

# Considering waste as a resource to re-think procurement requirements in the Maldives



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## Quick facts

-  Type of procurement: **fresh produce**
-  Year of inception: **2008**
-  Type of business: **Resort**
-  Organisation name: **Soneva**
-  Number of staff: **1,000**
-  Country/region: **Maldives**

## Background information

With 1.3 million visitors per year, tourism is a major source of revenue for the Maldives, where Soneva operates two resorts. Due to its remote location, availability of local supplies is limited on the island, and food items are imported. This not only implies **high transport costs and lack of available fresh products; it also triggers the production of large amounts of packaging waste.**

Considering the lack of municipal waste facilities in the Maldives, waste is traditionally either burned in an open fire, or discarded where it eventually leaks into the marine environment.

## The challenge

To preserve the natural beauty of the Maldives and its attractiveness for tourists, Soneva aims at minimising the amount of waste sent to landfill while sourcing fresh produce locally to the extent possible, hence preserving the quality and freshness of products used by hotels' chefs.

## The strategy

In a collaborative effort between sustainability experts, gardeners, chefs, as well as procurement and finance managers, Soneva first launched its **Waste-to-Wealth Programme** in 2008. The initiatives conducted in this framework have expanded since then, and include:

-  **Food and garden waste are collected to create fertile compost** which is in turn used in local vegetable gardens where Soneva staff grow herbs and vegetables, hence providing chefs with the freshest ingredients;
-  To mitigate the high transport costs of recycling glass waste outside the Maldives, **Soneva Fushi's Glass Studio turns used glass bottles from Soneva resorts and other neighbouring hotels into functional pieces as well as glass sculptures;**
-  Extruded polystyrene foam packaging used for transport when importing food items is transformed into lightweight blocks, then used in construction.



The Soneva Glass Studio turns glass waste into glass pieces.

# Impacts



- ➔ In 2017, Soneva recycled 90% of its solid waste;
- ➔ 12,500 glass bottles collected from Soneva and neighbouring resorts are saved from landfill per year;
- ➔ The Soneva herb & vegetable gardens produce over 100,000 USD worth of vegetables per year;
- ➔ The Waste-to Wealth Programme generated 340,000 USD of revenue in 2017, achieved from cost savings in both food procurement, as most fresh produce is grown locally, and in procurement of building blocks which are produced on site. In addition, revenue has been generated from the sales of artwork and functional glass pieces of the Soneva Fushi's Glass Studio.
- ➔ Improved quality of dishes served in Soneva restaurants, which have been praised by the guests;



x 12,500



= \$ 100,000



\$ 340,000



The Waste-to Wealth Programme has been replicated in all Soneva resorts in the Maldives and Thailand.

*"We view waste as an asset (...). We created the Waste-to-Wealth as a departmental profit centre to prove that handling waste in a sound way can make financial sense too".*

- Arnfinn Oines, Social & Environmental Conscience



The Soneva herb & vegetable gardens.



## Lessons learned

- ✓ A robust waste management strategy combined with a **focus on innovation** were key to the success of the Waste-to-Wealth Programme;
- ✓ Focusing first on the high-volume items such as food and garden waste served as a proof-of-concept before scaling up the initiatives under the Waste-to-Wealth Programme and investing in waste management equipment.

For further information

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