

Solomon Islands Forestry – Challenges and Future Directions

USP: ANU 2019 Pacific Update

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Introduction

- Logging has been the mainstay of the Solomon Islands economy since independence
- Despite unsustainable rates of harvesting and increasing widespread recognition of the negative environmental and community impacts of *logging little has changed*
 - PM Sogavare, June 2019: “we are looking... probably at 2036 or something like that before we see any real threat to our forests”
- Central question: How to progress the discussion and move to more sustainable forms of forest management?

Recent headlines: June, 2019

Our logging industry is unsustainable: Forestry PS

 Forestry, Government, Laws, Logging, Solomon Islands, Top Headlines  June 4, 2019

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SI may ban round log exports by 2023

 Development, Environment, Forestry, Government, Guadalcanal Province, Laws, Logging, M
Islands, Top Headlines  June 8, 2019 [PRINT](#)

Our forests are still safe from logging: Sogavare

 Forestry, Government, Logging, Solomon Islands, Top Headlines  June 17, 2019

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Solomon Islands



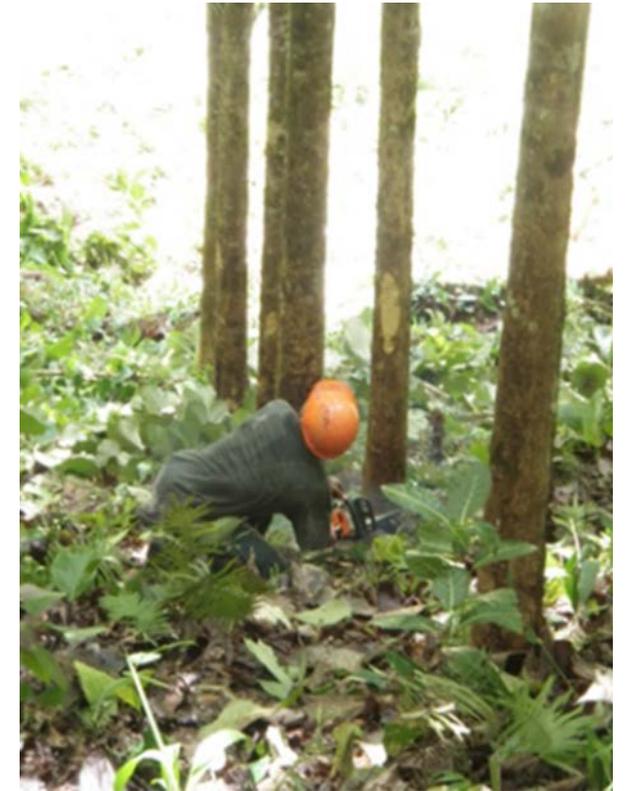
Sector snapshot

- Forests cover about 78% of total area in Solomon Islands
- 85% of land in Solomon Islands in customary tenure
- **LOGGING**
 - Log exports account for 71% (AUD 520 million) of export value and approx. 20% of all Govt. revenue (2018)
 - Industry provides approx. 10,000 jobs (approx. 20% total employment)
 - 90% of round log exports to China
 - 2.7 million m³ of logs exported in 2018. Estimated sustainable harvest is 250,000 m³!



