

Tukemaragai: Ecological Restoration of the Small Islands of the Southeast of Gambier

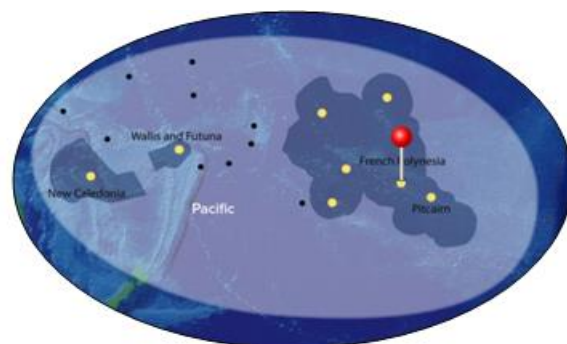
Targeted territory: French Polynesia

Total project budget: 77,789 Euros

BEST 2.0 grant awarded: 77,789 Euros

Duration: April 2017 – September 2018 (18 months)

Lead organisation: Commune des Gambier



Background:

Small uninhabited oceanic islands, or oceanic islands with low populations, can compensate for the loss of biodiversity of neighbouring more highly inhabited islands in an effort to capture and conserve most of the threatened biodiversity (fauna and flora). Thus, the 3 uninhabited islands of the Gambier archipelago have been selected for an ecological restoration project. On the other hand, the vegetation cover of these 3 islets today is subject to erosion due to overgrazing and the development of invasive plants.



Description of the Project:

The project aims to restore the habitats and bird life of 3 islets in the Gambier, Manui, Kamaka and Makaroa islands, in particular by reforesting eroded areas and those invaded by invasive plants and used by nesting seabirds.

The strategy will be to produce in a nursery and then plant and maintain thousands of indigenous and endemic tree species with many traditional uses (carving wood, wickerwork, edible seeds and fruits, medicinal plants and cosmetics) and which are increasingly rare on the scale of the

Gambier archipelago. The strategy will also include the installation of artificial sound and burrowing devices to attract breeding seabirds in order to encourage the return of some particularly rare and endangered species.

This restoration will eventually support the development of ornithological ecotourism. Finally, through the reforestation of eroded soils, the project will contribute to maintaining the soil fertility of the islands and the quality of the lagoon waters, which also provide many ecosystem services.

The implementation of the project will thus restore various ecosystem services and mitigate as far as possible the predicted effects of climate change. The participation of different stakeholders such as associations and educational actors will help to raise awareness of biodiversity conservation issues and the many services rendered by ecosystems.

Intended results:

The project aims to continue the restoration of islets by replanting shrubs and trees to stop erosion, controlling invasive plants and promoting the recolonisation of seabirds. More specifically, it aims to achieve 3 main results:

- The establishment of forest plantations on eroded areas and areas colonised by invasive plants.
- Increased number and diversity of breeding seabirds.
- Sensitization of the population and more particularly the owners to the richness and fragility of the natural heritage of the islets.

Reforestation will make these small island ecosystems more resilient to the effects of climate change through increased coverage of soil by native species perfectly adapted to the difficult natural conditions (droughts, spray, superficial soils), limiting erosion during exceptional climatic episodes (droughts, rain etc.) and the control of invasive species by replacement with more stable and sustainable indigenous species.

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