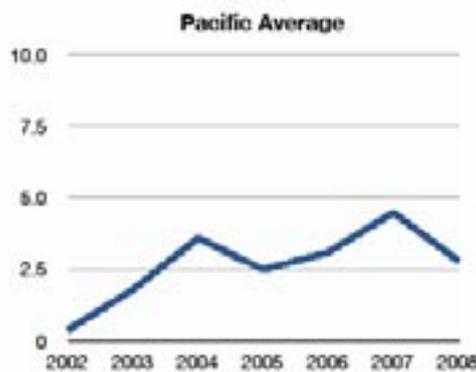
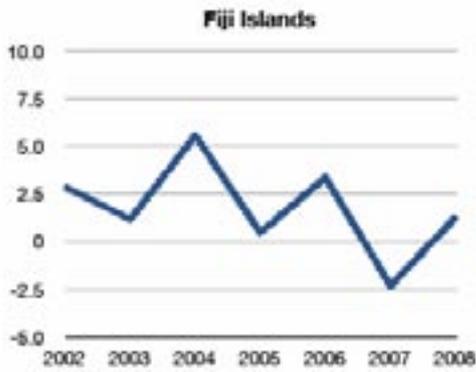
## Industry Sectors

The main industry sectors in the diversified Fiji Islands' economy are as follows;

**Agriculture:** Fiji is potentially on the verge of an exciting new era of growth and diversification in the production and export of agricultural products. It constitutes two main sub sectors of crops and livestock. The sector was anticipated to grow at 6% 2005 and 6.5% in 2006 especially from root crops, fresh fruits, ginger, kava and rice production. Its Agriculture policy objectives are to accelerate agricultural diversification for horticulture, floriculture, traditional food crops and high value niche exports together with much needed support through available incentives.

**Fisheries:** The Fiji Islands' large Exclusive Economic Zone (1.3million square

GDP Growth (%) 2002-2008



Source: ADB Asian Development Outlook, 2007. 2007 and 2008 are estimates.

kilometers) is a rich source of tuna, deep-sea fish and particularly snapper. This industry accounts for USD\$42.9 million (1999) of GDP and much of the potential is from the off shore areas especially its tuna resource. Furthermore, there are a small number of aquaculture projects in the Fiji Islands, producing mainly prawns for the local market.

**Forestry:** The remaining natural forest in the Fiji Islands is around 850,000 hectares making it ranked fifth in terms of foreign exchange earnings and provides direct employment to 3000 people. Extensive pine plantations have been utilised for the export of both pine chips and pine timber products, while the extensive mahogany plantations are expected to be made available for harvesting in the near future. A relatively high proportion of the local timber resources are exported in a finished form (furniture, doors and construction materials) because there has been an export ban on round logs for some time. The Fiji Islands also exports quality furniture made from coconut timber.

**Garments and Footwear:** These industries developed rapidly in the 1980s as a direct result of the tariff and quota preferences accorded to the Fiji Islands in the Australian market, providing employment to over 20,000 workers and exporting to the world. The industry has seen a drastic fall from high exports of around USD\$190 million in year 2000 to just over USD\$64 million in 2006 mainly due to phasing out of preferential treatments and more affordable products from other markets.

**Manufacturing:** In addition to garments and footwear there is a reasonably well developed manufacturing sector producing a wide range of processed foods, construction materials, furniture, packaging materials, soaps, beverages, metal products and small boats. In 2005 manufactured goods accounted for USD\$27 million of total exports and the sector is more export-orientated than those in other Pacific Island economies.

**Mining:** The only mining operation that was established in Fiji since 1934, the Vatukoula Emperor Gold Mine was shut down in December 2006; however several other gold, copper, silver and zinc deposits have been discovered and may be developed in the future. Fiji is considered to have potential for near shore deposits of heavy mineral sands.

**Service Industries:** The Fiji Islands has numerous well-developed service industries (freight, printing, education, etc.) in the Pacific Islands. This development is a direct result of the Fiji Islands superior infrastructure and transport/freight connections. Several international organizations have their Pacific Island regional headquarters in the Fiji Islands.

