

## THEMATIC REPORT ON FOREST ECOSYSTEMS

Contracting Party	Republic of Mauritius
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<b><i>Submission</i></b>	
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***Summary information on the process by which this report has been prepared, including information on the types of stakeholders who have been actively involved in its preparation and on material which was used as a basis for the report***

In the consultative process held with all stakeholders during the preparation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for the Republic of Mauritius (NBSAP), forest biodiversity was one of the thematic sectors that were thoroughly discussed. The Forestry Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Technology and Natural Resources is the lead institution responsible for forestry operations and management forest biological resources in state owned forest while the National Parks and Conservation Service is responsible for the management of endemic biological resources in the Black River Gorges National Park. Stakeholders that participated and contributed in thematic discussions included the Agricultural Services of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Technology and Natural Resources, National Parks and Conservation Service, Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute, University of Mauritius, Ministries of Economic Development, Environment, and Fisheries, NGO such as the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, and private sectors such as Grewal Limited and Bioculture Limited.

The Draft Final NBSAP and many other inputs in the form of information/ internal papers from the various above-mentioned organisations were used as the basis for the preparation of this thematic report. This thematic report is based on the input provided by the Forestry Service and the National Parks and Conservation Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Technology and Natural Resources.

It should be note that there is no indigenous tribal people practicing traditional lifestyle living in Mauritius.

**Decision IV/7 on Forest biological Diversity**

1. What is the relative priority afforded to implementation of this decision by your country?							
a) High	X	b) Medium		c) Low			
2. To what extent are the resources available adequate for meeting the obligations and recommendations made?							
a) Good		b) Adequate		c) Limiting	X	d) Severely limiting	
3. Has your country assessed the status and trends of its forest biological diversity and identified options for its conservation and sustainable use? (Decision IV/7, paragraph 12)							
a) no							
b) assessment underway							
c) assessment completed						X	
d) not relevant							
<b><i>If a developing country Party or a Party with economy in transition -</i></b>							
4. Has your country requested assistance through the financial mechanism for projects that promote the implementation of the focused work programme on forest biological diversity? (Decision IV/7, paragraph 7)							
a) no							
b) yes						X	

***Programme element 1: Holistic and inter-sectoral ecosystem approaches that integrate the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking account of social and cultural and economic considerations***

5. Has your country identified methodologies for enhancing the integration of forest biological diversity conservation and sustainable use into an holistic approach to sustainable forest management at the national level? (Work Programme, paragraph 13)							
a) no						X	
b) yes – limited extent							
c) yes – significant extent							
d) not applicable							
6. Has your country developed methodologies to advance the integration of traditional forest-related knowledge into sustainable forest management, in accordance with Article 8(j)? (Work Programme, paragraph 14)							
a) no							
b) yes – limited extent							
c) yes – significant extent							
d) not applicable						X	
7. Has your country promoted cooperation on the conservation and sustainable use of forest biological resources at all levels in accordance with Articles 5 and 16 of the Convention? (Work Programme, paragraph 15)							
a) no							
b) yes – limited extent							
c) yes – significant extent						X	
d) not applicable							

8. Has your country promoted the sharing of relevant technical and scientific information on networks at all levels of protected forest areas and networking modalities in all types of forest ecosystems? (Work Programme, paragraph 17)	
a) no	
b) yes – limited extent	X
c) yes – significant extent	
d) not applicable	

***Programme element 2: Comprehensive analysis of the ways in which human activities, in particular forest-management practices, influence biological diversity and assessment of ways to minimize or mitigate negative influences***

