

PEOPLE



In the Rodrigues Island lagoons, overexploitation of fish resources and degradation of marine ecosystems has been caused by a strong dependence from fishing communities. Recently, the FAO SmartFish project supported these fishers to engage in alternative sustainable livelihoods through agro-forestry, farming and agro-processing. An integrated set of activities is being implemented in partnership with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, within the framework of Result 5 on Food Security directly implemented by FAO.

With implementing support from the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, fishers were trained in practices such as invasive species removal techniques and teaching methods of plant propagation (cutting, seed sowing, and seedling transplantation).

One beneficiary of this project, Clarel Speville **Hortense, said afterwards; "I am very happy and satisfied with the two months' work. All went well. I had the opportunity to learn many things I did not know before and what I learned from working with the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation can provide an income for my family. This experience will help me in my daily life to still earn a living when I don't go out fishing. I hope these activities will be done again."**

Similar feelings were shared by other beneficiaries such as Jean Rodney Severy, a participant of the Octopus Fishery Closing. In this phase, octopus fishers were given experience removing exotic and invasive species in nature reserves to aid coastal environmental protection.

Jean had this to share about his experience: **"Thanks to the octopus closure these past two months, I discovered things that I never thought I would see. First, once I entered the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, I learned how to respect my environment, to know the beautiful endemic plants that exist in Rodrigues. I learned how to protect these plants by keeping them in a clean and healthy environment in order for our future generations to have more of them."** In addition to these activities, the project is supporting the establishment of a cooperative network among ex-fisherwomen and works closely with them on improving the quality standard of five key agro-processed products, creating awareness for food safety, good hygiene practices and quality as well as enhancing marketing strategies of selected agro-processed products.