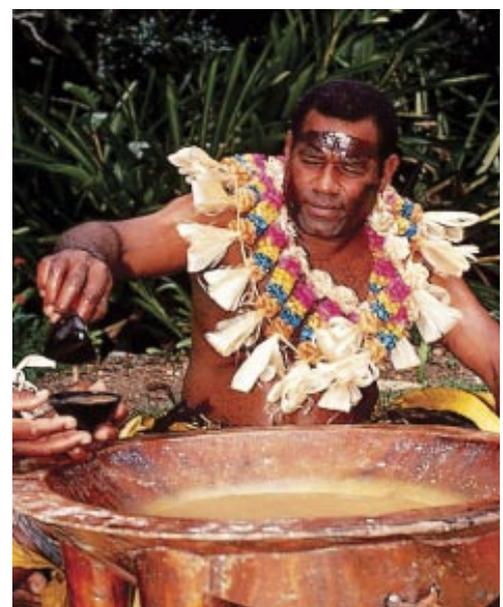
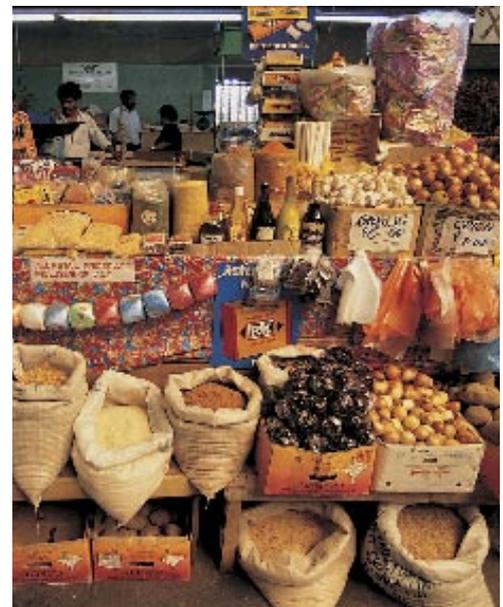
**Sugar:** This product was introduced into the Fiji Islands in the 19th century and it quickly developed into the key export commodity. The industry currently supports around 20,290 (2005) contract growers and farming households who lease land from the indigenous Fijian landowners. Total sugar production for 2005 was 289,000 tonnes a decrease from the 2004 production of 314,000 tonnes. Exports were almost half the amount exported in the 1980 – 1990 period. This is due to the problems associated with slow or non-renewal of expiring native land leases and the erosion of preferential treatment in the EU markets.

**Tourism:** This sector has been an important element of the Fiji Islands' economy for some time. A wide range of tourist hotels is located in the northern and western parts of the main island and on the smaller islands to the north. There is also a variety of supporting services (inbound tourist operators, hire cars, transport companies, restaurants, etc.) that benefited from the growth of the industry. Australia is the major source of tourists, followed by New Zealand, Japan and the United States.

## Imports/Exports

Provisional data on total exports for 2006 was USD\$716.6 million (this includes USD\$224.1 million of re-exports) and imports was USD\$1,902.5 million comprising of mineral products, machinery, mechanical, electrical appliances, vehicles, etc.

The main export destinations were Australia, Singapore, the United States and the United Kingdom whilst most imports came from Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand.



## Labour and Human Resources

Primary and secondary education is mainly run by the government and the curriculum is based on the New Zealand system. There are a number of post-high school education and technical training bodies in the Fiji Islands providing qualifications in recognized courses from trade skills to university degrees.

The University of the South Pacific's main campus is in the Fiji Islands and the Central Queensland University (Australia) has an international campus in the country. The Fiji College of Agriculture, Fiji National Training Council, the Fiji Garment Training Centre and the Fiji Islands Institute of Technology offer a range of specialized industrial training courses. Specialist centers provide training for those in the hospitality and garments and textiles industries.

The total labour force in the Fiji Islands was approximately 341,700 (2000) with an unemployment rate of 12.1 % (this is compared to 7.6% in 1999). Where shortages in middle and top management personnel are experienced, expatriates with appropriate qualifications are recruited to fill these.

In terms of labour market regulations, there is a range of legislation in the Fiji Islands which apply and of which are accessible through the relevant agencies. Regulations for minimum terms and conditions for employment for all employees are stipulated in the Employment Act, Cap. 92, and the Wages Councils Act, Cap.98 provides for the establishment of Wages Councils, which in turn decides on the industry/sector based minimum rates of remuneration and other terms and conditions.

From October 2007, hours of work can be either 45 hours for 5 days or 48 hours for 6 days per week. The statutory minimum wages is in the form of Wages Regulation Orders covering Industry/sector-based employment. Employers are legally obliged to contribute to the Fiji National Provident Fund at a rate of 8% of gross earnings for each employee, and the employee contributes a like amount, which is deductible from wages.

