Items are imported into the Cook Islands in growing numbers, but there are currently limited viable options for their end-of-life management and/or export. As such, most items imported are disposed of at landfills or stockpiled on vacant land. The priority for the Cook Islands is to reduce waste to landfill, and Infrastructure Cook Islands seeks to focus their PacWastePlus investment to support the implementation of an effective Sustainable Financing system (known as the Advance Recovery Deposit and Fee) to enable long-term, self-financing collection and recovery of recyclable items. The Advance Recovery Fee and Deposit (ARFD) is a mechanism to:

- provide an incentive for consumers to return recoverable items to a collection depot, and
- fund the collection and recycling of these items.

**Items targeted for inclusion in the Advance Recovery Fee and Deposit project include:**

- Aluminium Cans
- PET Plastic Bottles
- Glass
- Electronic Items
- End-of-Life Vehicles

The Cook Islands seeks to utilise the PacWastePlus investment for the following activities:

**LEGISLATION**
Assistance for drafting and approval of legislation to empower the Advance Recovery Fee and Deposit system

**TRAINING**
Appropriate capacity building through provision of quality training for staff on use of equipment

**FACILITY**
Construction of Advance Recovery Fee and Deposit depot facilities in all communities

**LEGACY WASTE**
Collection of legacy waste from identified sites

**EQUIPMENT**
Purchase of equipment for the Resource Recovery Center

**COMMUNICATIONS**
Implementation of project education and awareness actions to identified stakeholders
The Cook Islands Government has been designing a sustainable financing system for waste management for many years.

First draft of an Advance Recovery Deposit and Fee policy developed in 2018

Stakeholder consultation ongoing since 2018

Minister support for system received in 2019

The Advance Recovery Deposit and Fee project will help achieve this goal by creating a self-funding mechanism to enable:

- Long-term collection, management and recovery of recyclable materials
- Diverting them away from landfill to an appropriate recycle market

Cook Islands Waste Management Strategy - Overall goal to achieve zero waste to landfill

Currently drafting new standalone waste legislation, *Solid and Hazardous Waste Bill*, to provide for the coordinated management of waste

The Bill includes provisions for establishing a sustainable financing mechanism, along with other waste management goals

- Including establishing a single use plastic ban, formalising waste collection services, detailing obligation under MEA Conventions, and providing for infringements and compliance.

Advance Recovery Deposit and Fee project will provide support to finalise and implement this Bill

National Sustainable Development Plan Goal 3 - promotion of sustainable practices and effectively manage solid and hazardous waste

The Advance Recovery Deposit and Fee project will assist the Cook Islands to achieve this goal through providing a self-financing system to enable the collection and management of recyclable items.
CURRENT STATUS / MANAGEMENT OF PRIORITY WASTE

Current Situation:
Data collection and Education and Awareness

Recyclable materials can range from **30%-50% waste to landfill**

Awareness messaging for management of recyclables - on-going as opportunities arise

Policy & Regulation

Existing legislation for waste governance legislation performing at a MEDIUM to MEDIUM-HIGH, with significant additional improvements expected through the Solid and Hazardous Waste Bill

Current legislative environment for managing waste:
- Found across several laws, including environmental, infrastructure and public health
- Principal model for waste management laws is the environmental EIA/licensing model, which has scope to adopt regulations for specific waste streams
- Currently undergoing reform of its laws governing waste with development of a new Solid and Hazardous Waste Bill

On-Ground Activity

Household recyclables in Rarotonga and Aitutaki currently collected and managed at the Resource Recovery Centre

Many recyclable items still disposed at landfill due to:
- Lack of regular funding and export of items
- Lack of buy-in for recycling by community
- Space limitations and facility layout resulting in inefficiencies and incorrect disposal

EOL vehicles and electronic items commonly stockpiled or dumped on vacant land

With the exception of Aitutaki, 100% of household recyclables (along with all other waste) generated in the outer islands (Pa Enua) are disposed in island dumps or burnt.