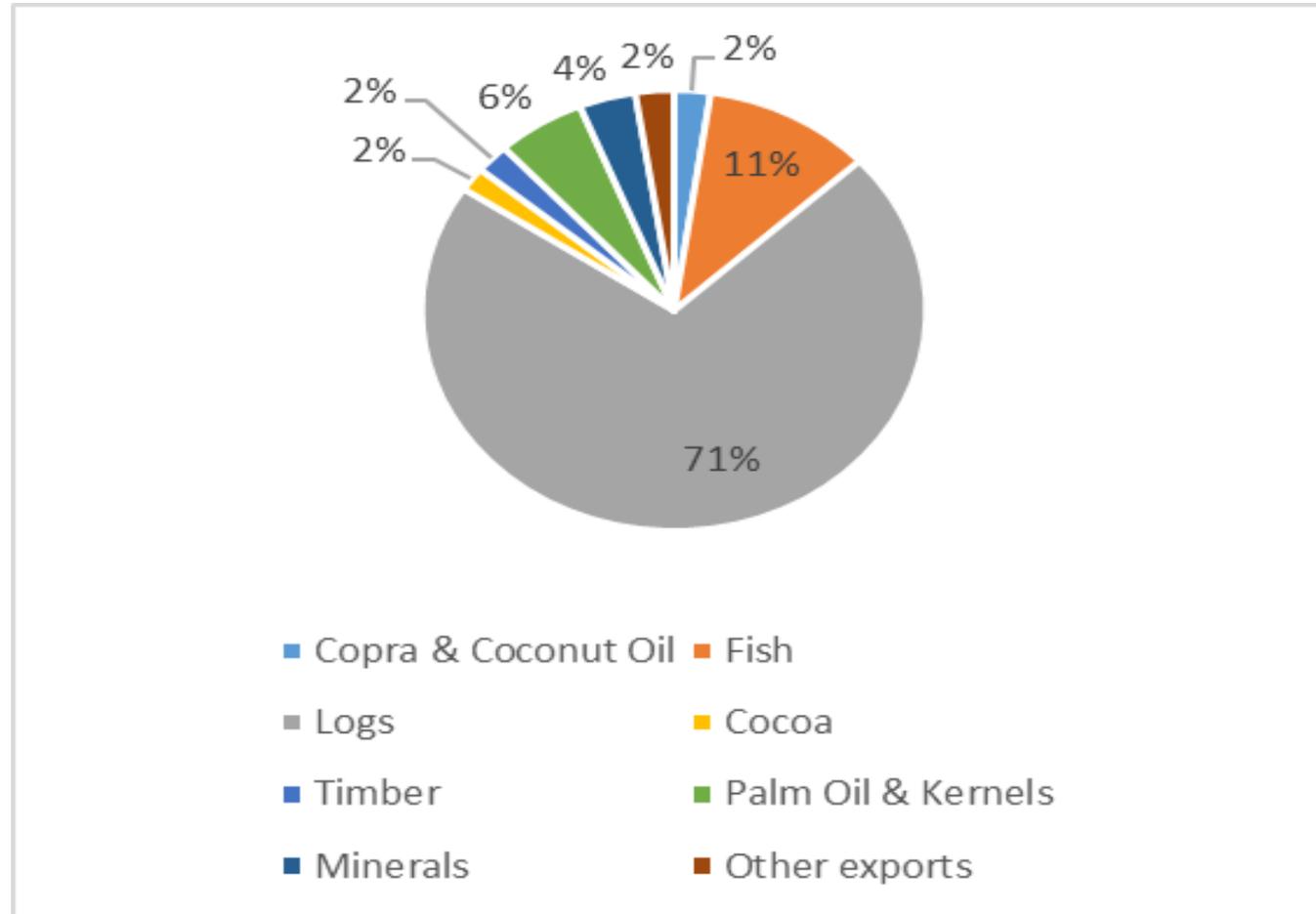
Sector snapshot #2

- **SAWN TIMBER SECTOR**
 - Local processing and value adding
 - Export value of SBD 89 million
- **COMMERCIAL PLANTATION**
 - Plantation area approx. 30,000 hectares
 - Two enterprises in Western Province
- **COMMUNITY PLANTATIONS**
 - About 6,000 hectares of community timber plantings