## Infrastructure

The Fiji Islands has a well-developed infrastructure with tar-sealed roads linking the main cities and towns on Viti Levu, including Suva, Nadi and Lautoka. The international airport where Nadi is located is linked by the 184km Suva-Nadi highway. The key mode of transport is by air and sea with regular bus, taxi's and hired cars servicing the cities and towns.

The Fiji Islands are serviced regularly by major airlines including Qantas, Air New Zealand, Canadian Pacific, Korean Airlines, Solomon Airlines, Air Caledonia International, Air Marshall Islands, Our Airline and Air Vanuatu. There are scheduled internal air service and regular daily flights between Nadi International Airport and Suva. Air Pacific, the Fiji Islands' national airline, has progressively grown as an international airline. Airfreight services, air cargo and air courier, are available on all aircraft operating out of Nadi airport.

Suva and Lautoka on the main island, and Savusavu and Levuka on other islands are the four ports of entry. All customs, immigration and quarantine facilities are provided. Other ports and deep-water anchorages are at Malau and Vuda Point. The Suva port provides pilotage, safe anchorage, deep berths (capable of handling vessels of over 40,000 tonnes), stevedoring, general cargo handling, cargo/container storage including freezer and cooler, loose cargo warehousing, fumigation, incineration and weighbridge facilities.

Lautoka is the second-largest port of entry and is located in the

north of the main island and handles the bulk of the Fiji Islands' sugar and timber exports. This port is the base for local cruise vessels servicing offshore holiday resorts. Other port facilities include a number of privately owned terminals for the handling of petroleum, gas, bulk sugar, molasses and wood chips. There is also a fishing port that services the requirements of local fishermen.

There are numerous shipping companies servicing Fiji Islands' ports on a frequent basis from one to three times a month. Direct sea-freight connections are available to most of the Pacific Islands ports, New Zealand, Australia, Japan and the west coast of the United States.

The Fiji Islands is the hub of the Pacific Islands' telecommunications network and the focal point of regional business activity. Telecom Fiji provides telephone, telex, radio telephone, facsimile, voice mail, paging, Internet, data services, ISDN and videoconferencing services. Fiji International Telecommunications Limited (FINTEL) is the international telecommunications carrier offering international voice, data, internet and video services.

The country is well serviced by commercial banks, specialist finance providers, accountants, lawyers and other service companies. A small stock exchange, the Suva Stock Exchange, operates as a trading post.

The government has developed a number of industrial areas at various locations on the two main islands for companies to lease or build factories, such as the Kalabo Tax Free Zone managed by the Fiji Trade and Investment Board. There are also warehouses and factory buildings available for lease from private owners in the main urban areas of the country.

Seventy percent of the population has access to clean piped water with 32 major regional water supply schemes. Electricity is accessible to all areas declared boundaries of cities, towns and townships. This accounts for more than 70% of the population who have electricity supplied to them. Electricity is available to all main centers at 240 volts, 50 cycles A.C.

## Investment Policy and Regulations

Fiji welcomes investment both foreign and local and applies the following principles in its National Investment Policy:

- Investment should be market-driven;
- Investment should be welcomed from all legal sources;
- Investment should be welcomed into all areas of the economy, except where legislation reserves specific economic activities for citizens, for social policy purposes;
- Investment facilitation shall not discriminate between foreign and local investor unless stated otherwise in the legislation reserving certain economic activities for citizens for social policy purposes; and
- Investment-related legislation should be transparent and efficient, designed and implemented as the regulations that are minimally necessary to achieve a specific public policy objective;

The *Foreign Investment Act 1998* regulates the entry of foreign investment into the Fiji Islands. The Fiji Trade and Investment Bureau (FTIB) facilitate all investments. The aim of the Act is to encourage, stimulate and facilitate foreign investment through:

- Establishing transparent and simple procedures for the registration of foreign investments (ultimately, the Act

aims to reduce the approval time for foreign investment proposals); and

- Specifying the activities that are open to foreign investors.