Human Capacity

Capacity - STRONG ability to manage recyclable items in all areas of their treatment, which includes, Knowledge, Collection, Transport, Process/Treat and Disposal/Control

Project Investment Effort

(Data collection on ARFD operation, including recyclables collection and export/formal education and awareness programme through implementation of National Education and Awareness plan.)

Project Investment Effort

(Solid and Hazardous Waste Bill/Advance ARFD Policy and Regulation)

Project Investment Effort

(ARFD depots/equipment to enhance processing of recyclables)

Project Investment Effort

(Already capacity for recyclable management training provided for operation of ARFD new equipment)
Equality in today’s society requires sound waste management. All people have the right to access waste infrastructure, participate in decision making and able to voice grievances, access information and awareness messages, and be protected from harmful effects of waste – on health, environment, culture and traditions.

Opportunities for the Cook Islands to provide for equality during the management of recyclables

- Continue development of effective legislation to provide coordinated and equitable approach for waste management.
- Include considerations regarding equality and inclusion in waste-related legislation and regulation.
- Consider additional bans and phaseouts of certain types of problematic or hazardous products.
- Provide for effective implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of waste-related legislation to protect vulnerable members of society.
- Mobilise additional resources for waste management including through an Advance Recovery Fee system.
- Enhance the availability and accessibility of information.
- Include additional Government departments, in particular labour, culture, women, and equality-related authorities and/or bodies, in waste-related decision making to identify and address potential inequalities.
- Provide waste management facilities for rural and outer island communities.
- Enhance efforts to protect waste workers.
- Utilise philosophy of Kaitiakitanga to enhance participation, environmental protection and stewardship.
All recyclable items entering the Cook Islands are diverted away from landfill.

Pollution caused by inappropriate management of recyclable products is eliminated.

Recovery and recycling industry provides equal opportunity employment.

Marginalised groups engaged in recyclables management to generate income.

ARFD system established in legislation.

Legislative environment provides for the implementation and long-term operation of the ARFD.

ARFD system in operation, including facilities and equipment, required to operate collection depots on Rarotonga and in the Pa Enua.

Households and communities in Rarotonga and in the Pa Enua effectively participating in the ARFD.

Finalisation, implementation, and enforcement of a Solid and Hazardous Waste (SHW) Bill.

Development, implementation, and enforcement of an ARFD Regulation, supported by the SHW Bill.

Update existing Resource Recovery Centre and procurement of equipment.

Development and implementation of an ARFD Policy and Operations Plan.

Construction and operation of ARFD Collection Depots on Rarotonga and in the Pa Enua.

Implementation of effective ARFD national education and awareness program.

Facilitate inclusive consultation to finalise SHW Bill with key stakeholders and obtain political support.

Facilitate inclusive consultation to finalise ARFD Regulation with key stakeholders and obtain political support.

Facilitate inclusive consultation to finalise ARFD Policy and Operation Plan with key stakeholders.

Construct and furnish Collection Depots.

Procure and install required equipment for Resource Recovery Centre.

Select operators and undertake training with staff for the operation and maintenance of equipment and facilities.

Develop and distribute ARFD system messaging through education and awareness materials throughout all communities in the Cook Islands.
ACTIVITIES AND TIMELINE

Consultation and Legislative activities

Quarter 1 2022

Purchase of equipment for Resource Recovery Center and training of staff

Quarter 2 2022

Training for ARFD operation

Quarter 3 2022

Construction of ARFD collection depots and training of staff – Rarotonga

Quarter 4 2022

Quarter 1 2023

Construction of ARFD collection depots and training of staff – Pa Enua

Quarter 2 2023

Training for Resource Recovery Center operation for staff

Quarter 3 2023

ARFD collection depots training for staff Rarotonga – Pa Enua

Quarter 4 2023

Quarter 1 2024

Training for Resource Recovery Center operation for staff

Quarter 2 2024

ARFD collection depots training of staff – Pa Enua

Quarter 3 2024

Quarter 4 2024
PACWASTEPLUS REGIONAL PROJECTS / ACTIVITIES
AND WHAT COOK ISLANDS CAN EXPECT

Health Care Waste Management
Cook Islands will receive:
- Healthcare waste training [storage, treatment, and disposal solutions for healthcare waste]
- Assessment of the impact of the PacWaste Project healthcare waste activities
- Repair selected healthcare waste Incinerators in the region
- Work with development partners to implement a long-term plan for the sustainability of health care waste infrastructure
- Ongoing Technical Assistance

