

Land resources in Mauritius

Mauritius, total area 185,000ha, is densely populated and has a limited high quality land area and is under high pressure due to increasing demand from various sectors of the economy.

- Agriculture (84 000 ha) 43 % of which sugar cane (77 000 ha) occupies 39% of total land mass
- Forest and shrubs (57 000 ha) 30%
- Built development including roads and utilities (43 000 ha) 26% of which 16 % is built-up space growing at a rate of 1000 ha of residential space every year.

Adverse impact of past action

Improper land use planning, in past has resulted:

- in the conversion of agricultural and forest land into other built up areas (conversion of 5,500 ha in last decade);
- degradation of coastal zones,
- loss of wetlands,
- traffic congestions on all major road ways,
- Unavoidable proximity of residential housing colonies to different polluting industry etc.

Erosion and soil degradation

Erosion is a process of physical land degradation caused by human impact and by changes in climate.

The major factors responsible for erosion and loss of soil fertility are:

- Cropping practices/or agro-chemical use
- Heavy rainfall soil fertility

Soil degradation also includes contamination by various toxicants as a result of: -

- (a) heavy waste disposal or solid waste management practices;
- (b) excess nutrients;
- (c) salinization; and
- (d) acidification under the impacts of acid rain

Loss of wetland

Wetlands are important ecosystems. They provide a vital link between lagoon and estuaries. Mauritius has around 40 wetlands ranging widely in size around the island.

Unfortunately, pressure from demand for development purposes some of these wetlands have been back-filled and reclaimed for other usages.

Sustainable development

Proper land management and planning are vital to ensure sustainable growth and protection of our resources.

Addressing soil erosion and soil degradation and management of drought are vital for ensuring food security and meet sustainable development goals.

Management for future

Over the next two decades, it is estimated that an additional 6200 ha will be needed to accommodate the increase in population and demands from economic expansion.

For a sustainable future, management of land resources is based on strategies that ensure judicious use of land, meeting equitably the competing demands, well-planned ecotourism and enforcement of related policies.