

Needs for and Status of Capacity for Pacific Coconut Resource Inventory

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ABSTRACT

Introduction Since the world copra price collapsed in the 80s there was no more investment in the coconut resource in terms of management and expansion. Also data, information and management capacity got lost. Various pilot projects in the Pacific region have shown that coconut oil can replace diesel oil in power generation and to a limited extent in transport applications. While the economics of using coconut oil as a substitute fuel are often marginal its use as a niche fuel (in remote island locations with high transport cost for both inbound fuels and outbound copra or coconut oil are high) and its potential to enhance energy security in case of an energy crisis and subsequent supply interruptions are undisputed. The results of the ADB trials in Solomon Islands and experiences of the power utilities of New Caledonia and Vanuatu have clearly shown that the use of high quality coconut oil is technically feasible in well-engineered equipment operated by properly trained staff. Revitalising the coconut industries of Pacific Island Countries to the levels of the early 80s would potentially allow the substitution of a significant portion of Pacific Island diesel imports. In remote islands coconut oil for energy generation will be most effective as diesel is normally shipped to the islands and copra from the outer islands to the main island. Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) is a UN initiative which will be strongly supported by the EU. EU funded facility will focus on clean energy access that private sector stakeholders such as coconut farmers and copra millers can provide as a result of an improved investment environment. However, it is also clear that besides its energy use, coconut oil prices on the world market have once again reached levels where the production of copra and/or coconut oil have become viable options for income generation and improvement of rural livelihoods of remote Pacific community. This would help to avoid the population drift from outer islands to the main islands. 1 ADB 2012: TA 7329- Promoting Access to Renewable Energy in the Pacific, CNO Feasibility Study Auki, Solomon Islands Measurement of palm height with clinometer, field work in Pohnpei. 2 What is required now is to qualify and quantify the existing palm stocks across the region in order to establish a clear picture of what current stocks can produce over time and where stocks need to be replaced to ensure a sustainable supply of copra and/or coconut oil. There is no official policy to establish the capacity for coconut resource inventory, however, as regional technical organisation SPC plans ahead and creates the technical facilities enabling a clear picture of the still existing resource in the Pacific.

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