

LES ASSISES DE L'AGRICULTURE 2026:

SMART AGRICULTURE FOR A RESILIENT MAURITIUS



#assisesagriculture2026

CLUSTER 4: CROP SECTOR

Empowering Stakeholders in Agriculture using Value Chain Interventions for Modernization and Inclusion

Atal Bihari Vajpayee
Institute of Public
Service and
Innovation

TEAM MEMBERS: Associate Professor Dr B. Ramasawmy Molaye / Mrs Davina Ellapen / Mrs Rishma Jaunkeypersad

Strategic Framework & Alignment

Cluster 4 covers the two themes on:

Value Chains and Market Differentiation

Enhances competitiveness by strengthening linkages from farm to market, promoting value addition, product differentiation and fair market access.

Empowering Smallholders, SMEs, Women, and Youth

Promotes inclusive growth by building capacities and opportunities for those who form the social and economic backbone of the sector.

Target Stakeholders

1. Smallholder Foodcrops Farmers
2. SMEs in the Foodcrops Sector
3. Women Entrepreneurs
4. Youth Innovators

Socio-economic and Inclusion Challenges

Some key statistics:

99% of all agricultural producers = smallholders (FAREI)

Age range (20-39 years old) (Population census, 2022)

30% total population Mauritius (52% male/48% female)

27% total population Rodrigues (48% male/52% female)

Only 66 of 214 registered agricultural SMEs are women-owned (2024)

SMALLHOLDER FARMERS

- Fragmented plots
- Ageing population
- Labour shortages
- Limited access to technology, finance, post harvest infrastructure
- Weak linkages between actors in the value chain
- Limited processing/value-addition/proper packaging
- Little certification/ branding/standards/local labels



SMES/ WOMEN/ YOUTH

- **Assets:** Collateral Warranty
- **Perception:** Agriculture viewed by youth as not valorising, low-income, labour intensive
- **Systemic friction:** Support schemes suffer from red tapism, low outreach, insufficient follow-up





Strategic Opportunities for Transformation

Leveraging shifting market demands to build a resilient, high-value sector.



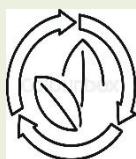
Tourism & Hospitality: Growing demand for healthy, authentic, traceable Mauritian products (The 'Locavore' movement).



Trusted Branding: A critical need for 'Sustainable Mauritius' branding and trusted local labels.



Import Substitution: Replacing foreign goods with value-added, differentiated local products



Circular Economy: Waste valorisation and by-product revenue streams.



Creating a Youth Think-Tank Hub for innovative agribusiness models

18 Intervention areas → 7 Domain of Interventions

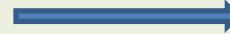
16 Proposed Interventions

Reduction of postharvest losses
and enhanced market access



Market Integration
Value Addition
Post-Harvest Systems
Professional Transitions

Innovation, Certification and
Market Expansion



Fiscal Incentives
Capacity Building
Market Differentiation
Research & Innovation Hub

Women Empowerment



Women-led Agri Cooperatives
Financial Inclusion
Social Support
Niche Branding

Youth Integration



Education Integration
Smart Farming
Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
Recognition & Valorisation

Domain of Interventions

1. Reduction of postharvest losses and enhanced market access

Market Integration

Connecting farmers directly with buyers through digital platforms and regional fairs to ensure fair pricing.

Capacity building for farmers for digital storytelling to differentiate their products online.

Post-Harvest Systems

Implementing solar-powered cooling and drying facilities at the farm level to minimise spoilage and stabilise income.

Value Addition

Establishing Agro-processing parks and post-harvest centres and shared facilities to convert raw produce into value-added products (e.g., breadfruit flour, nutraceuticals).

Professional Transition

Targeted training to shift farmers from subsistence models to professional agribusiness operations.

Domain of Interventions

2. Innovation, Certification and Market Expansion

Fiscal Incentives

Providing concessional loans and grants specifically for infrastructure and modern processing technology.

Market Differentiation

Assistance to obtain certification (e.g Bio-Mauritius) to access premium export markets and tourism sectors.

