



## U.S. Country Commercial Guides



2017

# Mauritius

U.S. Department of Commerce | International Trade Administration

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2017 Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies

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# Doing Business in Mauritius

## Market Overview

Mauritius is one of the most stable and successful economies in Africa with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of USD 11.8 billion and per capita GDP over USD 9,400. While the country saw remarkable economic growth in the years after independence, it has stagnated since 2008 with an 11 percent drop in exports in 2016 from 2015. Nevertheless, GDP grew by 3.8 percent in 2016 and the IMF estimates it will continue to grow at a moderate rate of 3.8 to 4 percent in the medium term. Mauritius consistently does well on the World Bank's Doing Business report and, for the 9th consecutive year, the 2017 report ranks Mauritius first among African economies (49th worldwide) in overall ease of doing business.

The most important sectors of the Mauritian economy are: textiles, tourism, financial and business services, information and communication technology, seafood processing, real estate development, energy, and education/training. Mauritius claims an Exclusive Economic Zone of 1.9 million square kilometers and has aspirations for the ocean economy to play a significant role in its economic development.

As for bilateral trade between Mauritius and the U.S., it is largely from Mauritius to the U.S., with a significant focus on textiles under AGOA. Total two-way trade between Mauritius and the United States was valued at \$342 million in 2016, a 3.3 percent increase from 2015. Mauritian exports to the U.S. amounted to \$245 million in 2016, and the U.S. is currently the third largest export market for Mauritius after the UK and France, receiving 10.6% of total Mauritian exports. Mauritius' main exports to the U.S. are textiles and apparel, precious stones/jewelry, processed fish, live primates, sunglasses, sugar and other processed specialty foods. As for imports, Mauritius imported \$97 million in goods from the U.S. in 2016, mainly agricultural/construction/industrial machinery and equipment, precious stones/jewelry, medical and surgical instruments, aircraft parts. Mauritius' main sources of imported goods are China, India, France and South Africa.

Mauritian exports are eligible for preferential access to markets of: i) the South African Development Community (SADC), ii) the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), iii) the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC – preferences to Madagascar only), iv) Europe (under the EU-East Africa Interim Economic Partnership Agreement), v) the United States (under the African Growth and Opportunity Act-AGOA), vi) Japan, Norway, Switzerland, USA and the Customs Union between Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), vii) Turkey under the Mauritius-Turkey Free Trade Agreement and viii) Pakistan under the Mauritius-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement.

## **Market Challenges**

There are no legal barriers for U.S. firms entering the Mauritian market, but the small size of the Mauritian market (1.26 million people) and the vast distance between Mauritius and the United States makes it a less attractive market for U.S. products. Other obstacles that limit economic progress include high sovereign debt, a skills mismatch, and significant risk associated with a financial sector that is vulnerable to external pressures. Additionally, U.S. firms entering the Mauritian market must contend with established European and Asian competitors.

The government controls key utility services, including electricity, water, waste water, postal services, and television broadcasting. The State Trading Corporation controls imports of non-basmati rice, wheat flour, and petroleum products, while the Agricultural Marketing Board controls imports of potatoes, onions, corn, and some spices that compete with locally grown produce. There are no laws providing a preference for Mauritian goods and services. However, some government tenders require local partners or importers.

## **Market Opportunities**

The best opportunities for U.S. firms exist in renewable and clean energy, energy efficient building design and equipment, medical equipment and healthcare services, drugs/pharmaceuticals, port handling equipment, ocean-related industries and services, refrigeration equipment, safety/security equipment, water supply equipment and services, hotel and restaurant equipment, agricultural/construction/industrial machinery, telecommunications and information technology, textile machinery and equipment, franchising, and consultancy services. Agricultural and food sector opportunities include wheat, vegetable oil, corn/soybean for animal feed, bio-farming technology, and seeds (potato, onion, and other vegetables).

## **Market Entry Strategy**

Partnering with a locally established agent or distributor is strongly recommended, especially in bidding for large government projects.

The Embassy's Economic/Commercial Section offers a variety of services designed to assist U.S. firms develop their market entry strategy and facilitate their export experience in Mauritius. Visit the Embassy website at <https://mu.usembassy.gov/> and click on the Business tab.

Embassy Port Louis partners with the [U.S. Commercial Service in Johannesburg, South Africa](#). For a more comprehensive list of commercial services available to U.S. businesses, visit their website at and click on "Services to U.S. Businesses."

Mauritians are bilingual in English and French. Mauritian Creole, a modified form of French, is the mother tongue of most Mauritians.

## **Political Environment**

### **Political Environment**

For background information on the political and economic environment of Mauritius, please click on the link below to the [U.S. Department of State Background Notes](#).

## **Selling US Products & Services**

### **Using an Agent to Sell US Products and Services**

Local agents and distributors represent more than 200 U.S. products or companies in Mauritius. For products that require servicing, qualified personnel and a reasonable supply of parts are essential. The Embassy can assist U.S. firms identify an agent or distributor through our International Partner Search or Gold Key Service. Interested parties must apply through the U.S. Commercial Service at the American Consulate in Johannesburg, South Africa. For additional information, please visit our [Embassy website](#) or the [U.S. Commercial Service Southern Africa](#) site.

### **Establishing an Office**

A company incorporated in Mauritius can be 100% foreign-owned with no minimum capital requirement. The new Business Facilitation Act of 2017 allows businesses to incorporate a company and register a business with the [Corporate Business Registration Department](#) in less than two hours and to start operations in less than one day. . Online application for incorporation and registration is available online.

Foreign companies typically organize as a private limited company. After obtaining a certificate of incorporation, foreign companies must register with the [Board of Investment](#) (BOI), the government's business facilitation and investment promotion agency. The BOI can also assist with occupation permits (work and residence permits combined) and offers other services to investors.

### **Franchising**

Franchising in Mauritius is predominantly, but not exclusively, in the fast food sector. American franchises such as Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut, and McDonalds have been operating in Mauritius for several years, alongside South African franchises such as Nando's, Steers, Debonair Pizza, Spur, and Ocean Basket. Coca-Cola and Pepsi products are produced by Phoenix Beverages and Quality Beverages, respectively. Many of the resorts and hotels present in Mauritius, such as Holiday Inn, Hilton, Marriott International , and Intercontinental, also operate under franchise agreements.

### **Direct Marketing**

Direct marketing is limited to a few products. Some companies sell cosmetic, health, and house cleaning products directly to consumers through visits to households or offices. Overseas shopping by mail order and internet is not common due to the small size of the island and the high cost of shipping goods internationally.

## **Joint Ventures/Licensing**

Joint ventures are used mostly for construction and engineering projects and management of shopping malls. Foreign architects must enter into a joint venture with a Mauritian architect or firm to work on local projects. All contractors and consultants, whether local or foreign, must register with the [Construction Industry Development Board](#) to be able to offer construction services in Mauritius. Local companies manufacture a number of products under license, ranging from beverages to toiletries. The foreign and local firm must negotiate the licensing agreements and royalty arrangements.

## **Selling to the Government**

Major government contracts are handled through an autonomous [Central Procurement Board](#). Government procurement regulations are available online. The Procurement Policy Office runs the public procurement system. The GOM publishes tender notices in the Government Gazette and local media, as well as on the Central Procurement Board's web site. The Embassy monitors tenders open to foreign participation and forwards them to the U.S. Department of Commerce, which in turn disseminates them to the U.S. business community through U.S. Export Assistance Centers. Successful foreign bidders generally work with local partners in pursuing major contracts. Many governments finance public works projects through borrowing from the Multilateral Development Banks. Please refer to "*Project Financing*" Section in "*Trade and Project Financing*" for more information.

## **Distribution & Sales Channels**

Goods are distributed through the standard channels of importers, wholesalers, retailers, and supermarkets. Mauritius has a wide range of retail outlets, ranging from high-end shopping centers to family-run corner stores. Distribution of goods is relatively uncomplicated once goods arrive on the island given Mauritius' size: 42 miles north to south, and 28 miles east to west. A four-lane motorway links the airport in the extreme southeast with the capital and principal seaport, Port Louis, on the west coast, before terminating in the extreme north at Grand Baie. Port Louis has a permanent population of only 155,000, but it is the island's business and commercial center. There are four other major towns, stretching south east from Port Louis along the main motorway to the airport and the majority of the country's population lives in this urban area.

## **Express Delivery**

A number of service providers namely DHL, FEDEX & TNT and UPS provide international express delivery services. The Mauritius Post, in which the Government is a majority shareholder, also provides international express courier services through

its Expedited Mail Service (EMS). Additionally, Mauritius Post and some smaller companies provide internal pick-up and delivery services.

### **Selling Factors & Techniques**

Effective advertising, competitive pricing, prompt delivery, and reliable after-sales servicing are important. Companies wishing to introduce new products into the Mauritian market require market research to identify potential customers, buying patterns, and preferences. In general, food products, especially prepared/processed food, must be adapted to local tastes and conditions. Companies should consider local cultural and religious preferences when developing a marketing strategy. To cater to the Muslim community (17% of the population), provision must be made for “halal” processing (slaughtered according to Muslim rites). Many Hindu Mauritians (48% of the population) do not eat beef.

### **eCommerce**

Ecommerce in Mauritius is limited, but its use is on the rise. The main obstacle is that the speed and bandwidth required for modern e-commerce transactions are lacking in some of the more remote areas. To address this limitation, the country is in the midst of upgrading to fiber-broadband with speeds between 10MB and 30MB, a process which the government expects to complete by 2018. While many Mauritians use websites more for information gathering than for purchasing, this is expected to change as companies use new online strategies to promote their products. Many Mauritian businesses still do not maintain websites, preferring to use Facebook to reach their target market. Nevertheless, some companies are investing in e-commerce platforms for services such as finding deals on hotels and activities, finding a gardener or housekeeper. Examples include: [marideal.mu](http://marideal.mu), [priceguru.mu](http://priceguru.mu) and [mychauffeur.mu](http://mychauffeur.mu).

Banking is fairly sophisticated and payment by debit/credit cards is very popular, rapidly replacing cash payment in malls, supermarkets and restaurants. Internet banking is increasingly used by consumers. According to Bank of Mauritius statistics, internet banking transactions have increased from 199,697 in March 2010 to 670,574 in March 2017. The major banks in Mauritius have also invested heavily in mobile banking since 2011. The number of mobile transactions as of March 2017 amounted to 655,362 (Source: Bank of Mauritius, Monthly Statistical Bulletin).

### **Trade Promotion & Advertising**

The advertising industry in Mauritius is quite sophisticated and advertising is essential to the successful launch of a product or service. U.S. exporters should be prepared to provide promotional support to their agents and distributors, particularly when introducing a new product to the market. Advertising can be in English, French, or Creole (the local dialect). Companies should consider radio, billboards, print media

and television as part of their campaign. Media deregulation has introduced more competition via three independent radio stations, but the government-run Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation remains the only local television broadcaster. Consumer goods account for most advertising, followed by durables and services (banking, insurance, information technology, education).

