

MINISTRY OF AGRO-INDUSTRY, FOOD SECURITY,
BLUE ECONOMY AND FISHERIES

(BLUE ECONOMY AND FISHERIES DIVISION)

Albion Fisheries Research Centre

Coral Restoration & Research Projects
Guidelines for Applicants



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Background

In 2008, the Albion Fisheries Research Centre started a pilot project to farm corals in the lagoon of Albion with the aim to develop and master the technique for the establishment of coral nurseries for the restoration of corals. The main objective of the project was to grow corals in the sea-based nurseries, following which the corals would be relocated to repopulate degraded areas of the reef.

Following the positive results obtained from the pilot project, this Ministry extended coral farming in other regions around Mauritius and Rodrigues with a view to restoring degraded reefs affected by mass bleaching events.

In an effort to scale up the coral restoration actions, authorisations were issued by this Ministry to carry out coral restoration using coral nurseries based on asexual methods of propagation.

This specific method of propagation involved the collection of fragments of corals from wild colonies, which are then transferred to the nurseries to grow after which they are relocated to degraded coral areas. The nurseries are mainly composed of metallic tables fitted with ropes, onto which the fragments are attached and spider frames onto which fragments are fixed using a non-toxic glue.

However, following massive coral bleaching events that occurred in the Western Indian Ocean in 2016, associated with increased Sea Surface Temperature, it was observed that the success rate of asexual methods of propagation through coral nurseries was less than 30%.

In 2024, following receipt of new applications for coral farming projects, the Ministry carried out an evaluation of all authorised sites where coral nurseries have been established and it was noted that:

- (a) to sustain the coral nurseries, additional coral fragments are being taken from live coral colonies to replace the die-offs on a regular basis, hence, putting more pressure on the mother colonies;
- (b) no degraded reefs have been successfully restored and rehabilitated and, in some cases, the structures used for the coral nurseries are left at sea, with less than 10% live corals, on the justification that they have become an isolated fully established ecosystem. However, this practice does not really contribute in the coral restoration and rehabilitation efforts of our degraded reefs;
- (c) in some areas, those metal structures along with a large number of concrete blocks appeared to have been abandoned over a large expanse of the lagoon, giving a dumping zone like seascape and which was not authorised by the Ministry; and
- (d) coral nurseries authorisations were given for conservation and research purposes only. However, few organisations have misused these authorisations by placing other structures illegally at sea or used these permits to carry out related commercial activities with the general public which is not permitted.

Based on the above observations, a new Policy was prepared for coral farming project and Cabinet took the decision in its session of 16 May 2025 that no applications/projects will be considered for the following:

- (i) Asexual reproduction techniques involving breaking off of coral fragments from mother colonies or collection of coral of opportunities; and
- (ii) Placement of any structures at sea for the creation of coral nurseries for the purpose of asexual reproduction techniques.

In view of the above, this Ministry has prepared these Guidelines, which are consistent with the new Policy, with the aim to promote responsible, transparent and scientifically robust interventions for the conservation and restoration of coral reef ecosystems in Mauritius.

These Guidelines have been classified into two distinct sections, namely:

- (a) Category A: Coral Restoration Projects; and
- (b) Category B: Research Projects.

These Guidelines are intended to be a framework for providing clear information to applicants on the minimum requirements to be submitted to the Ministry for assessment, including project objectives, site details, methodology, technical capacity, monitoring arrangements, funding provisions, environmental safeguards and decommissioning plans, where applicable.

Furthermore, these Guidelines will ensure that coral restoration initiatives in Mauritius contribute effectively to the recovery of degraded reef areas and do not create additional pressure on existing coral communities and also minimise the placement of unnecessary or long-term structures in the marine environment.

Any structure, device or material proposed to be placed at sea shall be properly justified, monitored and removed at the end of the approved project period, unless authorised by the Ministry. **Any non-compliance by applicants will be considered as a contravention of Section 21 of the Fisheries Act 2023, which is subject to fines up to Rs 25 Million and maximum imprisonment of 2 years upon conviction.**

All applications submitted under these Guidelines shall be assessed on a case-to-case basis by the Ministry. The assessment may include a technical review of the proposal, verification of the proposed sites and consultation with relevant Ministries/Authorities where necessary, prior to any decision being taken.

Following assessment, the Ministry may approve the application with conditions, request additional information, defer consideration pending further clarification, or decline the application where the proposal is inconsistent with these Guidelines, Policy and applicable laws.