9. Has your country promoted activities for an enhanced understanding of positive and negative human influences on forest ecosystems by land-use managers, policy makers, scientists and other relevant stakeholders) (Work Programme, paragraph 29)	
a) minimal activity	
b) yes – limited extent	X
c) yes – significant extent	
d) not relevant	
10. Has your country promoted activities to assemble management experiences and scientific, indigenous and local information at the national and local levels to provide for the sharing of approaches and tools that lead to improved forest practices with regard to forest biological diversity? (Work Programme, paragraph 30)	
a) minimal activity	
b) yes – limited extent	X
c) yes – significant extent	
d) not relevant	
11. Has your country promoted activities with the aim of providing options to minimize or mitigate negative and to promote positive human influences on forest biological diversity? (Work Programme, paragraph 31)	
a) minimal activity	
b) yes – limited extent	
c) yes – significant extent	X
d) not relevant	
12. Has your country promoted activities to minimize the impact of harmful alien species on forest biological diversity? (Work Programme, paragraph 32)	
a) minimal activity	
b) yes – limited extent	
c) yes – significant extent	X
d) not relevant	

13. Has your country identified means and mechanisms to improve the identification and prioritisation of research activities related to influences of human activities, in particular forest management practices, on forest biological diversity? (Work Programme, paragraph 33)	
a) minimal activity	X
b) yes – limited extent	
c) yes – significant extent	
d) not relevant	
14. Does your country hold research results and syntheses of reports of relevant scientific and traditional knowledge on key forest biological diversity issues and, if so, have these been disseminated as widely as possible? (Work Programme, paragraph 34)	
a) not relevant	
b) some relevant material, but not widely disseminated	X
c) significant material that could be more widely disseminated	
d) yes - already widely disseminated	
15. Has your country prepared case-studies on assessing impacts of fires and alien species on forest biological diversity and their influences on the management of forest ecosystems and savannahs? (Work Programme, paragraph 35)	
a) no – please indicate below whether this is due to a lack of available case-studies or for other reasons	X
b) yes – please give below any views you may have on the usefulness of the preparation of case-studies for developing a better biological understanding of the problem and/or better management responses.	

***Programme element 3: Methodologies necessary to advance the elaboration and implementation of criteria and indicators for forest biological diversity***

16. Has your country assessed experiences gained in national and regional processes, identifying common elements and gaps in existing initiatives and improving indicators for forest biological diversity? (Work Programme, paragraph 43)	
a) minimal activity	
b) yes – limited assessment made	X
c) yes – significant assessment made	
d) not relevant	
17. Has your country carried out taxonomic studies and inventories at the national level which provide for a basic assessment of forest biological diversity? (Work Programme, paragraph 43)	
a) minimal activity	
b) yes – limited assessment made	
c) yes – significant assessment made	X
d) not relevant	

## *Further Comments*

### **Question 3**

A thorough assessment for the forest biodiversity sector was undertaken during the preparation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan project. The findings were presented and discussed with all stakeholders in a national workshop. The gaps and pressing issues for that sector were identified and eventually a national strategy has been devised. Activities have also been discussed and identified to meet the targeted goals under a forest biodiversity programme as part of the draft final report for Mauritius.

### **Question 4**

“Restoration of highly degraded and threatened native forests in Mauritius” project. The purpose of this project was to halt degradation of native forests caused by invasive exotic weeds and to restore to the extent possible the original structure and functions of forest ecosystem. Funding to the tune of US \$ 200,000 was provided by UNDP/GEF. The project was a three-year pilot phase project that commenced in June 1996 and successfully completed in June 1999.

### ***Outcomes***

1. Following an international consultative workshop of top ecologists and weed control experts in September 1997, organised by the National Parks and Conservation Service, the use of herbicides (on experimental basis) to control exotic plants namely Chinese guava (*Psidium cattleianum*) and Privet (*Ligustrum robustum*) was one among various recommendations made. An experimental area of 0.6 Ha out of 6 Ha of study plot was used. The final result indicated that growth was slowed down.
2. The proceeding of the Consultative workshop has been published.
3. Capacity building in biodiversity assessment and monitoring effected through a three one –week training workshop organised by the University of Mauritius for undergraduate students and representatives of other stakeholders.
4. Biodiversity assessment in 6 Ha of the study plot.