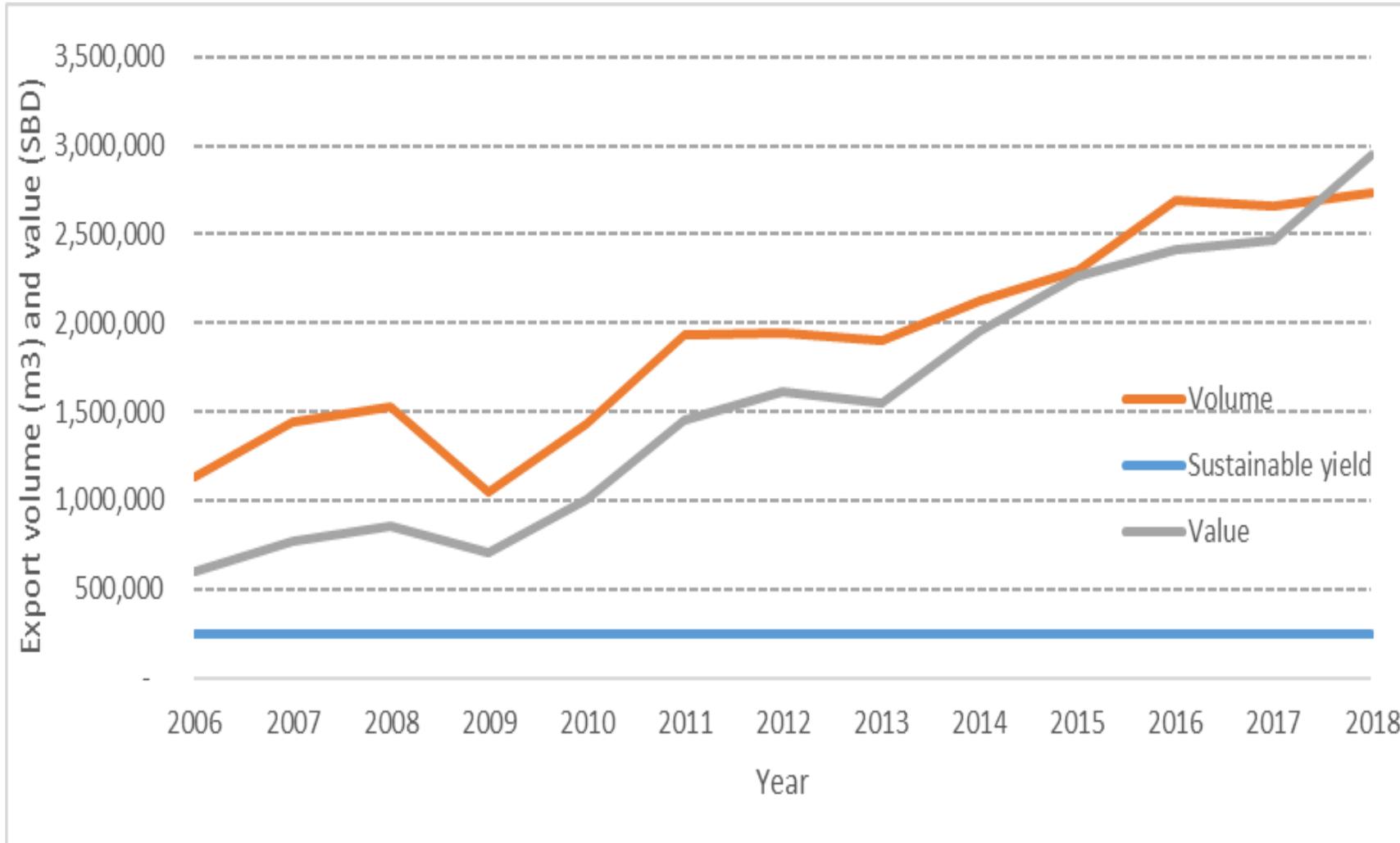


The continued reliance on logging

2018 export value (%)

