

Cook Islands Country Presentation

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POLICY MEASURES

National Sustainable Development Agenda (NSDA 2020+)

- Embeds sustainability, circular economy thinking, and zero waste goals across all development sectors

National Environment Policy (2022–2032)

- Recognises the impact of all waste types and calls for applying 5R and circular economy principles to protect environmental and human health

Solid and Hazardous Waste Act (2025)

- Establishes legal authority for regulating solid and hazardous waste, including chemicals, marine litter, and e-waste, in line with waste hierarchy principles

Advanced Recovery and Disposal Fee (ARDF) Scheme Policy (2023)

- Implements a polluter-pays system to support product stewardship and end-of-life recovery for imported goods

Single-Use Plastics Ban Policy (2019–2024)

- First national measure to promote upstream waste prevention by phasing out disposable plastic items, supports Refuse and Reduce

NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA (NSDA 2020+)

Objective: Supports the Cook Islands' journey toward Zero Waste by 2045, by embedding sustainable practices that:

- Protect the environment
- Strengthen the economy
- Honour traditional values of stewardship and resourcefulness

Key Goals Aligned with Jaipur Declaration:

- Goal 13: Clean and healthy environment — improving waste systems (Jaipur Goals 4, 5, 7)
- Goal 4: Sustainable infrastructure — enabling reuse, composting, and recycling (Jaipur Goals 1, 9a)
- Goal 15: Responsible land and marine resource use — reducing land-based ocean pollution (Jaipur Goals 8, 10)

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY 2022-2032

Overview:

The National Environment Policy outlines six core policy objectives and tools for environmental management. It aims to:

- Address key challenges relating to land, marine, biodiversity, and water resources
- Strengthen legal and institutional frameworks for environmental protection
- Promote sustainable resource use for current and future generations

Circular Economy Focus:

- Applies 5R and circular economy principles to guide waste prevention and resource recovery
- Supports national implementation of the waste hierarchy
- Emphasises upstream solutions, not just downstream clean-up

SOLID & HAZARDOUS ACT 2025

PART 6: ADVANCE RECOVERY DISPOSAL FEE (ARDF)

A fee paid by importers at the boarder for specific goods. The fee helps fund safe collection, recovery, & disposal system.

Applies to:

- Recyclables - Plastic bottles, aluminium cans
- E-waste - Laptops, televisions
- Whiteware - Fridges, washing machines, air conditioners
- Tyres
- Vehicles and machinery - cars, trucks, scooters, motorbikes

Objective: To reduce waste entering Landfills and promote environmentally responsible management of imported goods

Outcome:

- Revenue generated supports recycling programs
- Reduces pollution
- Build National Capacity for sustainable waste management



SOLID & HAZARDOUS ACT 2025

SCHEDULE 1: PROHIBITED ARTICLES AND SUBSTANCES

Objective: To reduce plastic pollution, protect the environment and marine ecosystems, and promote sustainable alternatives by banning the import of single-use plastic products that contribute significantly to landfill waste and ocean debris

Applies to:

1. Lightweight plastic bags, including shopping bags
2. Plastic cutlery
3. Plastic containers with no PET number or with any of numbers 3,4,5 and 7, including plastic plates and sealable food containers
4. Plastic and polystyrene cups, including plastic-lined coffee cups
5. Polystyrene containers and meat trays
6. Plastic-packaged single-serve butter and spreads
7. Products containing microbeads

Outcome:

1. Less plastic pollution, healthier environment, and increased use of sustainable alternatives.



ACTIVE & UPCOMING PROJECTS

- GEF 8 RESPONSE Project
- GEF ISLANDS Project
- POLP Project

GEF-8 RESPONSE

(Reducing Single-Use Plastics on Small-Island Economies)



Timeframe: Nov 2025 - 2029

Donor: Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Key Partners: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP),

Objective: Reduce Plastics from Food and Beverage Tourism Sectors

Project Component:

1. Policy Reform: Single Use Plastic (SUP) bans, Strategy and Action Plan
2. Alternatives: Pilot local packaging solutions
3. Private Sector: Pilot 10+ solutions in F&B sector
4. Capacity & Data: National inventory on SUP
5. Outreach: Knowledge sharing, public awareness

Outcome:

- 57 metric tons plastic waste avoided
- 234 metric tons CO2e avoided
- 0.0068 gTEQ air reduction
- Stronger local reuse and data systems



GEF ISLANDS



Timeframe: Nov 2025 - 2026

Donor: Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Key Partners: Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Objective: Improve the collection, consolidation, and recycling of e-waste and bulky waste across the Pa Enua (Outer Islands) in the Cook Islands.

Project Component:

1. Waste Collection and Consolidation
2. Infrastructure for E-Waste and Bulky Waste
3. Capacity Building and Training
4. Waste Audits and Data Collection
5. Outreach: Public Awareness and Communications



PACIFIC OCEAN LITTER PROJECT (POLP)



Timeframe: 2025-2026

Donor: Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Island: Rarotonga

Key Partners: Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP),

Objective: Raise Awareness to educate communities about marine pollution and health risks associated with plastic use

Project Component:

1. Policy Support
2. Data & Monitoring
3. Community Engagement
4. Outreach: Public Awareness



ACHIEVEMENTS

- Legacy Waste Programme
- Blue Orca Programme
- Single-Use Plastics Ban Policy (2019–2024)
- Solid and Hazardous Waste Act (2025) was passed in cabinet in June
- ARDF Policy Endorsed 2024

LEGACY WASTE PROGRAMME

Timeframe: July 2023 - June 2025

Objective:

To collect and remove legacy waste from Rarotonga, focusing on:

- Electronic waste (e-waste)
- Household appliances (whiteware)
- End-of-Life Vehicles (ELVs)

Outcome:

A total of:

- 9,008 e-waste items removed
- 9,646 whiteware items removed
- 2,183 ELVs removed



BLUE ORCA PROGRAMME

Objective: To support the safe collection, removal, and responsible recycling of electronic waste (e-waste) from Aitutaki, as part of the broader Blue Orca Pacific Island e-waste recovery initiative

Outcome:

- **Total Weight Recycled:** 7,400 kg of e-waste
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions Avoided:** 2,122.3 kg CO₂e
- **Toxic Metals Diverted from the Environment:** 43.78 kg



SAMSUNG



CHALLENGES & CONSTRAINTS FACED

- Geographic isolation & Logistics
- Financial Constraints
- Limited Infrastructure
- Human Resource Limitations
- Community Awareness & Engagement
- Policy & Regulatory Gaps
- Data Collection & Monitoring



COMMUNITY-LED REUSE & RECOVERY

CIRCLE Cook Islands

- Upcycles waste plastics, wrappers, and rubber
- Creates handcrafted bags, wallets, hats, and jewellery
- Diverts waste from landfill through creative reuse



Rent-a-Plate Scheme

- Replaces disposable plates at the Muri Night Market
- Promotes shared-use systems and reduces single-use waste
- Simple solution with long-term impact



Maoate-Iro Contractors

- Private run compost site turning organic waste into compost
- Supports local agriculture, reduces landfill pressure
- Demonstrates circular thinking at grassroots level



MEITAKI MAATA