### ***Lessons***

1. The time span of the project which was for a period of five at conception stage (before approval) was reduced to three years without any change in scope and objectives. As a result, the third component of the project that comprised of extending the outcomes of the field experiment to the 6 Ha of the Brise Fer CMA could not materialised.
2. In the project write up, youth groups were given the role to carry out weeding in the experimental plots. It did not work as they were not available continuously through out the weeding exercise.
3. The weeding exercise was contracted out through funding provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Technology and Natural Resources.
4. A full time Technical Officer had to be appointed by the executing agency to undertake the field experimentation.

**Question 7**

Mauritius has been promoting for past decades technical and scientific cooperation on the conservation and sustainable use of forest biological resources at the national, regional and international levels in accordance with Articles 5 and 16 of the Convention .

At the regional level, Mauritius as a member of the Indian Ocean Commission and the South African Development Community has participated and implemented a number of forest biodiversity projects and these include amongst others,

- “Flore des Mascareignes” project;
- Inventory of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants of the States of Indian Ocean;
- SADC Forestry Sector programme which aimed at strengthening and improving the forestry sector by way of training programmes and the setting up of a SADC Tree Seed centre Network.

At the international level, bilateral cooperation exists between Mauritius and China in the field of medicinal plants. The Government of Mauritius has also strong ties and working arrangements with a host of international organisations including

- FAO and Commission on Plant Genetic Resources;
- World Conservation Union;
- Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew and Edinburgh (UK);
- Flora and Fauna International;
- World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and
- Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust.

**Question 8**

With regard to sharing of relevant technical and scientific information on networks, this was effected mainly under the SADC Tree Seed Centre Network at the level of the Forestry Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Technology and Natural Resources.

**Question 9**

Among the most important activities that are underway include the review of the national forest policy for Mauritius. The present policy dates some 40 years back and it is considered obsolete as it does address the actual context only very partially. The Forestry Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Technology and natural Resources is soliciting the assistance of FAO for technical assistance in the preparation of an updated new policy. Other activities related to national sensitisation and awareness such as talks, national tree plantation campaigns, seminars, workshops, exhibition and organisation of events have also been extensively promoted in collaboration with all stakeholders.

**Question 10**

Activities that have been undertaken that lead to an improved forest practices mainly concern capacity building at the institutional level and training provided at the level of University of Mauritius. There have also been exchanges of management experiences through national seminars/workshops organised by the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation in collaboration with University of Mauritius and the competent public organisations.

**Question 11**

Some of activities that are geared to promote positive human influences on forest biological diversity refer to the activities/services that are undertaken/provided as part of national sensitisation and awareness campaigns. The public organisations dealing with forest biodiversity resources also provide free plants and advices to educational institutions, community based organisations and the public in general. In addition, free access to the Black River Gorges National Parks and free-guided visit to some of the Conservation Management Areas are becoming more and more popular for both Mauritian and foreigners.

**Question 12**

Kindly refer to further comment made on activities undertaken in Mauritius to minimize the impact of harmful alien species on forest biological diversity.

**Question 14**

Except for traditional knowledge which is not applicable.

**Question 15**

The major reasons given consist of shortage of staff and lack of technical expertise in the preparation of case studies.

**Question 16**

Most common gaps that have been identified specially through regional technical meetings. However, rather basic indicators are being used at the national level. Some of the most common gaps that were highlighted during consultative process include

- Inadequate coordination between the various organisations dealing with biodiversity and dissemination of information;
- Lack of resources both human and financial, and
- Inadequacy in legal provisions to safeguard loss of biodiversity in privately own biodiversity riched areas.

**Question 17**

A number of assessments have been undertaken. Some of the publications are

- (i) Baker (1877). "Flora of Mauritius and Seychelles" by the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew.;
- (ii) Vaughan R.E. and Wiehé P.O. (1937). Studies on the vegetation of Mauritius. Journal of Ecology 25: 289-343.
- (iii) "Flore des Mascareignes" ongoing project and various publications by the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute.
- (iv) Johnson (1988). "Group of species under threat."
- (v) Strahm W. (1989). Plant Red Data Book for Rodrigues.
- (vi) Strahm, W. (1996). The vegetation of the Mascarene Islands. Curtis's Magazine 13: 214-237.