Capacity Building

Conducting workshops on product innovation, digital marketing, and storytelling to reach broader audiences.

Research & Innovation Hubs

Creating shared R&D spaces (agri-innovation and export hub) to foster collaboration between value chain actors and exporters to develop high-value niche products

Domain of Interventions

3. Women Empowerment

Women-led Agri-Cooperatives

Encouraging cooperatives focused on grading/processing/branding

Empowering women to lead value-addition activities

Social Support

Providing nursery services and childcare facilities near farming centers to help women balance family responsibilities.

Financial Inclusion

Offering collateral-free loans and flexible products to overcome asset barriers like lack of land titles

Niche Branding

Developing women-led product lines (e.g., herbal teas, high-fibre snacks) supported by digital marketing training.
Specific GI products for Rodrigues

Domain of Interventions

4. Youth Integration

Education Integration

Introducing farming concepts and school gardens in curricula to foster early interest and combat negative stereotypes.

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Establishing a Youth AgriTech Innovation and Entrepreneurship Programme including incubators, mentorship programs, and start-up grants specifically for youth-led ventures.

Smart Farming

Promoting precision agriculture, climate-smart practices, and renewable energy to make the sector attractive to digital natives.

Recognition and Valorisation

Revitalising youth agricultural clubs and highlighting success stories to showcase the prestige of modern agriculture.

Domain of Interventions

Proposed Interventions

Proposed Flagship Interventions

Reduction of postharvest losses and enhanced market access



Market Integration
Value Addition
Post-Harvest Systems
Professional Transitions



Regional agroprocessing and post-harvest centres

Innovation, Certification and Market Expansion

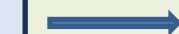


Fiscal Incentives
Capacity Building
Market Differentiation
Research & Innovation Hub



SME Agri-Innovation and Export hub with certified products

Women Empowerment



Women-led Agri Cooperatives
Financial Inclusion
Social Support
Niche Branding

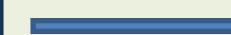


Women-led branded agricultural product lines (Specific GI products for Rodrigues)

Youth Integration



Education Integration
Smart Farming
Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
Recognition & Valorisation



Youth Agritech Innovation and Entrepreneurship Programme

THANK YOU



Specific Interventions for Mauritius

[1] Regional Agro-Processing and Post-Harvest Centers

Objective: To empower smallholder farmers by reducing post-harvest losses, increasing value addition, and improving market access, thereby enhancing their incomes and livelihoods.

Key Components:

1. Post-Harvest Infrastructure:

- a. Solar-powered cooling and drying facilities to preserve produce and reduce spoilage.
- b. Regional packing centers managed by cooperatives for efficient storage and distribution.

2. Value Addition Facilities:

- a. Shared agro-processing units to enable farmers to process and package their produce (e.g., breadfruit flour, turmeric nutraceuticals).
- b. Training programs on processing techniques and product development.

3. Market Integration:

- a. Digital platforms to connect farmers directly with buyers, processors, and exporters.
- b. Regional fairs to showcase products and establish stable market linkages.

Expected Impacts:

- Reduction in post-harvest losses, leading to increased profitability for farmers.
- Enhanced income through value-added products and fair market prices.
- Strengthened cooperatives, fostering collaboration and shared resources among farmers.
- Transition of smallholder farmers from subsistence farming to active participants in a professional, sustainable agroeconomy.
- Creation of jobs and promotion of rural development.

Specific Interventions for Mauritius

[2] SME Agri-Innovation and Export Hub

Objective: To empower agricultural SMEs by providing access to technology, finance, and premium markets, enabling them to innovate, scale, and contribute to a resilient and diversified agroeconomy.

Key Components:

1. Access to Finance: Concessional loans and grants for acquiring post-harvest infrastructure and advanced processing technologies. Financial support for certification under the "Bio-Mauritius" framework to access premium organic markets.
2. Capacity Building: Training programs on product innovation, digital marketing, and storytelling to enhance competitiveness. Workshops on sustainable practices and market differentiation strategies.
3. Market Expansion: Support for SMEs to access premium export markets for organic and agroecological products. Development of branding and packaging solutions to meet international standards.
4. Innovation and Collaboration: Establishment of shared innovation hubs for research and development in agri-tech and product diversification. Networking opportunities to foster partnerships between SMEs, farmers, and exporters.

