

# Mauritius

**Last updated: 31-01-2004**

## **Location and area**

Mauritius is an independent island republic in the western Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar. The country includes the island of Mauritius, with an area of 1,865 km<sup>2</sup>, the island of Rodrigues (109 km<sup>2</sup>) to the east, the Agalega islands to the north, and the St Brandon Group (also known as the Cargados Carajos Shoals) to the north-east, which have a combined area of 71 km<sup>2</sup>. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

## **Topography**

The island of Mauritius is of volcanic origin. From a low-lying plain in the north, the terrain rises to a plateau that covers the central part of the island. The south is mostly mountainous, rising to a maximum elevation in Petite Rivière Noire Peak (845 m). Several lakes are located in the plateau region, and numerous rivers rise in the highlands and flow to the coast. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

## **Climate**

The climate is tropical and generally humid. The average annual temperature is 27° C on the coast but is lower in the central plateau. Average annual rainfall ranges from about 1,000 mm on the coast to about 5,000 mm in the plateau region. Strong cyclonic storms occur often during the hot season (December to April). (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

## **Land use**

The economy of Mauritius has traditionally been dominated by sugar cane, which covers more than half of the cultivated land (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

## **Wetlands**

Natural wetland vegetation, sometimes peat forming, is found in the plateau region (Vaughan & Wiehe 1937).

## **Peatlands**

Straka (1960a) found peatlands in Le Petrin (630 m a.s.l.) and a 3 ha large peatland in the Grandes Gorges. Furthermore, Straka (1958, 1963) reports on a Stillingia-Croton swamp in Les Mares with a clay containing peat layer of 1.9 m. Schwaar (1979) reports on threatened mire species on Mauritius.

Markov et al. (1988) report the presence of swamps in the mountains of Mauritius. Check of misschien Mauretania bedoeld is. Most of them have a mineral soil, but in one case a peat layer of 190 cm was found.

According to the interpreted World Soil Map (Van Engelen & Huting 2002) no histosols exist in Mauritius and 41 km<sup>2</sup> of gley soils.