There are about 200 advertising agencies in Mauritius. The [Association of Communication Agencies \(ACA\)](#) of Mauritius is a trade group of the 18 largest agencies and accounts for 70% of the market. These agencies provide a full range of marketing services, including media planning, market surveys, and creation of advertising materials. Advertising agencies normally obtain a 20% commission from any media booking. Multinational companies tend to work on a service fee basis rather than commission. The ACA may be contacted at:

Association of Communication Agencies of Mauritius  
P.O. Box 522, Port Louis, Mauritius

Tel: +230 286-7330;

Fax: +230 286-7334

Email: [acamauritius@intnet.mu](mailto:acamauritius@intnet.mu)

There are three major daily newspapers and many weeklies. Most are in French but they do carry some articles and advertisements in English. L'express Weekly and News on Sunday are the only newspapers entirely in English. Major newspapers and business magazines include:

- [L'Express](#) (daily)
- [Le Mauricien](#) (daily)
- [Le Defi Quotidien](#) (daily)
- [Week-End](#) (weekly)
- [Business Magazine](#) (weekly) Email:
- [L'Express Weekly](#):

## **Pricing**

The Mauritian market is generally price sensitive, although middle and high-income brackets increasingly look for quality. Most prices are market-determined, but the government controls prices and/or markups on certain goods. For example, the government sets maximum prices for petroleum products, cooking gas (for domestic use), wheat flour, non-luxury rice, and bread. Additionally, there are maximum markups permitted (ranging from 17% to 45%) for goods such as pharmaceuticals, timber, tires, infant milk, canned fish and meats, and imported fresh fruits. Mauritius applies a 15% Value Added Tax (VAT) on all goods and services, except for some basic staple food items, medical and dental services, most pharmaceuticals, and educational and training services.

## **Sales Service/Customer Support**

While Mauritians are generally helpful and friendly, customer service is not up to the standards expected in the United States. However, Mauritian consumers are starting to expect better quality and after-sales service. After-sales servicing and availability of spare parts are essential for successfully marketing certain goods, particularly machinery and equipment. Most importers/distributors of appliances and electronic goods have a workshop for servicing and selling parts. U.S. manufacturers should be prepared to train local staff to provide efficient servicing.

## **Protecting Intellectual Property**

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) are protected in Mauritius by the Patents, Industrial Designs and Trade Marks Act of 2002, which complies with the WTO's Trade Related Aspects of Industrial Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement. However, to reinforce IPR in Mauritius, the government announced it will adopt a new Industrial Property Bill in 2017, covering all aspects of IPR. In addition to patents, trademarks and industrial designs, the Bill is intended to protect plant breeders' rights, geographical indications, and layout designs of integrated circuits and utility models.

While the IP legislation in Mauritius is consistent with international norms, enforcement is relatively weak. According to a leading IPR law firm, the authorities will normally only take action in cases where the IPR owner has an official representative in Mauritius because the courts require a representative to testify that the products seized are counterfeit. The Customs Department also requires rights holders or authorized users to register their trademarks and copyrights with its office so that it can seize suspicious goods at the port. Application forms for registration are available at the [Mauritius Revenue Authority](#) website.

In any foreign market companies should consider several general principles for effective management of their intellectual property. For background on these principles please link to our article on [Protecting Intellectual Property](#) and also [Corruption](#).

### **IP Contacts for Mauritius**

Name: Shariff Jathoonia

Address: U.S. Embassy Port Louis, Mauritius

Telephone: + 230 202 4464

E-mail: [jathoonisx@state.gov](mailto:jathoonisx@state.gov)

Name: Smita Bheenick

Address: U.S. Embassy Port Louis, Mauritius

Telephone: + 230 202 4430

E-mail: [bheenicks@state.gov](mailto:bheenicks@state.gov)

## **Due Diligence**

The Embassy recommends due diligence before entering into any type of business activity with local companies. The Embassy's Economic/Commercial Section can

provide valuable background information on Mauritian firms through its [International Company Profile](#) (ICP) service and is always ready to provide more general information to U.S. businesses and investors as needed. Further information can be obtained by visiting our website or by contacting your local U.S. Export Assistance Center or the [U.S. Commercial Service in Johannesburg](#).

### **Local Professional Services**

A number of international accounting and management-consulting firms such as PricewaterhouseCoopers, KPMG, Deloitte, BDO, and EY are represented in Mauritius. They provide a range of professional services including audit, tax, consulting, and financial advisory services.

A list of local attorneys is available on the Embassy website at <https://mu.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/local-resources-of-u-s-citizens/attorneys/>

The Embassy's Economic/Commercial Section can be contacted via email at [jathoonisx@state.gov](mailto:jathoonisx@state.gov) or [bheenicks@state.gov](mailto:bheenicks@state.gov); Phone: +230 202-4464 or +230 202-4430; or Fax: +230 208-9534.

Further information on legal resources is available from the Mauritius Bar Association:

#### [Mauritius Bar Association](#)

Max City Building (4th Floor)

21 Pope Hennessy Street

Port Louis, Mauritius

Tel: +230 213-9130; Fax: +230 208-8351

Email: [mbarcouncil@yahoo.com](mailto:mbarcouncil@yahoo.com)

### **Principal Business Associations**

#### [Mauritius Chamber of Commerce & Industry](#)

Contact: Mr. Raju Jadoo, Secretary-General

Address: 6 Adolphe de Plevitz Street

Port Louis, Mauritius

Tel: +230 203 4830

Email: [mcci@intnet.mu](mailto:mcci@intnet.mu)

#### [Business Mauritius](#)

Contact: Mr. Raj Makoond, CEO

Address: BM-MCCI Building

Rue du Savoir

Ebene Cyber City

Ebene, Mauritius

Tel: + 230 466 3600

Email: [info@businessmauritius.org](mailto:info@businessmauritius.org)

#### [Mauritius Bankers Association](#)

Contact: Ms. Aisha Timol, CEO  
Address: Newton Tower (15<sup>th</sup> Floor)  
Port Louis, Mauritius  
Tel: + 230 213 2390  
E-mail: [actimol@mba.mu](mailto:actimol@mba.mu)

[Mauritius Export Association](#)

Contact: Ms. Lilowtee Rajmun, Director  
Address: Royal Street  
Port Louis, Mauritius  
Tel: + 230 208 5216  
E-mail: [lilowtee@mexa.mu](mailto:lilowtee@mexa.mu)

### **Limitations on Selling US Products and Services**

There are no specific limitations on selling U.S. products and services in Mauritius.

### **Web Resources**

[Construction Industry Development Board](#)

[Association of Communication Agencies](#)

[L'express](#) (daily)

[Le mauricien](#) (daily)

[Le Defi Quotidien](#) (daily)

[Week-end](#) (daily)

[Mauritius Revenue Authority](#)

[U.S. Commercial Service in Johannesburg, South Africa](#)

[Mauritius Bar Association](#)

[Mauritius Chamber of Commerce & Industry](#)

[Business Mauritius](#)

[Mauritius Bankers Association](#)

[Mauritius Export Association](#)

## **Leading Sectors for US Exports & Investments**

### **Energy**

#### Overview

The GOM's energy policy encourages the use of renewable and clean energy to reduce the country's dependence on fossil fuels and decrease greenhouse gas emissions. The GOM has announced plans to increase use of renewable sources of energy from the current 22% to 35% by 2025. It aims to do this through wind farms, solar energy, biomass and waste-to-energy projects. While bagasse (sugarcane waste) remains the key source of renewable energy (16%), Mauritius derived the remaining renewable electricity generation from hydro, wind, landfill gas and solar. The government seeks international competitive bidding for all its power projects and favors joint ventures between the local private sector and international firms. The Central Electricity Board

(CEB), the power utility, plans to increase the grid absorption capacity of intermittent energy from 148 MW to 160 MW by 2018.

The GOM is also undertaking legal and institutional reforms in the energy sector. In 2016 the government created the Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency (MARENA) to oversee the development of renewable energy in Mauritius. In 2017 the GOM established a Utility Regulatory Authority to regulate electricity, water and waste water. An Energy Efficiency Act provides for product labeling and importation of energy efficient equipment, and the Building Control Act of 2011 aims to improve energy efficiency in building design.

The CEB is the sole agency for transmission, distribution, and sale of electricity in Mauritius. CEB currently produces 40% of the country's total power requirement from four thermal power stations and eight hydroelectric plants; the remaining 60% is purchased from Independent Power Producers, mainly private generators from the sugarcane industry using bagasse and imported coal.

Unit: USD Thousands	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	-	-	-	-
Total Exports	-	-	-	-
Total Imports (Renewable)	5,506	2,260	7,711	9,253
Imports from the US	9	-	2,794	3,352
Total Market Size	5,506	2,260	7,711	9,253
Exchange Rates: 1 USD	32.00	35.00	36.00	36.50

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Data Sources: i) Statistics Mauritius, ii) Embassy Estimates for 2017

#### Leading Sub-Sectors

- Photovoltaic cells and technology
- Solar energy technology for solar water heaters
- Waste-to-energy plant for burning solid waste
- Pumping of cold sea water for air conditioning
- Wind turbines
- Liquefied Natural Gas Projects
- Green building design services and equipment
- Energy efficiency projects and energy audits

## Opportunities

**Solar Technology/Waste-to-Energy:** Much of Mauritius receives almost year-round, intensive sunlight that makes solar photovoltaic (PV) energy an attractive energy option. To achieve the target of 35% renewable energy by 2025, Mauritius plans on commissioning five solar PV plants of 15MW each. In 2015 and 2016, CEB issued tenders for a total of 62 MW to be commissioned in 2018-2019. A U.S. firm won three contracts for a total of 13MW, of which two solar farms of 2 MW each have been completed. The government's FY 2017-18 proposed budget has earmarked close to USD 20 million for a Solar Home Project, which includes the installation of 10,000 roof-top solar panels over the next five years.

Mauritius produces about 500,000 tons of solid waste per year and its only landfill site is close to saturation. Accordingly, in 2016 CEB issued a Request for Proposals for a 24 MW of waste-to-energy project.

**Wind and Wave Energy:** The CEB has signed two Energy Supply and Purchase Agreements with two foreign firms for wind farm projects. The first project for 9MW was completed in 2016 by French company Quadran in joint venture with a local partner. The second project of 29MW, involving Indian firm Suzlon in joint venture with a local partner, has not yet started. Preliminary research carried out by the Mauritius Research Council (MRC) shows potential for the development of offshore wind farms, as well as wave energy, in the waters of Mauritius and Rodrigues. In November 2015, Australian company Carnegie Wave Energy Ltd. signed a Collaboration Agreement with MRC to explore opportunities for commercial wave energy plants and experiments are ongoing. In October 2016, the Embassy in collaboration with MRC organized a workshop on Offshore Wind Energy with an expert from U.S. company General Electric. In early 2017 MRC issued an Expression of Interest for consultants with experience in the development of offshore wind farms and has, to date, garnered 40 interested bidders.

**Energy Efficiency/Green Building:** As part of a general move away from fossil fuel-generated energy, opportunities exist for energy efficiency, audit, management, and advisory projects targeting large energy consumers. The Building Control Act 2011 provides opportunities for consultancy services in designing "green" buildings and supplying related equipment and materials. Energy efficiency is now one of the main criteria in the design of public buildings and in rental of private buildings.

**Deep Ocean Water Application (DOWA) Project:** The Board of Investment is actively promoting Deep Ocean Water Application (DOWA) projects, often known in the U.S. as "O-tech" or Sea Water Air Conditioning (SWAC). Local company Sotravic, through its subsidiary Urban Cooling Ltd, is developing a project to pump cold sea water from a deep ocean current into downtown Port Louis for air conditioning. Sotravic retained U.S. company Makai Ocean Engineering to carry out the feasibility study and the conceptual design of the project. In October 2016, Sotravic conducted offshore

marine surveys that will enable the company to proceed with the design and construction. In addition to air conditioning, Sotravic is considering the next phase of the project, which will involve using the cold ocean water for bottling, aquaculture, seaweed cultivation, pharmaceutical and cosmetic products.

**Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG):** In January 2017, the Ministry of Energy issued an international call for proposals for consultancy services for a feasibility study for liquefied natural gas. The GOM believes that natural gas would provide backup capacity for renewable energy, is less polluting than coal, diesel and heavy fuel oil, and also help with future peak load needs. The feasibility study will evaluate the technical and economic feasibility, as well as the best financial model for implementing the project. It will also assess environmental and social impacts. Bids were still being evaluated at the time of writing.

**Partnering with Mauritian Firms in Africa:** Several Mauritian firms are currently involved in or investigating renewable energy projects, particularly hydropower and PV solar farms, in Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Madagascar, and Ghana. U.S firms could partner with Mauritian companies to implement energy projects on mainland Africa with the support of Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), Ex-Im Bank, and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency.

Web Resources

[Ministry of Energy & Public Utilities](#)

[Central Electricity Board](#)

[Energy Efficiency Management Office](#)

[Board of Investment](#)

[U.S. Commercial service, Johannesburg, South Africa](#)

## Medical Equipment

Overview

Public hospitals are free in Mauritius, but there are also several private clinics. Mauritius' healthcare infrastructure includes 5 major public hospitals, 5 specialized public hospitals, 17 private multi-specialty clinics, 11 private specialized clinics and 29 medical laboratories. In 2016, Mauritius imported USD 28 million worth of medical equipment, mainly from Germany (16%), United States (14%), South Africa (11%), France (8%) and China (7%). As of January 2016, there were seven medical devices manufacturers in Mauritius, employing about 600 people. Further details on the companies and the products manufactured are provided below. The vast majority of the local production is exported to France (60%) and India (20%).

Unit: USD Thousands	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	16,406	14,882	NA	-
Total Exports	25,893	21,028	29,408	30,878

Total Imports	27,625	24,751	27,812	29,203
Imports from the US	3,434	2,533	3,954	4,152
Total Market Size	18,138	18,604	-	-
Exchange Rates: 1 USD	32.00	35.00	36.00	36.50

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Data Sources: i) Statistics Mauritius, ii) Embassy Estimates for 2017

Name	Main Products	Status
Natec Medical	Catheters & Stents	Autonomous Entity (Mauritius)
FCI Sud	Ophthalmic Implants	Carl Zeiss Subsidiary (Germany)
Lilmo	Cardiovascular and oncology implants	Pérouse Medical subsidiary (now VYGON since July 2015) (France)
Symatase	Artificial skins	Pérouse Medical subsidiary, (now VYGON since July 2015) (France)
Kasios	Orthopaedic and dental implants	Kasios France subsidiary (France)
Envaste	Catheters uro & gastroenterology	Autonomous entity (Mauritius)
Alpinia	Biomedical micromechanics	Statrice Santé subsidiary (France)

Data Source: National Export Strategy, Medical Devices Sector, pp. 10

#### Leading Sub-Sectors

- Cancer Center Equipment
- Ear, Nose, Throat (ENT) Hospital Equipment
- Medical Imaging (MRI, CT and X-Ray) and Diagnostic Equipment
- Surgical Equipment
- Orthopedics Supplies and Artificial Parts of the Body
- Dialysis Equipment
- Laboratory Equipment
- Dental Surgery and Dentofacial Orthopedics
- Healthcare IT Solutions

#### Opportunities

The GOM made several announcements about planned upgrades in the medical sector in the 2016–2017 budget. Projects include extension of the cardiac center, setting up a state-of-the-art National Health Laboratory Services and construction of a new ENT hospital. In April 2016, the Cabinet also approved the construction of a new cancer center and the Minister of Health appointed in January 2017 has identified this project as a priority due to an increase in cancer cases. The GOM launched tenders for construction of the cancer center in December 2016, and we expect to see requests for bids for linear accelerators and other equipment in the near future. We also expect this tender to include training and services for operation and maintenance of the equipment. Finally, the GOM has announced plans to launch an E-Health project in one of its hospitals on a pilot basis. The first phase of this project will computerize medical records, nursing management, patient management and pharmacy services. Eventually, the project will be extended to all public hospitals and other health institutions.

The medical industry in Mauritius is characterized by high-value activities such as hi-tech medicine, medical tourism, alternative medicine and wellness. Several global companies have invested in specialty centers to cater for growing healthcare needs of national and international patients. According to Government figures, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease account for 80% of total health expenditure and this demand is expected to increase in the coming years. Furthermore, the Government supports expansion of the medical tourism sector and has announced fast-tracking of visa applications for patients seeking treatment in Mauritius in the 2016–2017 budget. In 2016, Mauritius attracted more than 16,000 foreign patients (up from 1,000 in 2005 and 12,000 in 2012) for treatment in specialty areas such as cosmetic surgery and procedures, cardiology, fertility treatment and orthopedics.

There are potential opportunities for establishing:

- Multispecialty and super-specialty centers;
- Specialized diabetes research and treatment centers;
- Specialized centers for elderly care & rehabilitative medicine;
- Specialized centers for novel treatments stem-cell therapies;
- Plastic reconstructive surgery clinics;
- Clinics for dental surgery and dentofacial orthopedics; and
- Convalescence and pain clinics providing specialized care to patients suffering from acute and chronic conditions.

The medical device manufacturing industry has also seen sustained growth over the last few years. Due to the preferential market access that Mauritius enjoys to the EU, leading medical devices manufacturers have established themselves here. As an

incentive to attract more companies, the Government announced in the 2016–2017 budget that materials used in the manufacture of medical devices will be exempt from customs duty. In the proposed 2017–2018 budget, the Government announced that new companies that manufacture medical devices will have an eight year tax holiday, and also proposed a rebate on air freight for companies exporting medical devices to Europe. Finally, to encourage growth in the medical devices industry in Mauritius, the proposed 2017–2018 budget states that the government will amend the Clinical Trials Act to allow testing of devices in Mauritius.

#### Web Resources

[Board of Investment](#)

[Government Information Service](#)

[Ministry of Health and Quality of Life](#)

[National Export Strategy, Medical Devices Sector](#)

[Public Procurement Portal](#)

[Statistics Mauritius](#)

## Pharmaceuticals

### Overview

There are 344 registered private drugstores and 35 registered pharmaceutical wholesalers in Mauritius. Pharmaceutical products can only be imported by wholesalers licensed by the Pharmacy Board which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. Of the USD 114 million of pharmaceuticals imported in 2016, the Health Ministry accounted for 25% of the import value. The government purchases mostly generic medications through tenders issued throughout the year according to an established annual procurement plan. The private hospitals and drug stores tend to buy branded products through local wholesalers. In 2016, India remained the main supplier of pharmaceuticals to Mauritius, with 31% of the market, followed by France (17%), Germany (8%), South Africa (6%) and Switzerland (5.5%). Imports from the United States in 2016 were 1.3% of the total, but some European imports originate from U.S. subsidiaries. There is one Indian-based pharmaceutical companies, Ajanta Pharma, which has invested in local manufacturing facilities in Mauritius.

Unit: USD Thousands	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	2,000	6,000	NA	-
Total Exports	1,093	5,171	32,228	33,839
Total Imports	111,878	121,800	114,289	120,003
Imports from the US	1,368	1,685	1,470	1,544

Total Market Size	112,785	122,629	-	-
Exchange Rates: 1 USD	32.00	35.00	36.00	36.50

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Data Sources: i) Statistics Mauritius, ii) Embassy Estimates for 2017

Leading Sub-Sectors

The main categories of pharmaceutical products imported into Mauritius:

- Non-antibiotic medicines
- Vaccines (human and veterinarian)
- Antibiotics
- Anti-infective, Antiretroviral and Antihypertensive drugs
- Cardiovascular drugs
- Cytotoxic drugs
- Antidiabetics
- Renal drugs
- Opioids, Antituberculosis, Ophthalmic, Dermatological and NICU drugs

Opportunities

Since Mauritius imports the vast majority of its pharmaceuticals, there are opportunities for U.S. products to increase their share of the market. Since government procurement tends to favor generic medicines, opportunities are mostly with pharmaceutical wholesalers. Some private clinics occasionally do their own procurement.

Pharmaceutical manufacturing in Mauritius has also grown in recent years. Companies in this sector view Mauritius as a platform for targeting mainland Africa. In the 2016-2017 budget, the Government announced incentives to attract more pharmaceutical companies to manufacture in Mauritius. These incentives include an investment tax credit of 15% over three years for manufacturers of pharmaceuticals, and the establishment of a pharmaceutical village in the south. In the proposed 2017-2018 budget, the Government announced an eight year tax holiday for new companies that manufacture pharmaceuticals.

Web Resources

[Board of Investment](#)

[Public Procurement Portal](#)

[Statistics Mauritius](#)

## **Port Handling Equipment/Ocean Economy**

Overview

As the sole maritime gateway, Port Louis harbor plays a vital role in the national economy. It handles about 99% of the total volume of external trade and directly contributes 2% to Mauritius' GDP. The Mauritius Ports Authority (MPA) regulates and controls the port sector, and also provides port infrastructure, related facilities, and equipment. The Cargo Handling Corporation (CHC) Ltd is responsible for the management of all port handling operations pertaining to containers and general cargo.

As part of the Government's promotion of the ocean economy, it sees the Port as a potential container transshipment hub in the region. Since commencing operations in 1999, the container terminal has experienced a steady growth in container trade as well as a moderate growth in transshipment trade. MPA has targeted a container transshipment throughput of 500,000 Twenty-Foot Equivalent Unit (TEUs) by 2020 and 750,000 TEUs by 2025. If this target is met, the total container throughput, including the captive container traffic, will exceed one million TEUs by 2025. Indeed, MPA believes that based on early interest expressed by shipping lines, the Port could reach its transshipment forecast earlier than expected. The recently extended container terminal berth will be fully operational by October 2017, enabling the port to accommodate large container vessels of over 8,000 TEUs and increasing the overall capacity of the terminal to 750,000 TEUs. To cater for container traffic beyond 2025, MPA has decided to develop an Island Container Terminal with a capacity of 1.5 Million TEUs. MPA expects to award the consultancy contract for preliminary technical study and design of the island terminal in July 2017. The MPA will also construct a second breakwater, with work planned to start in early 2018 for completion by mid-2019.

Much of the port handling equipment is imported. Five gantry cranes were supplied by South Korea and U.A.E, and most of the forklifts, lifts, and skip hoists were imported from China, the United States, and France. In March 2016, the Cargo Handling Corporation issued Expression of Interest for consultancy services for the procurement of two post panamax ship-to-shore cranes, six rubber-tire gantry cranes, and associated equipment. This equipment is expected to be delivered before the end of 2017. MPA expects to carry out a study to determine additional equipment they will require in the short to long term.

