

SONEVA FUSHI

CATEGORY:

POLICY | RESEARCH | FIELD | CLIMATE | **BUSINESS**

LOCATION/SCALE:

Maldives (Local)

FOUNDER:

Sonu and Eva Shivdasani

PERIOD:

1995 - now

IN A NUTSHELL

Soneva Fushi, a pioneering luxury eco resort, has developed a new sustainable system called “Eco Centro Waste to Wealth” to turn most waste into value and nutrients for the soil, such as compost, bio char, charcoal, mulches and soil conditioners. The resort follows the three R principles: Reduce – Reuse – Recycle. Resources such as energy, water, soil and organisms provide a localized ecosystem for sustainable use, while unwanted materials are re-used and recycled to reduce the amount of waste ending up in landfill. The introduced system of permaculture has shown that there is a solution to sustainable agriculture even on low coral islands where people’s perception of waste is challenged. With the help of these recycled inputs, Soneva Fushi preserves the indigenous vegetation and cultivates an organic garden consisting of over 70 herb, salad, vegetable and fruit varieties. Raised beds, crop rotation and mixed cropping helps to reduce pests, while the usage of organic waste as a subsoil enabled them to obtain over 90% of the agricultural inputs directly from their island. Moreover, the Waste to Wealth centre has not only become a model for waste recycling in the Maldives but is also used for educational purposes for guests, staff and the local community.

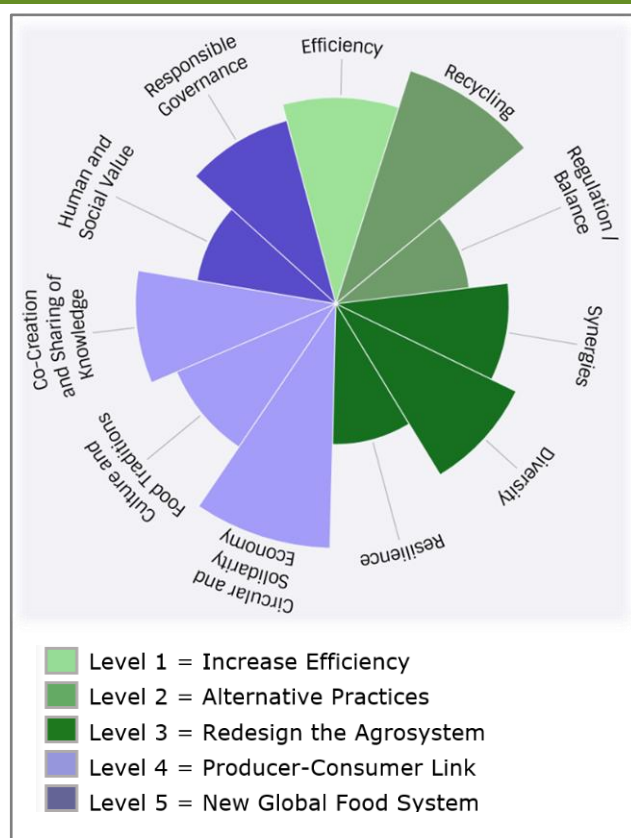


Figure: Assessment of Soneva Fushi based on FAO Elements of Agroecology and Gliessman's five levels of food system change

CONTEXT

The Maldives is a nation of coral islands scattered across 600 miles of Indian Ocean consisting of 1200 islands, of which 200 are home to local populations and 120 are exclusively for tourist resorts. A local supply of fish and coconuts made up the traditional diet, but with the rise of luxury tourism and a wealthier population, fresh fruit and vegetables are now flew in daily. Local agriculture focuses on just a few products, and heavy use of imported agrochemicals is taking its toll on these delicate island ecosystems. Tourism, fisheries and agriculture account for 89% of the Maldivian GDP, which makes the country heavily reliant on a sensitive ecosystem. Nevertheless, especially small islands are vulnerable to biodiversity loss from rapid economic development, habitat destruction and overexploitation.

OBJECTIVE

Soneva Fushi's main objective is to challenge peoples' perception of waste and tackle waste issues for an island setting like the Maldives. They therefore follow three strategies to increase engagement, reduce their environmental impact and increase biodiversity and soil life: 1) Applying Zero waste principles in order to minimize their impact on the island and to serve as a role model for other islands, 2) Promoting local production for local consumption using local resources in order to encourage 'circular economy' activities, and 3) Ensuring that the most environmentally friendly approach is also the most profitable in the long term.

KEY INTERVENTIONS

FARM LEVEL:

- The waste management centre helps maintaining a clean environment, recycling over 80% of their solid waste and converting waste into useful products, such as compost (~1000kg/day) or charcoal (~2000kg/month)
- Bann imported water and produce their own drinking water using reusable glass bottles preventing the production of an estimated 550,000 plastic bottles
- Increase self-sufficiency by reducing the value of imported vegetables for their guests and staff by 37%

REGIONAL/NATIONAL LEVEL:

- Contribute to a government consultation sessions with FAO on the subject of Island Smart Agriculture to influence national policy and assisting in bringing more investments into island farming
- Maintain good links with the Maldives Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, who recognizes that organic agriculture is essential for sustainable growth in this sector
- Regularly conduct eco tours of their composting facilities, mushroom production area and organic gardens for government authorities, agriculture businesses and schools

LESSONS LEARNED/CHALLENGES

Soneva Fushi is trying to ensure that their solution can be replicated on other small island nations in the region and across the world. However, a main hurdle is seen in attracting initial investments. By selling fruits, vegetables and mushrooms to the Soneva Fushi kitchens, the Eco Centro Waste to Wealth is approaching breakeven, turning the gardens into an independent profit centre for the business. Nonetheless, the biggest challenge for expanding the Waste to Wealth model is people's negative perception of waste as it is hard for them to understand that waste can be used as a useful resource when recycled correctly.

RELEVANT LINKS & REFERENCES

- Soneva Fushi Homepage
<https://www.soneva.com/soneva-fushi/>
- Solution Search, Farming for Biodiversity
<http://solutionsearch.org/contests/entry/503#>
- Green hotelier article
<https://bit.ly/304OmlN>

