

1. INTRODUCTION.

The Cook Islands became a “self governing country” in free association with New Zealand in 1965. It consists of a group of 15 volcanic islands and raised coral atolls, split between the Southern and the Northern group and located between the Society Islands on the east and Niue and Samoa on the west.

It has a land area of 240 square kilometre and surrounded by 2,000,000 square kilometre of the Pacific Ocean and populated by approximately 18,000 people with the 70 percent of these on the mainland Rarotonga

Land in the Cook Islands are owned by traditional landowners units and are divided and sub divided into portions along family lines.

Approximately 63% of the Cook Islands land area is under some kind of forest cover. The forested area consists of Makatea Atoll, Coastal and High mountain forests. A further 5% is covered in forest plantations dominated especially by *Pinus caribaea* and *Acacia* species, which occurs on four islands namely Mangaia, Rarotonga, Mauke and Atiu. A small plots of sandalwood has also been established on these islands either around home surrounding as well as in identified Makatea sites.

Table 1: Forest Areas

Forest Areas (ha)		
Forest Type	Area (ha)	% of Total Area (ha)
Coastal	4900	20.5
Makatea Forest	5000	21.6
Other Natural Forest	4500	20.5
Plantation	1240	5
Others	7720	32.4
Total	23,300	100%

Table 1.1 Forest Plantations

Plantation (Ha)		
Island	Age Group (>10 years)	Total
Rarotonga	44.72	44.72
Atiu	175.34	175.34
Mangaia	982.35	982.35
Mauke	36.11	36.11
Total	1238.52	1238.52
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