Unit: USD Thousands	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	-	-	-	-
Total Exports	-	-	-	-
Total Imports	8,600	9,920	7,365	8,960
Imports from the US	106	98	95	100

Total Market Size	8,600	9,920	7,365	8,960
Exchange Rates	32.00	35.00	36.00	36.50

Data Sources: i) Statistics Mauritius, ii) Embassy Estimates for 2017

#### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

- Gantry cranes
- Forklifts/trucks with handling equipment
- Loading and unloading machinery
- Land reclamation equipment and services
- Onshore and offshore bunkering
- Construction of an island container terminal

#### Opportunities

Mauritius' claims an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 1.9 million square kilometers, one of the 25 largest in the world. The Government has said it wants to transform Mauritius "from an island state into an ocean state" through the development of ocean-related industries. The Mauritius Port Authority is developing a new Master Plan focused on making Port Louis harbor a regional hub for a variety of maritime services and developing aquaculture and ocean-related tourist sites. Opportunities identified under the ocean economy are as follows:

- Seabed exploration for hydrocarbon and minerals
- Fishing, seafood processing, and aquaculture
- Port-related activities (bunkering, cargo transshipment, fishing port, and cruise traveling)
- Marine services (financing, ship registration, etc.)
- Marine renewable energies (wind and tidal)
- Ocean knowledge (research, development, innovation)

#### Web Resources

[Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping, and Outer Islands](#)

[Mauritius Ports Authority](#)

[Mauritius Freeport Portal](#)

[Mauritius Freeport Development](#)

[Mauritius Trade Easy](#)

[Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd](#)

### **Safety and Security Equipment**

#### Overview

Public concern about crime levels have been rising steadily, resulting in an increasing demand for security services. Additionally, with tourism being one of the major pillars of the Mauritian economy, the GOM wants to safeguard Mauritius' reputation as a safe tourist destination. The government is installing Closed Circuit Television Surveillance Systems in major tourist zones as well as in urban areas, and has plans to extend the network to other high-risk areas. China, South Africa, Portugal and the United States were the main suppliers of security and safety equipment to Mauritius in 2016.

Unit: USD Thousands	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	-	-	-	-
Total Exports	-	-	-	-
Total Imports	10,800	11,290	10,496	11,705
Imports from the US	1,600	1,700	603	663
Total Market Size	10,800	11,290	10,496	11,705
Exchange Rates: 1 USD	32.00	35.00	36.00	36.50

Data Sources: i) Statistics Mauritius, ii) Embassy Estimates for 2017

#### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

- CCTV, integrated surveillance systems
- Alarm and intruder detection
- Access control systems
- Security locks and digital safe for hotel rooms
- Safety glass
- ID management
- Radar/navigational aids
- Security services

#### Opportunities

Mauritius has seen a remarkable growth in property development in recent years. This is largely driven by Integrated Resort Scheme (luxury villas integrated with commercial, sports and wellness facilities), hotel construction, office blocks, and several large shopping malls. The government has also announced plans to create “smart cities” and “technopoles” across the country. Four smart cities are already being implemented by the private sector. These projects will generate significant demand for security equipment and services, including CCTV and security alarm

systems. To protect the safety of residents, the government requires all hotels to provide electronic security locks and in-room digital safes, as well as access control systems in secured areas.

#### Web Resources

The [Embassy's Economic/Commercial Section](#) in Port Louis, Mauritius can be contacted via email at: [jathoonisx@state.gov](mailto:jathoonisx@state.gov) or [bheenicks@state.gov](mailto:bheenicks@state.gov); Phone: +230 202-4464 or + 230 202-4430; Fax: +230 208-9534 or visit our website.

## Refrigeration/ Seafood Sector

### Overview

As Mauritian incomes rise, more and more fresh or frozen products arrive in the market. Seafood transshipment and processing has also emerged as an important sector of the economy. All of these products require a continuous stable temperature from point of production to the consumer's plate. As a result, imports of cold chain products, including cold storage equipment, refrigerated trucks and containers, and refrigerated display cases, have been increasing steadily. Most of these cold chain products in Mauritius are currently imported from China, Thailand, France, Poland, India and Italy.

Unit: USD Thousands	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	-	-	-	-
Total Exports	-	-	-	-
Total Imports	30,600	33,019	23,533	26,245
Imports from the US	32	35	137	152
Total Market Size	30,600	33,019	23,533	26,245
Exchange Rates	32.00	35.00	36.00	36.50

Data Sources: i) Statistics Mauritius, ii) Embassy Estimates for 2017

### Sub-Sector Best Prospects

The best prospects in the cold chain sector include:

- Cold storage equipment
- Refrigerated trucks and containers
- Refrigerated display cases
- Cold chain training program

### Opportunities

In the past five years, the seafood sector has witnessed dramatic expansion and emerged as one of the pillars on the Mauritian economy. Seafood exports amounted

to USD 276 million in 2016, making it the second most important export sector in Mauritius with 22 percent of total exports. The Indian Ocean holds the second largest stock of tuna in the world and in 2016, a U.S. company engaged in fishing tuna and swordfish moved its headquarters from South Africa to Mauritius. The seafood sector offers business opportunities in:

- Fishing
- Transshipment
- Storage and warehousing
- Light processing such as grading, cleaning, filleting, loining, and canning.

The Mauritius port and Freeport (free trade zone) offer services and infrastructure for the transshipment of fish. The Mauritius Freeport offers more than 80,000 cubic meters of cold room facilities under controlled temperature from -14 degrees Celsius to -28 degrees Celsius, built to international standards. Continued developments in the seafood sector will generate increasing demand for cold chain equipment and services, as well as fish processing equipment.

Web Resources

[Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping, and Outer Islands](#)

[Mauritius Ports Authority](#)

[Mauritius Freeport Portal](#)

[Mauritius Freeport Development](#)

[Mauritius Trade Easy](#)

## **Biotechnology**

Overview

The biotech industry in Mauritius is young, but is growing. Since 2014, five companies have operated at a dedicated BioPark with state-of-the-art infrastructure for biotechnology research and development. Governmental organizations such as the Mauritius Research Council, the Center for Biomedical & Biomaterials Research and the Food and Agricultural Research & Extension Institute support the budding biotechnology industry through their research. There are currently 19 companies employing about 800 people in the biotech sector (excluding medical devices and manufacturing of pharmaceuticals). These companies are involved in different types of activities such as clinical trials, breeding of primates for export, production of fish oil and manufacture of biofuels..

The table below, updated as of 2015, provides further details on the industry in Mauritius:

Sub-Sector	Number of Companies	Company
Red Biotechnology (Medical)		

Sub-Sector	Number of Companies	Company
Contract Research Organizations (Clinical Trials)	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insight Research</li> <li>• Centre International de Developpement Pharmaceutique (CIDP)</li> <li>• Centre for Phytotherapy Research and Development (CEPHYR)</li> <li>• CAP Research</li> </ul>
Breeding for Contract Research	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biosphere</li> <li>• Les Tamariniers</li> <li>• Noveprim</li> <li>• Biofarm</li> <li>• Biodia</li> <li>• Bioculture</li> </ul>
Analytical Laboratories	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laboratoire International de Bio Analyse</li> <li>• Cynologics</li> <li>• Quantilab</li> </ul>
<b>Green Biotechnology (Agro)</b>		
Production of Bull Semen for Export and Bio Fertilizers	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aadicon Biotechnologies</li> </ul>
<b>Blue Biotechnology (Marine)</b>		
Fish oil extraction & production and extraction of molecules from by-products for different applications	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marine Biotechnology Products</li> <li>• Bioseanergy</li> </ul>
<b>Grey Biotechnology</b>		
Production of landfill gas for energy generation and conversion of organic waste into compost	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sotravic</li> <li>• Solid Waste Recycling</li> </ul>
<b>White Biotechnology (Industrial)</b>		
Production of ethanol	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Omnicane</li> </ul>

Source: Board of Investment

### Leading Sub-Sectors

Leading sub-sectors include:

- Pre-clinical and clinical trials
- Breeding for pre-clinical trials
- Stem cell therapy

- Phytotherapy research and development
- Agro-industry applications
- Marine biotechnology

## Opportunities

The government has shown a commitment to develop the biotech industry. In January 2017, the Agro-Industry Ministry organised a workshop to discuss the setting up of a National Biotechnology Institute for tapping into the full potential of the industry to tackle the challenges such as increasing demand for biofuels, food security and new pests. Additionally, in February 2017, the government passed regulations to allow experimentation on animals. And in May 2017 the Embassy collaborated with the Mauritius Sugarcane Industry Research Institute to host a two-day workshop to discuss amendments to the Genetically Modified Organisms Act. The GOM also realizes that intellectual property is important to this industry, and has announced in its 2016-2017 budget that Mauritius will adhere to the Patent Cooperation Treaty, the Hague Convention and the Madrid Protocol to facilitate registration of patents, trademarks and industrial designs.

There are opportunities for:

- U.S. companies to export lab supplies and biotechnology equipment
- Setting up pre-clinical and clinical trial labs
- Research and development in plant-based and marine-based pharmaceuticals
- Research and development for agro-industry applications

## Web Resources

### [Board of Investment](#)

Biotechnology Cluster Staff, Board of Investment, 10th Floor, One Cathedral Square Building, 16, Jules Koenig Street, Port Louis 11328, Tel: + 230 203 3800, Fax: +230 210 8560, Email: [biotech@investmauritius.com](mailto:biotech@investmauritius.com)

## **Processed Food and Agricultural Products**

### Overview

Mauritius is a net food importer, with an overall self-sufficiency ratio of less than 30%. Due to its limited size, the absence of economies of scale, and the comparative advantage of sugarcane in economic terms, Mauritius imports many of its essential food requirements. In 2016, food imports accounted for USD 1.1 billion, representing 18% of total Mauritian imports. France was the leading source of Mauritian food imports with a market share of 11%, followed by Spain (9%), South Africa (9%), Australia (7%) and India (7%). Products imported include: meat and fish; certain fruits (e.g., oranges, mandarins and grapes); pulses; milk and dairy products; fresh

and frozen vegetables; coffee, tea and spices; cereals; oil; wheat and food preparations. Mauritius also imports some items for the production of animal feed, such as corn and oil cake and solid residues from soybean oil extraction, mostly from Argentina.

Unit: USD Thousands	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Value of Local Agricultural Production*	399,312	362,743	NA	-
Gross Output for Locally Produced Processed Food*	615,873	550,830	NA	-
Total Exports	822,492	761,707	806,049	846,351
Total Imports	1,097,484	1,035,750	1,074,103	1,127,808
Imports from the US	7,756	6,111	5,984	6,283
Total Market Size	-	-	-	-
Exchange Rates	32.00	35.00	36.00	36.50

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Data Sources: i) Statistics Mauritius, ii) Embassy Estimates for 2017

\*Data for 2016 not yet available

### Leading Sub-Sectors

Leading sub-sectors include:

- Wheat
- Crude edible oil
- Corn and soybean residue for animal feed
- Processed Foods

### Opportunities

#### Wheat

Mauritius traditionally imports wheat from France and Australia. In 2016, Mauritius imported 130,353 metric tons of unmilled wheat valued at USD 34 million. Mauritius imported 50,000 metric tons of wheat from the United States for the first time in 2007-8 due to a poor crop in its traditional markets. There may be future opportunities here, but U.S. exporters would need to compete with French and Australian wheat, particularly in terms of price and freight availability. Les Moulins de la Concorde, the only flour mill in Mauritius, has shown interest in U.S. wheat, particularly the Hard Red Spring and Hard White varieties.

## Crude Edible Oil

Mauritius imports 100% of its edible oil requirements, traditionally from Argentina and Brazil. In 2016, Mauritius imported 26,316 metric tons of crude soybean oil, crude sunflower oil and palm olein, worth USD 21 million. Of this, crude soybean oil accounted for 78%, while sunflower oil and palm olein comprised 22%. There are two refineries for edible oil operating in Mauritius which supply 90% of the market with refined edible oil. The remaining 10% is supplied by importers of refined edible oil and sold directly to supermarkets. The local refineries negotiate their purchase with large producers such as Nidera and Dreyfuss on a cash-against documents-basis. To get a share of this market, U.S. suppliers must compete with Argentina and Brazil on price and freight availability.