Expected Impacts:

Increased competitiveness and profitability of SMEs in the agricultural sector.

Enhanced access to premium markets, boosting export revenues.

Creation of jobs and promotion of entrepreneurship in rural and urban areas.

Strengthened food-system resilience through innovation and diversification.

Contribution to sustainable economic growth and modernization of agriculture in Mauritius.

Specific Interventions for Mauritius and Rodrigues

[3] Women-Led Agri-Cooperatives and Entrepreneurship Program

Objective: To empower women in agriculture by enhancing their access to resources, skills, and opportunities, enabling them to become leaders in value addition, entrepreneurship, and sustainable farming practices.

Key Components:

1. Women-Led Cooperatives:

- a. Establish cooperatives focused on grading, processing, and value addition services.
- b. Provide training in leadership, financial management, and cooperative governance.

2. Financial Support:

- a. Offer collateral-free loans and flexible repayment schemes tailored for women entrepreneurs.
- b. Provide grants for women-led agri-business startups and value-added product lines.

3. Childcare Facilities:

- a. Set up nursery and childcare services near farming and processing centers to support women balancing work and family responsibilities.

4. Product Branding and Marketing:

- a. Encourage women to lead the development of specialized product lines such as baby foods, herbal teas, and high-fiber snacks.
- b. Provide training in branding, packaging, and digital marketing to enhance product visibility and market reach.

Expected Impacts:

- Increased participation of women in agriculture and agri-business, fostering inclusivity.
- Enhanced income and economic independence for women through value-added products and entrepreneurship.
- Improved work-life balance for women, encouraging long-term engagement in the sector.
- Creation of innovative, women-led product lines that contribute to market diversification.

Specific Interventions for Mauritius and Rodrigues

[4] Youth Agri-Tech Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program

Objective: To attract and empower youth in agriculture by integrating technology, education, and entrepreneurship, transforming agriculture into a modern, high-income, and sustainable career path.

Key Components:

1. Education and Awareness:

- a. Integrate agriculture and agri-tech into school curricula.
- b. Establish school gardens and organize inter-school competitions to spark interest in farming.
- c. Host workshops and events showcasing successful youth-led agricultural ventures.

2. Entrepreneurship Support:

- a. Launch agri-tech incubators to support youth in developing innovative solutions for farming challenges.
- b. Provide mentorship programs and start-up grants for youth-led agricultural enterprises.

3. Technology and Modernization:

- a. Promote smart farming techniques, climate-smart practices, and renewable energy systems.
- b. Provide access to digital tools, drones, and precision agriculture technologies.

4. Recognition and Networking:

- a. Revitalize Agricultural Youth Clubs to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- b. Create platforms to showcase youth achievements and connect them with investors and markets.

Expected Impacts:

- Increased youth participation in agriculture, rejuvenating the farming population.
- Development of innovative, tech-driven solutions to enhance agricultural productivity and sustainability.
- Creation of new job opportunities and youth-led enterprises in the agri-tech sector.
- Improved perception of agriculture as a modern and lucrative career choice.
- Long-term food security and economic growth through the engagement of a skilled and motivated youth workforce.

Specific Intervention for Rodrigues

[5] Agroprocessing and Branding Hub

Objective: Establish a centralised facility to enhance value addition, branding, and market differentiation for local agricultural products.

Key Components:

1. Develop a state-of-the-art processing park for key local products, equipped with solar-powered equipment and innovative processing lines.
2. Train local producers and youth in value addition, product development, and marketing.
3. Create a certified Rodriguan label with Geographical Indication (GI) protection to promote local products in domestic and international markets.
4. Launch a marketing campaign to build consumer trust and increase demand for branded Rodriguan products.

Expected Impact:

- Increased income for producers through value-added products.
- Enhanced competitiveness of Rodriguan products in local and export markets.
- Strengthened market resilience and consumer trust.