CATEGORY A: Coral Restoration Projects

1. Title of Project

2. Scope of Project

- (i) Aims
- (ii) Objectives
- (iii) Expected outcomes
- (iv) Project rationale
- (v) Location and site description, including map and GPS coordinates
- (vi) Proposed timeline
- (vii) Funding source and estimated budget

Note: No pilot project will be considered under Category A

3. Background Details

- (i) Organisation (include if applicable, Registration Certificate / Certificate of Incorporation)
- (ii) Names of Project Coordinators and Team to carry out the project
- (iii) Proven past experience on coral restoration, supported by documentary evidence
- (iv) Qualification of Project Coordinators and Team (to attach Curriculum Vitae)
- (v) Other partners / institutions involved in the implementation of activities
- (vi) Risk Assessment and Mitigation

4. Detailed Methodology

(a) Sexual Reproduction Technique

- (i) Location of land nursery (Include approval or permits/leases for land use, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) Licence, Building and Land Use Permit, etc.)
- (ii) Detailed design for culture system for land nursery
- (iii) Location of ocean nursery
- (iv) Detailed design for ocean nursery
- (v) Seawater source and detailed structure to be set up for the seawater collection, including intake method, quantity of water needed and discharge strategy to be supported by detailed designs
- (vi) GPS location and requested area (m²) for spawning collection

- (vii) Collection period and frequency
- (viii) Target coral species spawns to be collected
- (ix) Fertilised coral eggs collection method (including details of any structure to be placed at sea and anchoring methodology, if any)
- (x) Methodology to transfer fertilised coral eggs in land-based nursery.

(b) Coral Settlement Devices (CSDs)

- (i) Design, material and dimension of CSDs and supporting base to be placed at sea
- (ii) Detailed methodology for the placement of the CSDs and supporting base at sea
- (iii) GPS location for placement of CSDs and supporting base
- (iv) Number of CSDs and supporting base to be placed at sea
- (v) Monitoring strategy
- (vi) Removal/Decommissioning plan after approved project period (if applicable) ***Non-compliance for the removal of any structures at the end of the approved project period will be considered as a contravention of Section 21 of the Fisheries Act 2023.***

(c) Restoration

- (i) Proposed restoration site
- (ii) GPS location for restoration site (including map)
- (iii) Proposed area (m²) of restoration site
- (iv) Methodology to transplant nursery-based coral recruits to restoration site (techniques and materials to be used)
- (v) Coral transplantation frequency

5. Detailed project timeline

- (i) Duration of project
- (ii) Gantt chart with timeline and proposed activities

6. Expected Output

- (i) Projected reef area restored
- (ii) Project beneficiaries and benefits, if applicable

7. Funding

- (i) Financial projection to carry out the project
- (ii) Source of funding
- (iii) Post-funding sustainability of the project

8. Any other additional/relevant information

CATEGORY B: Research Projects

1. Title of Project(s)

2. Scope of Project

- (i) Aims
- (ii) Objectives
- (iii) Expected Outcomes /Output

3. Background Details

- (i) Name of Research Institution
- (ii) Name of Researcher(s) and team
- (iii) Curriculum Vitae of Researchers (1 page brief CV)
- (iv) Other partners / institutions / students involved in the research (incl. student ID and course registered, MoU with research institution)

4. Detailed Methodology (*any or multiple of below*)

(a) Structure at sea (*if applicable*)

- (i) Design, material and dimension of structure to be placed at sea
- (ii) Detailed methodology for the placement of the structure at sea
- (iii) GPS location for placement of structure
- (iv) Number of structures to be placed at sea
- (v) Removal plan of structure (*if applicable*)
- (vi) Monitoring strategy

(b) Spawn or fertilised coral eggs collection (*if applicable*)

- (i) GPS location for study and collection area
- (ii) Target marine species for spawn/fertilised coral eggs collection
- (iii) Number of specimens targeted per species
- (iv) Detailed collection methodology
- (v) Collection period and frequency

5. Detailed project timeline

- (i) Duration of project (start date and end date)
- (ii) Gantt chart with timeline and activities

6. Expected Output

7. Funding

8. Any other additional/relevant information

General Conditions

Important information to be considered by applicants for both Coral Restoration and Research Projects:

- (a) No coral and marine organisms' collection will be considered for commercial purposes.
- (b) No collection of marine organisms, placement of structures and restoration works shall be allowed in Marine Protected Areas except against payment for an Interference Permit fee as per the Fisheries (Marine Protected Areas) Regulations 2001 and (Amendment) Regulations 2007.
- (c) Assessment of the project proposal by this Ministry may involve surveys at the project sites before any decision is taken / permit is issued.
- (d) Maximum of 100 coral fragments will be considered for Research Projects not involving coral restoration using asexual reproduction.
- (e) Prior proven experience dealing with corals is required to carry out Coral Restoration Projects.
- (f) Rare and endemic corals may be allowed for collection for research purposes only (will be assessed on a case-to-case basis).
- (g) Innovative coral restoration techniques will be assessed on a case-to-case basis.
- (h) If the project includes foreign researchers or collaborators, an application for Marine Scientific Research shall be made through the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zone Administration and Exploration (Prime Minister's Office).
- (i) Missing or inadequate submission of requested information may delay the evaluation process or lead to no approval of the project.
- (j) The applicants shall:
 - (i) submit periodic technical and financial progress reports;
 - (ii) participate in site inspections and audits, if required;
 - (iii) document lessons learned and best practices;
 - (iv) contribute data and findings to national coral reef databases, where applicable;
 - (v) have due regard to the environmental impact of their projects;
 - (vi) implement measures to avoid harm to existing ecosystems; and
 - (vii) develop and implement a stakeholder and community engagement plan.

Amendments and Review

These Guidelines may be reviewed and updated periodically by the Ministry to reflect emerging scientific knowledge, policy priorities, and environmental challenges.

**Ministry of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries
(Blue Economy and Fisheries Division)
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