## Corn/ Soybean Residue for Animal Feed

In 2016, Mauritius imported 95,153 metric tons of corn and 45,787 metric tons of oil-cake and other solid residues resulting from the extraction of soybean oil as inputs for its livestock feed factories. The total grain requirement valued at USD 40 million is traditionally imported from Argentina. The two animal feed factories in Mauritius have indicated that they would consider imports from the U.S. if they were competitive in terms of freight and price. U.S. trade associations, such as the U.S. Grain Council, would need to undertake long-term market development efforts with the local animal feed manufacturers.

## Processed Foods

Food habits of Mauritians have been changing over the past few years with consumers placing more emphasis on quality and food safety. The range of organic products and convenience foods available in supermarkets is expanding. Furthermore, concerns about pesticides are driving consumers to buy branded bio products. This has led to a sharp increase in imports of processed foods. There are thus opportunities for more US products to enter the market if they can compete with imports from South Africa, China, Malaysia and Europe.

## Web Resources

[Blueprint for a Sustainable Diversified Agri Food Strategy for Mauritius](#) 2008-2015: [Livestock Feed Ltd](#), Les Guibies, Mauritius. Tel: +230 286 1112; Fax: +230 286 1114; Email: [livestockfeed@food-allied.com](mailto:livestockfeed@food-allied.com)

Mr. Phillipe Lahausse, Managing Director, [Les Moulins de la Concorde](#) Ltee (flourmill), Cargo Peninsula, Port Louis, Mauritius. Tel: +230 217-9100; Fax: +230 240-8171; Email: [plahausse@food-allied.com](mailto:plahausse@food-allied.com).

Mr. Mark Samson, Regional Vice President For the Middle East, East & North Africa, [U.S. Wheat Associates](#), Inc., Cairo, Egypt; Tel: +2 02 2380 3162; FAX: +2 02 2380 3138; Email: [msamson@uswheat.org](mailto:msamson@uswheat.org)

[Mauritius Oil Refineries Ltd.](#), Quay Road, Port Louis, Mauritius. Tel: +230 206-9800; Fax: +230 240-8320; Email: [moroil@intnet.mu](mailto:moroil@intnet.mu).

[Meaders Feeds Ltd.](#), Riche Terre, Mauritius. Tel: +230 249-3860; Fax: +230 248-1837;  
Email: meaders@intnet.mu.

[National Export Strategy, Agro-Processing Sector  
Statistics Mauritius](#)

## **Customs, Regulations & Standards**

### **Trade Barriers**

For more information and help with trade barriers please contact:

[International Trade Administration](#)

[Enforcement](#) and Compliance

(202) 482-0063

ECCommunications@trade.gov

There is no discrimination against U.S. companies as far as tariff and non-tariff barriers are concerned.

### **Import Tariffs**

Mauritius has a relatively streamlined trade regime and over the past several years the GOM has taken steps to liberalize trade by significantly lowering import tariffs over a wide range of products. The tariff rates currently range from 0 to 30%, while the number of tariff bands currently stands at five (0, 5, 10, 15, and 30%). Customs Duties are normally imposed on the “c.i.f.” (cost, insurance, and freight) value of imported goods. Vehicles, petroleum, alcoholic drinks, and cigarettes are subject to excise duties. With some exceptions, goods imported into Mauritius are also subject to a 15% Value Added Tax (VAT). The tariff rates for different types of goods are listed in the [Customs Tariff Schedule](#).

### **Import Requirements & Documentation**

Importers must submit the following documents:

- Bill of lading/airway bill
- Bill of entry
- Invoice
- Packing list
- Insurance certificate (if applicable)
- Certificate of origin (if applicable)
- Other relevant documents/permits which may be required by government agencies (such as health, agriculture, veterinary services)

Exporters are required to submit the following documents:

- Bill of lading
- Bill of entry

- Invoice
- Packing list
- Insurance certificate (if applicable)
- Export permit (if applicable)
- Certificates of origin for exports to the European Union, United States (under AGOA), countries of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)

Guidelines for submission of applications for import permits as well as a list of goods subject to import permits are posted at the [Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection's web site](#).

### **Labeling/Marking Requirements**

Labeling and marking requirements are governed by the [Legal Metrology Act](#).

### **U.S. Export Controls**

A list that consolidates eleven export screening lists of the Departments of Commerce, State and the Treasury into a single search as an aid to industry in conducting electronic screens of potential parties to regulated transactions is [available here](#).

### **Temporary Entry**

The Mauritius Customs Department may authorize the temporary entry of goods for a period of six months where the importer furnishes adequate security to cover the duty and other taxes (if applicable) which would otherwise be payable. The importer may be exempted from furnishing security if the goods are covered by documents for temporary entry issued under a recognized international convention. For example, the ATA Carnet, an internationally recognized document for the temporary admission of goods under the Istanbul Convention is administered by the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry. ATA Carnets do not cover perishable goods or goods for processing or repair. Additional information on the ATA Carnet system can be obtained from the [Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#).

### **Prohibited & Restricted Imports**

Prohibited goods include ivory, tortoise shell and other endangered animal products, underwater fishing guns, second-hand motor vehicle parts and accessories, appliances containing chlorofluorocarbons, asbestos fibers, and publications/films/playable media of obscene character. A [detailed list of prohibited goods](#) is available online.

Restricted/controlled goods, which are subject to an import permit include syringes, drugs and psychotropic substances, arms and ammunition, and second-hand motor vehicles. A [detailed list of restricted imports](#) is available online.

## **Customs Regulations**

[Customs regulations for Mauritius](#) can be downloaded online.

Contact information for the Mauritius Customs Office: The Director, Mauritius Revenue Authority, Customs, New Customs House, Mer Rouge, Port Louis, Mauritius, Phone: +230 202-0500, Fax: +230 216-9567, E-mail: [customs@mra.mu](mailto:customs@mra.mu)

## **Standards for Trade**

### Overview

The Mauritius Standards Bureau (MSB) is the national body that develops standards for the manufacturing and service sectors, while the Mauritius Accreditation Service (MAURITAS) accredits testing laboratories, inspection bodies and certification bodies. Accreditation in Mauritius is a voluntary process. Mauritius is very open to internationally recognized best practices and collaborates with regional bodies such as COMESA and SADC, international bodies such as the OECD and UN, as well as developed economies like the U.S., the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and the European Union to develop and adopt best practices.

### Standards

The MSB develops standards and provides metrology, calibration, testing, and quality assurance services to the manufacturing and service sectors. It publishes a program of its standards development activities in January and July of each year. There is a website for the [Mauritius Standards Bureau](#).

National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST) "Notify U.S." Service: Member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) must report to the WTO all proposed technical regulations that could affect trade with other Member countries. [Notify U.S.](#) is a free, web-based e-mail subscription service that offers an opportunity to review and comment on proposed foreign technical regulations that might affect your access to international markets. Register online.

### Testing, inspection and certification

The MSB is the national product certification body. MSB certification enables companies to use the MSB mark to demonstrate that their products and processes meet all the requirements of the relevant Mauritian Standard. The renewable license to use the mark for products and processes is valid for two years, during which the MSB conducts regular surveillance visits. MSB clearance is also required for the release of certain goods from customs, such as toys, iron bars, pipes and fittings.

Several global certification companies independently inspect, verify, test and certify companies. Examples include : SGS (Mauritius) Ltd, Intertek Mauritius and Bureau Veritas. Third party certifications still must undergo paper verification at MSB before obtaining clearance to release controlled goods from Customs.

The Mauritius Accreditation Service (MAURITAS) is an associate member of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) since November 2008 and a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) since 2000.

The Embassy is not aware of any certification requirements that burden US exporters or service providers.

#### Publication of technical regulations

Draft standards are published in the Government Gazette and there is a 60-day period for public comments. The Minister in charge of industry may, by public notice, transform a standard into a technical regulation after consideration of written comments. Contact information for the MSB is provided below.

#### Contact Information

Mauritius Standards Bureau, Villa Road, Moka, Mauritius, Contact: Director, Tel: +230 433-3648, Fax: +230 433-5051, E-mail: [msb@intnet.mu](mailto:msb@intnet.mu)

[Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection](#), 8th floor, Air Mauritius Center, Port Louis, Mauritius, Contact: The Permanent Secretary, Tel: +230 201-1068, Fax: +230 201-3289

### **Trade Agreements**

Mauritius is a beneficiary of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) offered by Japan, Norway, Switzerland, the U.S., and the customs union of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia. Mauritius is a Free Trade Agreement member of the Common Market for Southern and Eastern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) has grouped Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion and Seychelles together to promote diplomatic, economic and commercial ties between the islands. At present, only products which are traded between Mauritius and Madagascar and which meet the IOC Rules of Origin enjoy duty free access. Mauritius has a Free Trade Agreement with Turkey and a Preferential Trade Agreement with Pakistan. Mauritius has been a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) since 1995 and was a member of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) prior to 1995.

The U.S and Mauritius signed a [Trade and Investment Framework Agreement](#) (TIFA) in September 2006. This provides a formal mechanism to address bilateral trade issues and helps to strengthen and expand trade and investment relations between the two countries.

Mauritius is eligible for the trade benefits under the [African Growth and Opportunity Act](#) (AGOA), which provides for duty free and quota free access to the U.S. market for over 6,000 products from eligible Sub-Saharan African countries. Additional information on AGOA can be obtained online. Export of apparel from Mauritius to the United States made from fabric imported from any country is duty free under the AGOA Third Country Fabric Provision. In 2015, the U.S. renewed AGOA until September 30, 2025.

### **Licensing Requirements for Professional Services**

Individuals providing professional services should ensure that they register with the appropriate body before practicing in Mauritius:

Profession	Body
Medical practitioner	<a href="#">Medical Council of Mauritius</a>
Law practitioner	<a href="#">Bar Council</a>
Engineer	<a href="#">The Council of Registered Professional Engineers of Mauritius</a>
Land Surveyors	<a href="#">Commission issued by President</a>
Architects	<a href="#">Professional Architects' Council</a>
Contractors/ Consultants	<a href="#">Construction Industry Development Board</a>
Investment Advisor/ Insurance Agent	<a href="#">Financial Services Commission</a>

**Web Resources**

- [Mauritius Accreditation Service](#)
- [Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#)
- [Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Consumer Protection](#)
- [Mauritius Revenue Authority](#)
- [Mauritius Standards Bureau](#)

**Investment Climate Statement**

**Executive Summary**

Mauritius is an island nation with a population of 1.26 million people. Its land area of only 2,040 square kilometers understates the country’s importance to the Indian Ocean region as it controls a vast maritime zone, claiming an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of approximately 2.3 million square kilometers, one of the largest in the world. Mauritius has a stable and competitive economy, with a GDP of USD 11.8 billion and per capita GDP over USD 9,400 in 2016. The economy grew by 3.8 percent in 2016 and IMF estimates it will continue to grow at a moderate rate of 3.8 to 4 percent in the medium term. The inflation rate decreased from 1.3 percent in 2015 to 1 percent in 2016 and is expected to rise to 2.5 percent in 2017, mainly due to the upward trend in oil prices. The unemployment rate decreased from 7.9 percent in 2015 to 7.3 percent in 2016, although it is higher among women and youth. According to the World Bank’s 2017 Ease of Doing Business Index, Mauritius ranks first in Africa and 49<sup>th</sup> worldwide (out of 190 countries).

Since achieving independence in 1968, Mauritius has made a remarkable economic transformation from a mono-crop economy based on sugarcane production to a diversified economy driven by export-oriented manufacturing (mainly textiles), tourism, and financial and business services, information and communication technology, seafood processing, real estate and education/training. With sluggish growth in the past several years, the government of Mauritius has tried to stimulate economic growth in four areas: serving as a gateway for investment into Africa, increasing the use of renewable energy, developing smart cities, and exploring activities related to the ocean economy.