Asbestos Management
Cook Islands will receive:
- A guidance and drafting note to assist with legislative reform to ban the importation of asbestos
- Template Code of Practice to guide the safe handling and management of asbestos
- Communication resources and materials to provide information on safe handling and management of asbestos
- Learnings from other country projects focused on asbestos
- Ongoing Technical Assistance

Organics Management
Cook Islands will receive:
- Document providing technical analysis of how to compost common organic materials received in the Pacific
- Template Minimum Standard document to guide effective and safe composting
- Resources to guide organic facility design and operation
- Training on organic facility design and operation
- Ongoing Technical Assistance
- Learnings from country projects focused on organics management

ARFD / Sustainable Financing
Cook Islands will receive:
- Communication resources and materials to provide information to stakeholders on the benefits of ARFD systems
- Resources and training to assist during ARFD system design and guide decisions support
- Learnings from other country feasibility studies and projects focused on ARFD
- Ongoing Technical Assistance

Disaster Waste Management
Cook Islands will receive:
- Terms of Reference for the establishment of an Environment Sector Working Group (Cluster) within National Disaster Management Framework to ensure effective implementation of disaster Waste Management Response and Recovery
- Drafting/Guiding Notes on National and Community Disaster Waste Management Plans
- Disaster Waste Training Manual for use at both the National and Community level
- Learnings from country projects focused on disaster waste management
- Ongoing Technical Assistance

Regional Course Development
Cook Islands will receive
- Development of a sustainable capacity building program for waste management in based on country needs
- Training through the adopted training courses, both vocational and tertiary

Schools Curriculum Development
Cook Islands will receive
- School curriculum on waste management education (eight programme waste streams) incorporated in to existing school core subjects such as Maths, English and Science
- Primary school education-problem based curriculum
- Secondary school education-culturally responsive
- Tertiary school education-culturally responsive
- Training and capacity building opportunities for teachers

Bulky Waste Management
Cook Islands will receive:
- Guiding document and a Decision Support Tool to guide on how to design and implement a national ELV management programme.
- Drafting/Guiding Notes on how to draft national legislation for the management of End-of-Life vehicles
- Safe Dismantling Training Manual
- Publications and awareness materials

Behaviour Change
Cook Islands will receive
- Learnings of the community-based social marketing Pilot projects and replication of successfully implemented projects
- Ongoing Technical Assistance
The Pacific – European Union (EU) Waste Management Programme, PacWastePlus, is a 72-month programme funded by the EU and implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to improve regional management of waste and pollution sustainably and cost-effectively.

**About PacWastePlus**

The impact of waste and pollution is taking its toll on the health of communities, degrading natural ecosystems, threatening food security, impeding resilience to climate change, and adversely impacting social and economic development of countries in the region. The PacWastePlus programme will generate improved economic, social, health, and environmental benefits by enhancing existing activities and building capacity and sustainability into waste management practices for all participating countries.

Countries participating in the PacWastePlus programme are: Cook Islands, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

**KEY OBJECTIVES**

**Outcomes & Key Result Areas**

The overall objective of PacWastePlus is “to generate improved economic, social, health and environmental benefits arising from stronger regional economic integration and the sustainable management of natural resources and the environment”.

The specific objective is “to ensure the safe and sustainable management of waste with due regard for the conservation of biodiversity, health and wellbeing of Pacific Island communities and climate change mitigation and adaptation requirements”.

**Key Result Areas**

- Improved data collection, information sharing, and education awareness
- **Policy & Regulation** - Policies and regulatory frameworks developed and implemented.
- **Best Practices** - Enhanced private sector engagement and infrastructure development implemented
- **Human Capacity** - Enhanced human capacity

Learn more about the Cook Island Project by visiting [https://pacwasteplus.org/country-project/cook-islands/](https://pacwasteplus.org/country-project/cook-islands/)

For more information please contact:

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**Disclaimer**

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