

Sustainable Kava Cultivation

Pacific BioScapes Programme - Fiji


The rapid expansion of kava farms, and the increase in market value for the plant, has resulted in an increased clearing of native forests in key growing zones. Cleared cultivation areas are now penetrating some of the most well preserved native forests of the Pacific region. To what extent this is currently impacting on biodiversity and **Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs)** is not yet fully known, especially in Fiji and Vanuatu.

BirdLife International with **NatureFiji-MareqetiViti** will work with local government and communities on Gau island to map current land uses, including kava. Assessments of the direct and indirect impacts on KBA trigger species and adjacent watersheds will be undertaken. Working groups will then be established with representatives from government, the kava industry and communities to identify approaches for minimising the ecological impact of cultivation. These approaches will then be shared with communities and uptake of the new techniques encouraged.




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CENTRAL ISSUES:

-  More kava cultivation is leading to increased deforestation in previously intact forest areas
-  Uncertainty regarding impact on biodiversity and key species
-  Potential downstream impacts on aquatic environments

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY SUMMARY:

-  Assess the impact of kava and other cultivation on Gau Island, Fiji
-  Establish working groups to identify approaches to minimise impact on KBAs and downstream environments
-  Showcase new alternative management practices to kava growing communities

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