For Paul Thompson Evers
(Founder of Future Forests (Fiji) ltd, Executive Director Green Generation ltd, Executive Director Scientific Forestry Services ltd and Founder of Ravua Agro forestry ltd)

Timber is not a passive commodity it is a dynamic interconnected commodity of extremely high value not simply financial but socially and environmentally as well. The traditional paradigm for forestry management is evolving into complex systems of interconnected operational spheres.

In 2004 the company Future Forests (Fiji) limited was formed. Its main aim was to become the first privately owned timber plantation company in Fiji. The scope of the company’s operations were planned to encompass, plantation development, genetic improvements, timber processing and downstream product development. To date the company has achieved several milestones one of which was to become the first Forestry Company to be listed on the South Pacific Stock Exchange (SPSE).

The Pacific region finds itself not only surrounded by seas and oceans but also oceans of change. These global influences, population, environment, trade and natural resources have created a portfolio of opportunities that have negated some of the challenges of the Pacific into enhancements. Such things as distance, isolation and lack of development have in fact become the appealing aspects of this region.

The pacific island nations have found it difficult to compete with the more developed nations on a general level yet the ability for the Small Island Nation states to become niche players in specific markets can be considered very real and exciting indicators for the future. Forestry is one of these commodity markets.

With the world’s population rapidly expanding and half of this number concentrated within the tropical zones. Forestry and forestry lands are experiencing greater and greater pressures as urban expansion, illegal logging and agriculture all play a part in reducing the global reserves of tropical timbers. As can be seen the price of timber over the last century has steadily increased and trended better than any other commodity today. In fact many of the world’s financial investment firms consider timber investment as a ‘Blue Chip’ category.

The forests of the pacific have gone through decades of over exploitation yet in the last several years a reversal of such degradation has been occurring. Future Forests (Fiji) limited can be considered an example of this reversal. [With the partnership of the private sector and government Fiji is witnessing an empowerment of its forestry sector.] Under improved (intensive) forestry/plantation management yields per hectare in Fiji can (are) be tripled, rural employment expanded and additional benefits such as Biomass electrification achieved.

Green Generation Ltd., in partnership with the government, has the necessary expertise to take the lead in a pilot project, which will introduce improved forest management in the 12,000 Ha (name). The outcome will be diversified income streams from the forest resources with the following outputs: (i) replanting of commercially valuable species, (ii) co-generation of 3 MW electricity per year from forest waste and thus reduction of Forex, (iii) rural job generation, and (iv) increased potential for value adding from higher grade timber.

We do not say that such an approach is without risks, however, we are confident that with appropriate financing, donor support and assured agreements with the various state and non-state actors a pilot project can be implemented successfully and that replication of improved forest management will be of considerable economic benefits to Fiji.