Government policy in Mauritius is firmly centered on promoting foreign and domestic investment, having signed Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements with 50 countries and maintaining a legal and regulatory framework that keeps Mauritius highly-ranked on “Ease of Doing Business” and good governance indices. In recent years Mauritius has been especially intent on attracting foreign direct investment from emerging economies, as well as courting more traditional markets like the UK, France and the U.S. In support of this, the government highlights its democratic tradition and good governance.

Although corruption in Mauritius is low by regional standards, progress in improving transparency and accountability has been stagnating.

Table 1

Measure	Year	Index/Rank	Website Address
	2016	50 of 176	<a href="http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview">http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview</a>
World Bank's Doing	2016	49 of 190	<a href="http://doingbusiness.org/rankings">doingbusiness.org/rankings</a>
	2016	53 of 128	<a href="http://globalinnovationindex.org/content/page/data-analysis">globalinnovationindex.org/content/page/data-analysis</a>
U.S. FDI in partner country (\$M USD, stock positions)	2015	USD 6.9 billion	<a href="http://www.bea.gov/international/factsheet/">http://www.bea.gov/international/factsheet/</a>
	2015	USD 9780	<a href="http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP">http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP</a> .CD

## **Openness to and Restrictions upon Foreign Investment**

### **Limit on Foreign Control and Right to Private Ownership and Establishment**

A non-citizen can hold, purchase, or acquire real property, under the Non-Citizens (Property Restriction) Act, subject to the Government of Mauritius' approval. A foreigner can acquire a residential property under the Property Development Scheme (PDS), a government-regulated scheme, as well as apartments. The PDS replaces the previous Integrated Resort Scheme (IRS), and the Real Estate Scheme (RES). [The Non-Citizens \(Property Restriction\) Act](#) was amended in December 2016 to allow foreigners to purchase certain types of properties so long as the amount paid is over Rs 6 million (approximately USD166,000).

Regarding business activities, the Government of Mauritius generally does not discriminate between local and foreign investment. There are, however, some business activities where foreign involvement is restricted. These include television broadcasting, sugar production, newspaper or magazine publishing, and certain operations in the tourism sector.

In television broadcasting, the Independent Broadcasting Authority will not grant a license to a foreign company or to a company more than 20 percent owned or controlled by foreign nationals. Similarly, a foreign investor cannot hold 20 percent or more of a company that owns or controls any newspaper or magazine, or any printing press publishing such publications. In the sugar sector, no foreign investor is allowed to make an investment that would result in 15 percent or more of the voting capital of a Mauritian sugar company being held by foreign investors. Finally, in the tourism sector, there are certain conditions for investment by non-citizens in the following activities: (i) guesthouse/tourist accommodation; (ii) pleasure craft; (iii) scuba diving; and (iv) tour operators. Generally, the limitations refer to a minimum investment amount, number of rooms, or a maximum equity participation depending on the business activity. [Details of the restrictions](#) are available from BOI.

The BOI screens foreign investment proposals and also provides a range of services to potential investors. BOI is a useful resource for investors exploring business opportunities in Mauritius and provides assistance with occupation permits, licenses and clearances by coordinating with relevant local authorities. The U.S. Embassy in Port Louis has had no negative comments from U.S. businesses regarding the government's investment the screening mechanism.

BOI reviews proposals for economic benefit, environmental impact, and any relation to national security. BOI will then advise the potential investor on specific permits or licenses required, depending on the nature of the business. Foreign investors can also apply through the [BOI for Occupation Permits](#), a combined work and residence permit. In the event that an investment fails review, the prospective investor may appeal the decision within BOI or to the relevant government ministry. Details on [specific business activities restricted by law](#) can be found online.

### *Other Investment Policy Reviews*

In July 2014, the Government of Mauritius conducted an investment policy review with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (<http://www.oecd.org/investment/countryreviews.htm>). This review concluded that policies and legislation in Mauritius support private sector development. In October 2014, the authorities also conducted a trade policy review with the World Trade Organization (WTO) ([http://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/tpr\\_e/tpr\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/tpr_e.htm)).

### *Business Facilitation*

The Government recognizes the importance of a good business environment to attract investment and achieve higher growth rate. In 2017, for the ninth consecutive year, the World Bank's Doing Business report ranked Mauritius first among African economies, and 49th worldwide, in terms of overall ease of doing business.

The incorporation of companies and registration of business activities fall under the provisions of the [Companies Act 2001](#) and the [Business Registration Act 2002](#). All businesses must register with the Registrar of Companies. A company incorporated in Mauritius can be 100 percent foreign-owned with no minimum capital. According to the World Bank 2017 Doing Business report, while procedures for registering of a company takes two days, actually starting a business takes six days.

After the Registrar of Companies issues a certificate of incorporation, companies must register their business activities with the BOI. The company can then apply for occupation permits (work and residence permits) and incentives offered to investors. BOI's investment facilitation services are available to all investors, domestic as well as foreign.

In partnership with the Corporate and Business Registration Department, the Mauritius Network Services (MNS) has implemented the Companies and Business Registration Integrated System (CBRIS), a web-based portal that allows businesses to incorporate, file statutory returns, pay yearly fees, register businesses, and search for business information. Applicants can register with [MNS](#).

### *Outward Investment*

In Mauritius, there are no restrictions on capital outflows. With the small size of the Mauritian economy, the government encourages Mauritian entrepreneurs to invest overseas, particularly in Africa, to expand and grow their businesses. In the context of its Africa Strategy, the government has established the Mauritius Africa Fund as a public company with a capital of USD 13.8 million to support Mauritian investment in Africa. Through the Fund, the government can participate as an equity partner up to 10 percent of the seed capital invested by Mauritian investors in projects targeted towards Africa. The government has signed agreements with Senegal, Madagascar, and Ghana establishing and managing Special Economic Zones in these countries and has invited local and international firms to set up operations there. To further facilitate investment, Mauritius has also signed 23 Investment Promotion and

Protection Agreements and 20 Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements with African States.

Since 2012, the Board of Investment has been operating the Africa Center of Excellence, a special office dedicated to facilitating investment from Mauritius into Africa. It acts as a repository of business information for Mauritian entrepreneurs on investment opportunities in different sectors in Africa.

The bulk of Mauritian direct outward investment over the past several years has gone to (i) the tourism sector (hotel construction) in Maldives and Seychelles, (ii) sugar production in Mozambique, Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, and Uganda, (iii) the manufacturing sector (mainly apparel) in Madagascar, India, and Bangladesh, and (iv) the banking sector in Seychelles, Madagascar, Reunion, Maldives, Mozambique, South Africa, and India.

### **Bilateral Investment Agreement and Taxation Treaties**

In September 2006, Mauritius and the United States signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), aimed at strengthening and expanding trade and investment ties between the two countries. The United States has not signed a Bilateral Investment Treaty or a Free Trade Agreement with Mauritius.

As of March 2017, Mauritius has signed Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (IPPA) with 44 countries. The following 28 IPPAs have been ratified and are in force: Barbados, Belgium/Luxemburg Economic Union, Burundi, China, Comoros, Czech Republic, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Madagascar, Mozambique, Pakistan, Portugal, Republic of Congo, Republic of Korea, Romania, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Turkey, U.K. and Northern Ireland, and Zambia. The following 16 IPPAs have been signed but are still waiting ratification: Benin, Cameroon, Comoros, Cote D'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea Republic, Kenya, Mauritania, Nepal, Rwanda, Swaziland, Chad, Zimbabwe, Sao Tome and Principe, and United Arab Emirates.

In December 2013, Mauritius signed a Tax Information Exchange Agreement (TIEA) and an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with the United States to implement the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA). Mauritius has also signed TIEAs with Australia, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Guernsey, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, and South Korea.

As of March 2017, Mauritius has concluded Double Taxation Avoidance Treaties (DTATs) with 43 countries as follows: Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Botswana, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Germany, Guernsey, India, Italy, Kuwait, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Monaco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Rwanda, Republic of Congo Senegal, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In addition,

the following signed treaties await ratification: Gabon, Ghana, Jersey, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, and Russia.

## **Legal Regime**

### **Transparency of the Regulatory System**

Since 2006, the government has brought major reforms to trade, investment, tariffs, and income tax regulations to simplify the framework for doing business. Trade licenses and many other bureaucratic hurdles have been reduced or abolished. With a well-developed legal and commercial infrastructure and a tradition of both entrepreneurship and representative government, Mauritius is one of Africa's most successful economies. Business Mauritius, the coordinating body of the Mauritian private sector, participates in discussions with and presents papers to the authorities on laws and regulations affecting the private sector.

Regulatory agencies do not request comments on proposed bills from the general public. Both the notice of the introduction of a government bill and a copy of the bill are distributed to every member of the Legislative Assembly, and published in the Government Gazette before enactment. Bills with a “certificate of urgency” can be enacted with summary process. All proposed regulations are published on the Legislative Assembly’s website, which is publicly accessible.

Companies in Mauritius are regulated by the Companies Act of 2001, which incorporates international best practices and promotes accountability, openness, and fairness. To combat corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing, the government also enacted the Prevention of Corruption Act, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act. While Mauritius does not have a Freedom of Information Act, members of the public may request information by contacting the permanent secretary of the relevant ministry.

### **International Regulatory Considerations**

#### **Legal System and Judicial Independence**

The Mauritian legal system is a unique mixture of traditions. Mauritius draws legal principles from both French civil law and British common law traditions; its procedures are largely derived from the English system, while its substance is based in the Napoleon Code of 1804. Commercial and contractual law is also based on the civil code. However, some specialized areas of law are comparable to other jurisdictions. For example, its company law is practically identical to that of New Zealand. Mauritian courts often resolve legal disputes by drawing on current legislation, the local legal tradition, and by means of a comparative approach utilizing various legal systems. The highest court of appeal is the judicial committee of the Privy Council of England. Mauritius is a member of the International Court of Justice. Mauritius established a Commercial Court in 2009 to expedite the settlement of commercial disputes.

Contracts are legally enforceable and binding on the parties signing the contracts. Ownership of property is enforced with the registration of the title deed with the Registrar-General and payment of the registration duty. Mauritian courts have the jurisdiction to hear intellectual property claims, both civil and criminal. The judiciary is independent and the domestic legal system is generally non-discriminatory and transparent.

#### Laws and Regulations on Foreign Direct Investment

The Investment Promotion Act of 2000 governs investment in Mauritius and the Companies Act of 2001 contains the regulations governing incorporation of businesses. The Corporate and Business Registration Department (CBRD) of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development administers the Companies Act 2001, the Business Registration Act 2002, the Insolvency Act 2009, the Limited Partnerships Act 2011, and the Foundations Act 2012. Information regarding the various Acts can be found at the CBRD's [website](#).

The above-mentioned Acts and all the laws and regulations related to foreign investment can be downloaded from the Board of Investment's [website](#).

The Mauritian judiciary is independent and the legal system is generally non-discriminatory and transparent. The Embassy is not aware of any cases of government or other interference in the court system affecting foreign investors.

#### Competition and Anti-Trust Laws

The Competition Commission of Mauritius (CCM) is a statutory body established in 2009 to enforce the Competition Act 2007. This Act established a competition regime in Mauritius, under which the CCM can investigate possible anticompetitive behavior by businesses in the Mauritian market. Since it began operations, the CCM has undertaken 36 investigations, of which 24 have been completed and 12 are still ongoing. The results of completed investigations are available on CCM's [website](#).

