

PROTEGE takes off

Some of the main characteristics of Pacific Island countries and territories include high population growth rates, increasing urbanisation, significant economic reliance on national-government transfers, and difficulties in creating economic sectors. The natural ecosystems of the Pacific Islands region provide essential services that support countries' economies, and offer economically viable solutions for addressing climate-resilient development issues. Local communities continue to rely heavily on the quality of both their resources and natural environments, which provide their livelihoods and are vehicles for their social and cultural well-being and identities.

Building sustainable development and climate-resilient economies in French overseas countries and territories (OCTs) by focusing on biodiversity and renewable resources will be the main goal of a new project, named PROTEGE – which stands for the 'Projet régional océanien des territoires pour la gestion durable des écosystèmes' (in English: Pacific Territories Regional Project for Sustainable Ecosystem Management).

PROTEGE has a total budget of EUR 36 million, and has two main objectives: strengthening key primary sectors' sustainability, climate-change adaptation and autonomy; and enhancing ecosystem-service security by protecting water resources and biodiversity.

PROTEGE comes under the 11th regional European Development Fund (EDF). A four-year agreement was signed last October between the European Union and the Pacific Community. The project will operate in Wallis and Futuna, New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Pitcairn.

Four themes

PROTEGE has four themes: fisheries and aquaculture, agriculture and forestry, water, and invasive species. Expected outcomes for each theme are listed below.

Fisheries and aquaculture (budget: EUR 6.64 million)

- ✓ Aquaculture techniques and production development methods suited to island economies are trialled and implemented at pilot scales and then transferred to the rest of the Pacific Islands region (OCTs and ACP countries).
- ✓ Aquaculture activities are sustainably integrated into the natural setting by documenting and minimising any negative interactions.
- ✓ Participatory management and integrated planning (at the local, territorial and regional level) of the resources used are continued and strengthened.
- ✓ Optimal use is made of fisheries and aquaculture products.

Mangrove crab fishing in New Caledonia. (image: Matthieu Juncker)



Agriculture and forestry (budget: EUR 7.96 million)

- ✓ Viable agro-ecosystems are validated technically and transferred to crop and livestock farmers.
- ✓ At the territorial and regional level, an integrated forestry and agro-forestry policy is established for each forest stand.
- ✓ The marketed volumes of certified-organic products and those from the wood and coconut sectors increase by providing those areas with appropriate structures and making them sustainable.
- ✓ Agro-ecology and organic products are integrated into Pacific Island food systems.
- ✓ Cooperation among OCTs and between OCTs and ACP countries is strengthened through operational tools and coordination.



Forest regeneration work in Futuna. (image: SPC/INTEGRE)

Invasive species (budget: EUR 4.4 million)

- ✓ Biosecurity is improved through the development of strategies and action plans, and the acquisition of technology.
- ✓ Certain invasive alien animal and plant species (IAS) are managed and even eliminated at key biodiversity and ecosystem-services sites.
- ✓ Systems are set up to monitor the status of natural settings (including water resources), damage caused by IAS, and management efforts.
- ✓ Cooperation between OCTs and between OCTs and ACP countries is strengthened.
- ✓ These objectives and expected outcomes will be implemented at various geographic levels (i.e. local, territorial and regional).



Image: SPC/INTEGRE

Water (budget: EUR 7.36 million)

- ✓ Water-management knowledge and skills are improved by strengthening regional cooperation and laying the foundations for water monitoring agencies in each OCT and among OCTs.
- ✓ Drinking water resources are managed, protected and restored.
- ✓ Resilience to health risks, flooding and drought is enhanced.

The PROTEGE team

The team consists of 10 staff from the Pacific Community (SPC) and 1 staff from the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

Project Manager
Administrative Assistant
Project Finance Officer
Communications Officer
Coordinator – French Polynesia
Coordinator – Wallis and Futuna
Coordinator – New Caledonia
Coordinator – Agriculture/Forestry
Coordinator – Fisheries/Aquaculture
Coordinator – Water
Coordinator – Invasive Species

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