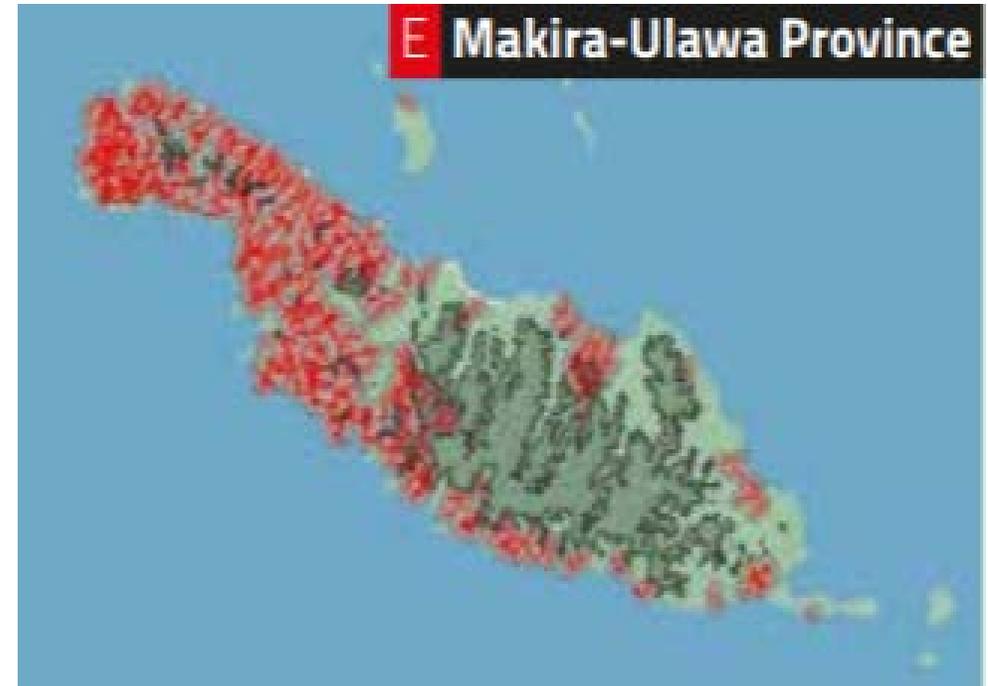


Log export volume & indicative sustainable yield



Source: CBSI

Logging roads



Global Witness
2018

Community impacts

WorldFish research in Malaita (2018)

- Employment largely low-paid, male dominated & short-term, many foreign workers
- Royalty payments relatively small and exclusively used by men
- Impacts on marine, freshwater & terrestrial resources – affects water sources and food security
- Disputes over land ownership, decision-making processes & benefit sharing
- Sexual exploitation of women & girls
- **“Logging in Malaita is environmentally and socially destructive. It undermines local food security and social integrity and does not contribute to development at either the village or provincial level”**

Drivers of the status quo

- Pressure to maintain the economic role of the industry to the nation
 - What can replace logging revenues?
- Lack of alternative income sources for rural communities
 - Conservation and development activities have not yet changed decision making
- Global demand for round logs, especially from China
 - Chinese market typically does not require certification
- Governance of the forest sector
 - Ineffective monitoring & enforcement of licence conditions. Little TRANSPARENCY
 - Outdated legislation: Forest Resources and Timber Utilisation Act 1969
 - MOFR unable to enforce harvest rates for an individual license
 - Attempts to update the legislative framework over previous years unsuccessful
- Entwined logging and political interests

Current initiatives

- Ministry of Forestry
 - Revising the National Forest Policy 2018
 - Revised Forest Act 2018 (Draft)
 - REDD+ initiatives to improve monitoring and transparency
 - Supporting certification in sawn timber sector
- Donor support
 - Sustainable forest management and REDD+
 - Market access and value adding in sawn timber
 - Community land use planning and conservation
- But... need change at the political and community level

So what now?

- Forest management will remain important to rural people (high forest cover, most people live in forested areas)
- Need to better manage degraded forest areas for economic, environmental, social benefits
- Forthcoming decline in logging revenues – opportunity to broaden the discussion on forestry and development
- Requires a shift in the discussion and a broader approach to forest management

Elements of more sustainable forest management

- Managing degraded forest land
 - Reforestation
 - Conversion to agricultural production – need for land use planning
- Domestic timber processing
 - Relatively small scale but strong prospects if the sector is well managed
 - Currently supporting approx. 6,000 livelihoods
 - Scope for more value adding e.g. furniture
- Commercial timber plantations
 - Kolombangara Forest Products Ltd (since 1989)
 - Eagon (since 1990's)
- Community timber plantations
 - Around 6-7,000 hectares of donor-funded teak & mahogany plantations approaching harvesting age

Elements of more sustainable forest management

- Building materials for communities – timber and roofing
- Non-timber forest products such as material for handicrafts & furniture, traditional building materials, nuts
- Conservation initiatives
 - Mainly small-scale community-based schemes (formal conservation reserves in their infancy although legislation now in place – Protected Areas Act 2011)
- Climate and green finance
 - Prospects, but also in infancy. Challenges of facilitating access to such funds for local people.

Conclusion

- Forest use and management will remain central to development in Solomon Islands
- There are some indications of changing perspectives at community and political level
- Opportunity to improve forest management as key element of national development IF greater focus is given on the other elements of forest management
- Need to broaden discussion “beyond logging”

Thank you!