### **Expropriation and Compensation**

The constitution includes a guarantee against nationalization, but the Insurance (Amendment) Act passed in April 2015 enables the government's Financial Services Commission (FSC) to appoint "special administrators" in cases where there is evidence that the liabilities of an insurer and its related companies exceed assets by MUR 1 billion (USD 28 million) and that such a situation "is likely to jeopardize the stability and soundness of the financial system of Mauritius." The special administrators are empowered to seize and sell assets. The government enacted this law in the immediate aftermath of the financial scandal explained below.

In April 2015 the Bank of Mauritius, the Central Bank, revoked the banking license of Bramer Bank, the banking arm of Mauritian conglomerate BAI Group, citing an inadequate capital reserve ratio. As a result, Bramer Bank entered receivership and by May 2015 the receiver had transferred the assets and liabilities of Bramer Bank to a newly created state-owned bank, the National Commercial Bank Ltd., thus

effectively nationalizing Bramer Bank. In January 2016, the Mauritian government merged the National Commercial Bank Ltd. with another government-owned bank resulting in Maubank, a new bank dedicated mainly to small and medium enterprises. The government subsequently took over much of Bramer's parent, the BAI Group. The Financial Services Commission placed the BAI Group in conservatorship, alleging fraud and corporate mismanagement in BAI's insurance business. Following passage of the Insurance (Amendment) Act in April 2015, the FSC created the National Insurance Company, which took over the BAI Group's core insurance business, and the National Property Fund, which took over other BAI Group assets, including a hospital and several retail outlets. CIEL Healthcare, a local private company, bought the hospital in January 2017.

In November 2015 BAI's former chairman filed a dispute against the government of Mauritius with the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law alleging that the government illegally appropriated BAI's assets. The dispute is ongoing.

## **Dispute Settlement**

### ICSID Convention and New York Convention

Mauritius is a member of the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes and a signatory to the New York Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards Act. Mauritius is also a member of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency of the World Bank. Investor-State Dispute Settlement

The Embassy is unaware of any investment dispute involving U.S. investors. However, as explained above, the former chairman of BAI has filed a dispute against the government of Mauritius with the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law alleging that the government illegally appropriated BAI's assets. Other disputes involving foreign investors include a suit by a local firm (which had bought out its foreign partner) alleging unfair competitive practices by Mauritius Telecom, and a foreign power company's suit challenging the government's decision to cancel a proposed energy project.

### International Commercial Arbitration and Foreign Courts

In July 2011, the government of Mauritius, the London Court of International Arbitration (LCIA), and the Mauritius International Arbitration Center (MIAC) established a new arbitration center in Mauritius, the LCIA-MIAC Arbitration Center. LCIA-MIAC offers all the services offered by the LCIA in the U.K. The organization's [website](#) has additional information.

In addition, the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry's [Arbitration and Mediation Center](#) (MARC) is an internationally recognized institution for commercial dispute settlement. MARC's arbitration and mediation rules are also based on international standards, and it is a member of the International Federation of Commercial Arbitration Institutions. MARC has entered into cooperation agreements

with arbitration centers in the United States (American Arbitration Association), Germany, France, Australia, India, and Kenya. More information is available online.  
**Bankruptcy Regulations**

Bankruptcy is not criminalized in Mauritius. The Insolvency Act of 2009 amended and consolidated the law relating to insolvency of individuals and companies and the distribution of assets in the case of insolvency and related matters. Most notably, the Act introduced administration procedures, providing creditors the option of a more orderly reorganization or restructuring of a business than in liquidation. A bankrupt individual is automatically discharged from bankruptcy three years after adjudication, but may apply to be discharged earlier. The Act draws on the Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency adopted by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law on 30 May 1997. The Act can be accessed through the Board of Investment's [website](#). According to the World Bank's 2016 Doing Business report, Mauritius ranks 39<sup>th</sup> out of 190 countries in "Resolving Insolvency."

## **Industrial Policies**

### **Investment Incentives**

Mauritius applies investment incentives uniformly to both domestic and foreign investors. The incentives are outlined in the Income Tax Act, the Customs Act, and the Value Added Tax Act.

Mauritius is known for its political, social and economic stability and provides preferential market access to Africa, Europe, and the U.S. Mauritius offers a low-tax jurisdiction and a number of other fiscal incentives, including the following: (i) flat corporate and income tax rate of 15 percent; (ii) 100 percent foreign ownership permitted; (iii) no minimum foreign capital required; (iv) no tax on dividends or capital gains; (v) free repatriation of profits, dividends, and capital; (vi) accelerated depreciation on acquisition of plant, machinery, and equipment; (vii) exemption from customs duty on imported equipment; and (viii) access to an extensive network of Double Taxation Avoidance treaties (as of March 2017, Mauritius had concluded such treaties with 43 countries while seven additional treaties are waiting ratification). Additionally, the government has established the Property Development Scheme (PDS) to attract high net worth non-citizens who want to acquire residences in Mauritius. The PDS is a follow-on program from the existing Integrated Resort Scheme (IRS) and the Real Estate Scheme (RES). Buyers of a residential unit valued over USD 500,000 in certain projects are eligible to apply for a residence permit in Mauritius. The residential unit can also be let out by the owner. More detailed information on the PDS is available on BOI's [website](#).

### **Foreign Trade Zones/Free Ports/Trade Facilitation**

The Mauritius Freeport, a free trade zone, was established in 1992 and is a customs-free zone for goods destined for re-export. The government's objective is to promote the country as a regional warehousing, distribution, marketing, and logistics center

for eastern and southern Africa and the Indian Ocean rim. Through its membership in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Mauritius offers preferential access to a market of over 600 million consumers, representing an import potential of USD 100 billion. Companies operating in Freeport are exempt from corporate tax. Foreign-owned firms operating in Freeport have the same investment incentives and opportunities as local entities.

The government of Mauritius has set aside 76 hectares of land as a Freeport zone, out of which 52 hectares have already been developed. Developed space has increased from 5,000 square meters in 1993 to 295,000 square meters in 2016, including cold rooms, dry storage, an international trade exhibition center, processing units, office space for transshipment, consolidation, and storage, and processing activities. Freeport facilities are also available at the airport. Activities carried out in the Freeport include warehousing and storage, breaking bulk, sorting, grading, cleaning and mixing, labeling, packing and re-packing, minor processing, transshipment, export-oriented port based activities, export-oriented airport based activities, freight forwarding, express courier services, mail order, simple assembly, reshipment, and quality control and inspection services. The Freeport has attracted close to USD 195 million of investments with a number of projects currently under implementation within the seaport and airport zones. In 2016, total trade in the Freeport reached 760,000 tons valued at USD 1.2 billion.

The government, in collaboration with the private sector, has also been promoting the Freeport as a seafood hub, in particular focusing on the transshipment, processing, storage, distribution, and re-exportation of high value-added seafood products using the modern port and Freeport facilities and logistics. The government set up a “one-stop-shop” in the port area to help facilitate administrative clearances related to the seafood industry.

### Performance and Data Localization Requirements

The Government of Mauritius does not impose local employment requirements on foreign investors. A foreign national can apply for an Occupation Permit (OP), which is a combined work and residence permit, subject to certain conditions such as minimum investment, salary, and/or business turnover. The OP allows foreign nationals to work and reside in Mauritius under three specific categories, namely: (i) investor (ii) professional (iii) self-employed. Also, foreign nationals, above the age of 50 years, may choose to retire in Mauritius under a Residence Permit (RP). An OP or a RP is issued for a maximum period of three years and the permit holder may submit a new application upon expiry of the permit. Dependents of an OP or RP holder may also apply for residence permits for a duration not exceeding that of the OP or RP holder. Details on the minimum investment, salary or turnover amounts required to qualify for an OP or RP are available at the BOI [website](#).

The Data Protection Act (DPA) of 2004 is the law that governs the protection of personal data in Mauritius. The Government of Mauritius established the Data Protection Office [website](#) in 2009. The Data Protection Commissioner is responsible for upholding the rights of individuals set forth in the DPA and for enforcing the obligations imposed upon data controllers. In June 2016, Mauritius ratified the Convention 108 of the European Union on data protection, becoming the second non-European country to sign the convention. This agreement gives individuals the right to protection of their personal data.

The Data Protection Act prohibits personal data being transferred to another country unless that country ensures an adequate level of protection and without written authorization of the Data Protection Commissioner. Regarding data storage, if it concerns the storage of personal data and/or sensitive personal data, the same provisions of the DPA regarding personal data apply. If a source code does not contain personal data, the DPA will not apply.

## **Protection of Property Rights**

### **Real Property**

Real property rights are respected in Mauritius. A non-citizen can hold, purchase, or acquire an immovable property under the Non-Citizens (Property Restriction) Act, subject to the government's approval. Ownership of property is memorialized with the registration of the title deed with the Registrar-General and payment of the registration duty. The recording system of mortgages and liens is reliable. Traditional use rights are not an issue in Mauritius as there were no indigenous peoples present at the time of European colonization. According to the World Bank's 2017 Doing Business Report, Mauritius ranks 98th out of 190 countries for the ease of registering property.

### **Intellectual Property Rights**

Intellectual property rights (IPR) in Mauritius are currently protected by two pieces of legislation, namely the Patents, Industrial Designs and Trade Marks Act of 2002 and the Copyrights Act of 2014. The government plans to adopt a new Industrial Property Bill covering all aspects of Industrial Property Rights when Parliament resumes at the end of March 2017. A draft version of the Bill is available on the government's [website](#). In addition to patents and trademarks, the Bill is intended to protect industrial designs, plant breeders' rights, geographical indications, and layout designs of integrated circuits and utility models, which are not covered by existing legislation. In his 2016-17 Budget Speech, the Minister of Finance announced that the government will adhere to the Patent Cooperation Treaty, the Hague Convention, and the Madrid Protocol to facilitate the registration of patents, trademarks and industrial designs.

The government is also planning to amend the Copyrights Act of 2014. Following protest by local artists against sale of pirated CDs and the lack of infrastructure

facilities and other incentives, the government set up a high-powered committee to look into all the grievances and submit a report. As of March 2017, the report was still being examined by the government.

Mauritius is a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and party to the Paris and Bern Conventions for the protection of industrial property and the Universal Copyright Convention. The trademark and patent laws comply with the WTO's Trade Related Aspects of Industrial Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement. A trademark is initially registered for 10 years and may be renewed for successive periods of 10 years. A patent is granted for 20 years and cannot be renewed. While the IP legislation in Mauritius is consistent with international norms, enforcement is relatively weak. According to a leading IPR law firm, the police will normally only take action against IPR infringements in cases where the IPR owner has an official representative in Mauritius because the courts require a representative to testify that the products seized are counterfeit. The Customs Department also requires rights holders or authorized users to register their trademarks and copyrights with its office in order to seize suspicious goods at the port. Application forms for registration can be downloaded from the Mauritius Revenue Authority/Customs' [website](#).

The Customs Department keeps a record of counterfeit goods seized. In 2016 the Customs Department carried out 25 seizures of a total of 30,914 goods valued at USD 127,213. The rights holder is responsible for paying for the storage and/or destruction of the counterfeit goods. Customs has ex-officio as well as de-minimis authority to seize and destroy counterfeit goods.

Mauritius is not listed in the U.S. Trade Representative's Special 301 report or in the Department of State's notorious market report.

For additional information about treaty obligations and points of contact at local IP offices, please see WIPO's country [profiles](#).