The process for establishing business in Fiji:

- Submission of application form and fee of F\$14.00 to FTIB with five working days to process;
- Issue of Approval Certificate and application to Reserve Bank for veracity check on transactions approval and authorization for issue and transfer of shares to non-residents;
- Application to Immigration Department for criminal and character checks before issuing of post visas;
- Incorporation/registration, reservation and registration of company/business names and a compliance undertaken by the Office of Register of Companies; and
- Registration and issuing of Tax Identification Numbers (TIN) for Income Tax, PAYE and VAT requirements;

Further information on requirements and processing of applications can be sourced from the Investment Facilitation Unit of the FTIB.

## Land

The majority of land (87%) is owned by Fijians in communal tenure and is reserved for special use by its owners; this land may only be leased upon the consent of the owners. The Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) is entrusted with the management of surplus land outside the reserve and Government controls 3.91% of other land. About 7.94% of land is held in freehold tenure and is negotiable with private owners. Land classification comes under Agriculture; Residential; Commercial; Industrial; and Special;

The cost of acquisition of freehold land and the cost of premium for leasehold land will be dependent on the cost of development of the land.

## Taxation and Other Regulations

The main sources of government revenue are from income tax both for normal and withholding individuals and companies, land sales tax, value added tax, departure tax, stamp duty, gambling turnover tax and hotel turnover tax. Company tax is payable by Fiji Islands' resident companies on non-exempt income derived from all sources. Non-resident companies are required to pay the tax on income sourced in the Fiji Islands.

The tax year usually runs from 1 January to 31 December although alternative fiscal years are permitted.

Income tax rates are as follows:

### Income Tax on individual's payable as at 2006\*:

Income	Resident
Up to USD\$5,390	Nil
\$5,390 - \$6,097	15% of excess over \$5,390
\$6,098 to \$12,195	\$106 + 25% of excess over \$6,097
\$12,195+	\$1,630 + 31% of excess over \$12,195

\* Income tax rates will also apply to businesses that are operating as a Sole-Trader, or Partnership arrangements

\*\* Information obtained from FTIB as at January 2006

Property transactions may be subject to income tax under the Income Tax Act or the land sales tax under the Lands Sales Act. Where not applicable to income tax, the profits arising from the sale of undeveloped land in Fiji may also be subject to land sales tax.

The Fiji Islands' value-added tax is a tax on spending that is levied on the sale of goods and services. The tax is a flat rate of 12.5%. All businesses with a turnover of F\$30,000 or more in respect of goods and F\$15,000 or more for services are required to register with the VAT unit. Monthly or quarterly VAT returns must be lodged with the VAT office and, payments are made by the end of the month following the month of the VAT return.

Imports are subject to import duty only, which is levied at various rates in accordance with the *Customs Tariff Act 1986*, although, as an investment incentive, such duties may be waived. Most goods can be imported without an import license. However, there are restrictions on the import of a number of industries in order to protect local industries.

Repatriation of dividend profits is restricted to three years retained earning a year if not previously remitted. For applications that exceed these amounts the application must be accompanied by a tax clearance certificate and Board resolution for the dividend payment and be supported by the company's most recent audited accounts. Also the amount to be remitted must be covered by a tax clearance certificate from the Inland Revenue Department.

## Investment Opportunities

There is an abundance of investment opportunities in the Fiji Islands, these include but are not restricted to:

Child-minding services; commercial bakery; tourism supply services; eco-tourism accommodation services; petrol and associated services; deep-sea fishing; floriculture; noni; non timber products; handicrafts; dried fruit; commercial managed eco-forestry;

Incentives that are available for specific Industry Sectors include the following:

### *Agricultural Exports Service Industry*

- Import Duty on capital goods Agricultural is Free Fiscal + VAT (Value Added Tax is payable upfront but will be refunded subsequently);
- Applies to all goods (raw materials) presently under the 10 percent band and most that are duty free;
- Excludes essential goods for education, health and agriculture, which will continue to enter duty free;
- Intermediate goods benefit from a reduction from 15 percent to 10 percent;

### *Back Office Information Export Service Industry*

- Duty free imports of IT and telecommunications equipment;
- 100% deductibility on all R&D expenditures;
- Investment allowances for investments in IT;
- Unrestricted movements of foreign exchange and profits repatriation;

## Electronics Industry

- Government encourages any export-oriented project;

## IT Service Industry

- Duty free imports of IT and telecommunications equipment;
- 100% deductibility of all R&D expenditures;
- Investment allowances for investments in IT;
- Unrestricted movements of foreign exchange and profits repatriation;

## Business Development Assistance

### FIJI ISLANDS TRADE AND INVESTMENT BUREAU (FTIB)

The Fiji Islands Trade and Investment Bureau (FTIB) a statutory agency under the Ministry of Commerce, Business and Investment is vested in facilitating and promoting all investments in the Fiji Islands. FTIB provides export promotion incentives and other incentives for setting up business and exporting.

The following schemes and assistance are available and eligible to Fiji Island based companies:

- Export Incentive Scheme;
- Export Credit Finance Facility;
- Finance and Assistance Schemes;
- Export Promotion Incentive;
- Business Training Fund;

Each Scheme has different criteria's and further information should be requested through FTIB.

### NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SMALL AND MICRO-ENTERPRISES DEVELOPMENT (NCSMED)

The NCSMED is mandated under the Small and Micro-Enterprises Act of 2002 to develop, promote and support small and micro-enterprises (SME). The broad aims of the Centre include the development of business training programmes, advocacy for a supportive policy and regulatory environment for SMEs, and facilitation of credit and funding for SMEs.

It currently has three (3) micro-finance institutions, four village banks and a cooperative programme run through the department of Cooperatives and they cover thirteen (13) major areas in Fiji. The following services are provided:

- Training and Business Advice;
- Research and Development; and
- Micro-finance;

### UNDP PACIFIC CENTER

The Pacific Centre offers policy advice and technical assistance in the following business related and private sector development areas:

- Partnership building with commercial financial institutions to bank the unbanked in the Pacific;
- Business mentoring program development;
- Young entrepreneurs training;
- Integration of financial literacy and entrepreneurship education in school curriculum;
- Partnership with Pacific Islands Private Sector

- Organisations to strengthen business networking and policy dialogue for sustainable economic growth;
- Human development implications of labour mobility schemes;
- Integrated framework for trade for LDCs; and
- Promoting private sector partnerships for pro-poor outcomes

## Useful Contacts

### FIJI ISLANDS TRADE AND INVESTMENT BUREAU

General Manager  
6th Floor, Civic Tower, Victoria Parade  
Government Buildings  
PO. Box 2303, Suva, FIJI ISLANDS  
Phone: (679) 3315 988  
Fax: (679) 3301 783  
Email: [ftibinfo@ftib.org.fj](mailto:ftibinfo@ftib.org.fj)  
Website: [www.ftib.org.fj](http://www.ftib.org.fj)

### IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT

Ground Flr, Civic Tower  
PO. Box 2224, Government Buildings  
Suva, FIJI ISLANDS  
Phone: (679) 3312 672 / 3312 622  
Fax: (679) 3300 954  
Website: [www.immigration.gov.fj](http://www.immigration.gov.fj)

### LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, MINISTRY

4th Flr, Civic Tower  
PO. box 2216 Governmetn Buildings  
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Phone: (679) 3303 500  
Fax: (679) 3304 701  
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### NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SMALL AND MICRO ENTERPRISES DEVELOPMENT (NCSMED)

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Website: [www.ncsmed.org.fj](http://www.ncsmed.org.fj)

### NATIVE LANDS TRUST BOARD

Head Office  
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FIJI ISLANDS  
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Fax: (679) 3312 014  
Email: [info@nlfb.com.fj](mailto:info@nlfb.com.fj)  
Website: [www.nltb.com.fj](http://www.nltb.com.fj)

### REVENUE AND CUSTOMS AUTHORITY

Head Office  
Phone: (679) 0800 331 7834  
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# The Pacific Islands Trade & Investment Commission, Sydney

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## Who We Are and What We Do

We are one of four overseas agencies of the Suva-based Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS). PIFS has other overseas offices located in Japan, New Zealand, and the People's Republic of China.

We work closely with a network of government and private sector agencies in the 14 Pacific Islands who are members of Pacific Islands Forum.

Our aim is to improve the capabilities of their private sector; in particular in enterprise, export and tourism development.

## Our Functions

1. To assist Pacific Island enterprises develop sustainable business and trade activities.
2. To assist Pacific Island governments and private sector service providers develop their tourism potential.
3. To support private sector growth in the Pacific Islands, including promoting intra-regional investment.
4. To support business linkages between government and enterprises in the Pacific Islands and Australia through efficient and effective dissemination of market information.

## Out Special Projects Unit

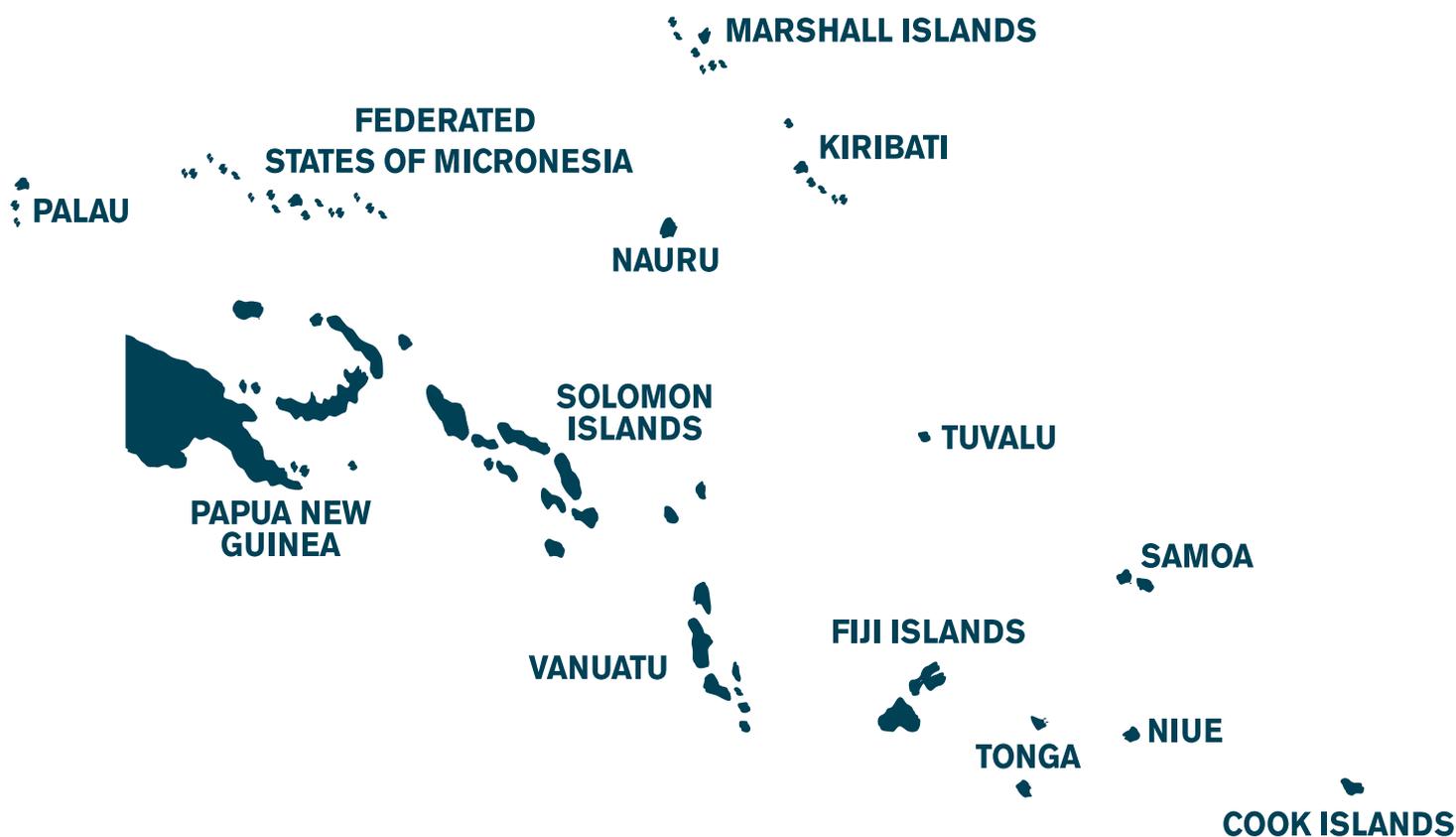
- Supports private sector development in 14 Pacific Islands Countries.
- Promotes intra-regional investment development.
- Supports the business development programs of Small Island States (SIS).
- Supports skills development, including through capacity building initiatives.

## Our Newsletters

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Our newsletter provides practical information about trade, tourism and investment trends in the Pacific Islands and Australia. Pacific Outlook also contains up-to-date information on developments on regulatory changes and requirements for trade and industry in the region.

Our newsletters are published on a bi-monthly basis. Register online at [www.pitic.org.au](http://www.pitic.org.au) for your free subscription.





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