Embassy Contact for IPR

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Some IPR Law Firms in Mauritius

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***Financial Sector***

**Capital Markets and Portfolio Investment**

The government welcomes foreign portfolio investment. The Stock Exchange of Mauritius (SEM) was opened to foreign investors following the lifting of the foreign exchange controls in 1994. Foreign investors do not need approval to trade shares, except for the holding of more than 15 percent in a sugar company as detailed in the Securities (Investment by Foreign Investors) Rules [2013](#). Incentives to foreign investors include free repatriation of revenue from the sale of shares and exemption from tax on dividends and capital gains.

The SEM currently operates two markets: the Official Market and the Development & Enterprise Market (DEM). Currently, the shares of 56 companies (local, global business and foreign companies) are listed on the Official Market representing a market capitalization of nearly USD 9.7 billion as of February 28, 2017. Five exchange traded funds (ETFs) as well as 18 fixed income products also trade on the Official Market. SEM can list, trade, and settle equity and debt products in U.S. dollars, Euros, Pounds Sterling, South African Rand, as well as Mauritian Rupees. The DEM was launched in August 2006 and the shares of 42 companies are currently listed on this market with a market capitalization of nearly USD 1.3 billion as of February 28, 2017. Debentures of three companies are also listed on the DEM.

The stock market has attracted strong foreign investor interest, particularly over the last decade, generating positive investment inflows on many listed companies.

Foreign investors accounted for 42 percent of trading volume on the exchange in 2016. Standard & Poor's, Morgan Stanley, Dow Jones, and FTSE have included the Mauritius stock market in a number of their stock indices. Since 2005, SEM has been a member of the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE), a central reference point and standards-setter for exchanges and the securities industry in the world. SEM is also a partner exchange of the Sustainable Stock Exchanges Initiative.

The government respects IMF Article VIII by refraining from restrictions on payments and transfers for current international transactions. A variety of credit instruments is available to local and foreign investors through the banking system.

#### Money and Banking System

Mauritius has a relatively sophisticated banking sector with 23 banks currently licensed to undertake banking business. Of the 23 banks, 2 banks provide private banking services exclusively while one bank conducts Islamic banking exclusively. Data sourced by the Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion suggests that 82 percent of Mauritians aged 15 and above have a bank account.

According to the Banking Act of 2004, all banks are free to conduct business in all currencies, including the Mauritian rupee. There are also eight non-bank deposit-taking institutions, as well as several money changers and foreign exchange dealers. There are no official government restrictions on foreigners opening bank accounts in Mauritius, but some banks may require letters of reference or proof of residence for their own due diligence. The Bank of Mauritius, the country's central bank, carries out the supervision and regulation of banks as well as non-bank financial institutions authorized to accept deposits. The Bank of Mauritius has endorsed the Core Principles for Effective Banking Supervision as set out by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision.

The banking system is dominated by two, long-established domestic groups, Mauritius Commercial Bank (MCB) and State Bank of Mauritius (SBM), which together hold approximately 65 percent of all Mauritian banking assets. Maubank, the third largest bank in the country, became operational in January 2016 following a merger between the Mauritius Post & Cooperative Bank and the National Commercial Bank. The latter is the ex-Bramer bank which was nationalized after revocation of its license in April 2015 for failure to meet the minimum cash reserves ratio. The Bank of China obtained a banking license in March 2016 and started operations on 27 September 2016. Other foreign banks present in Mauritius include HSBC, Barclays Bank, Bank of Baroda, Habib Bank, Banque des Mascareignes, PT Bank Maybank Indonesia, Deutsche Bank, Standard Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, State Bank of India, and Investec Bank. As of January 31, 2017, commercial banks' total assets amounted to USD 34.7 billion.

According to the Bank of Mauritius Annual Report 2016, the ratio of non-performing loans to total credit outstanding reached 7.1 percent as at end June 2016, up from 5.0 percent from June 2015. Furthermore, Construction, Tourism, Personal and Traders accounted for 70 percent of the total impaired credit in Mauritius.

#### *Foreign Exchange and Remittances*

##### **Foreign Exchange**

The government of Mauritius abolished foreign exchange controls in 1994. Consequently, no approval is required for converting, transferring, or repatriating profits, dividends, or capital gains earned by a foreign investor in Mauritius. Funds associated with any form of investment can be freely converted into any world currency.

The exchange rate is market-determined, but a small number of institutions dominate the market with the Bank of Mauritius, the central bank, occasionally intervening. Between end February 2016 and end February 2017, the Mauritian Rupee appreciated against the British Pound Sterling and the Euro by 10.7 percent and 3.3 percent, respectively, but remained fairly stable against the U.S. Dollar.

Mauritius remains committed to transparency and adherence to best practices as set by leading institutions including the OECD, IMF, and other standards-setting bodies. OECD Global Forum recognizes Mauritius as a largely compliant jurisdiction. In December 2013, Mauritius signed a Tax Information Exchange Agreement (TIEA) and an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with the United States to implement the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA).

##### **Remittance Policies**

There are no time or quantity limits on remittance of capital, profits, dividends, and capital gains earned by a foreign investor in Mauritius. Mauritius has a well-developed and modern banking system. There is no legal parallel market in Mauritius for investment remittances. The Embassy is unaware of any proposed changes by the government to its investment remittance policies.

## **Trade & Project Financing**

### **Methods of Payment**

Mauritius has a well-developed financial system. Payments for import transactions are generally made through letters of credit, depending on the exporter's payment experience with the buyer. The terms of payment as well as the currency of payment should be clearly specified. An open account can be a convenient method of payment if the buyer is well established and has a favorable payment record. For new customers, it is advisable to do a credit check through the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Company Profile service. To apply for this service, interested U.S. firms should contact their nearest [Export Assistance Center](#). More information can be found online.

## **Banking Systems**

Banks in Mauritius provide a wide range of services. Besides traditional banking facilities, they also offer card-based payment services, such as credit and debit cards, internet banking and phone banking facilities. Banks also offer specialized services such as fund administration, custodial services, trusteeship, structured lending, structured trade finance, international portfolio management, investment banking, private client activities, treasury and specialized finance. The international banks offer a wide range of global banking and financial services to corporate, institutional and private clients.

A list of banks operating in Mauritius, including their profiles and the latest edition of the Code of Ethics and Banking Practice, is available at the website of the [Mauritius Bankers Association](#).

## **Foreign Exchange Controls**

There are no foreign exchange controls in Mauritius.

## **US Banks & Local Correspondent Banks**

There are no U.S. banks in Mauritius, although several of the leading banks have a large network of correspondent banks based in major cities around the world, including New York.

## **Project Financing**

Most major infrastructure projects are financed by institutions such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Investment Bank, the French Agence Française de Développement, the Kuwait Fund, and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa. Some are funded through bilateral assistance from France, India, China, Germany, and Japan. These sources fund a broad portfolio of projects, including port and airport upgrades, sewage treatment, road, bridge and dam construction, energy, telecommunications, hospital and housing construction, and sports facilities. Mauritius is eligible for the programs of both the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and the Export-Import Bank of the United States (Ex-Im Bank). The U.S. Trade and Development Agency also provides grant funding for feasibility studies spanning a wide variety of sectors.

U.S. Commercial Service Liaison Offices at the Multilateral Development Banks (African Development Bank, World Bank)

The Commercial Service maintains Commercial Liaison Offices in each of the main Multilateral Development Banks, including the African Development Bank and the World Bank. These institutions lend billions of dollars in developing countries for projects aimed at accelerating economic growth and social development by reducing poverty and inequality, improving health and education, and advancing infrastructure development. The Commercial Liaison Offices help American businesses learn how to get involved in bank-funded projects, and advocate on behalf of American bidders.

Learn more by contacting the [Commercial Liaison Offices to the African Development Bank](#) and the [World Bank](#).

## **Financing Web Resources**

[Commercial Liaison Office to the African Development Bank](#)

[Commercial Liaison Office to the World Bank](#)

Trade Finance Guide: A Quick Reference for U.S. Exporters, published by the [International Trade Administration's Industry & Analysis team](#)

[Ex-Im Bank of the United States](#)

[Ex-Im's Country Limitation Schedule](#)

[OPIC](#)

[Trade and Development Agency](#)

[SBA's Office of International Trade](#)

[USDA Commodity Credit Corporation](#)

[U.S. Agency for International Development](#)

## **Business Travel**

### **Business Customs**

Business customs are similar to those in Europe and the United States. For men, normal business wear is suit and tie. The coastal areas are warmer than the central plateau region year-round. During the cooler months - June through September - an additional layer may be needed if travelling in the center of the country. Humidity can be quite high during summer - November through April - especially in the capital city and the coastal areas. Lunches and cocktail receptions are common business functions.

### **Travel Advisory**

For the [latest travel advisory on Mauritius](#)

For general information on international travel, please visit the [main website](#).

### **Visa Requirements**

Visas are not required for U.S. citizens, but travelers must have an onward or return ticket. Immunization certificates are not required unless the traveler arrives from an infected area. Mauritians traveling to the U.S. require visas. Visa applicants should go to the following links:

- [State Department Visa Website](#)
- [U.S. Embassy Port Louis Consular Section](#)

U.S. companies that require travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States should be aware that security evaluations are handled via an interagency process and therefore cannot be rushed in most circumstances. Visa applicants should visit the [website](#).

## **Currency**

The currency in Mauritius is the Mauritian rupee – Rs or MUR.

1Rupee = 100 cents

The exchange rate (on 06 June 2017): 1 US\$ = Rs 35.40 (Source: Bank of Mauritius)

Most businesses accept credit and debit cards such as Mastercard and Visa. Banks around the country can exchange currency. Money changers are also available in the cities. ATMs on the Cirrus network are available in banks and most shopping centers. Money wiring services such as Western Union and Moneygram are also available.

## **Telecommunications/Electric**

Mauritius' telecommunications infrastructure has not kept pace with recent technological advances, but reliable international mail, telephone, fax, e-mail, and internet services are available and are generally more reliable than the rest of the region. Speed and bandwidth of internet connectivity, though improving, are currently inadequate for many modern commercial requirements. However, Mauritius is planning to install a new submarine cable and is increasing the number of free Wi-Fi hotspots from 15 to 350. The GOM has announced a goal of providing full broadband fiber optic connectivity across the entire island by 2018.

The power supply is 220–240 volts and the plug types used are “Type C, E, F & G (British).

## **Transportation**

Direct flights connect Mauritius to several international destinations. Regular flights serve France, the UK, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, India, China, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey. In March 2016, Air Mauritius and Singapore Changi Airport inaugurated an air corridor that links Africa and Asia via hubs in Mauritius and Singapore. There are no direct flights between Mauritius and the U.S. U.S. travelers typically transit Paris, London, Johannesburg or Dubai. It is also relatively easy to travel around the island by taxi or rental car. In general, taxis fares must be negotiated before setting out. Traffic drives on the left. Port Louis is a 50-minute drive from the airport and easily accessible from other parts of the country except during the morning and evening rush hours.

## **Language**

The official language is English, but French and Mauritian Creole are used in everyday life. Most business executives are bilingual in English and French. A number of Asian languages (Hindi, Urdu, and Mandarin) are also spoken, but usually at religious or cultural events.

## **Health**

Mauritius has no major health hazards. It is considered malaria-free. Vaccination is not required unless the traveler arrives from an infected area. While hospitals and clinics within the public health system are adequate and free, foreign visitors must

pay out-of-pocket for their health needs and are advised to secure health coverage before traveling here. There are a number of private clinics which are relatively expensive such as Wellkin Hospital and Fortis Darne.

### **Local Time, Business Hours and Holidays**

Local Time and Business Hours: Local time is four hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time and nine hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. Business hours are as follows:

- Government Offices open 0900-1600, Monday through Friday
- Banks open 0900-1500, Monday through Friday and some banks remain open until 1700 on Fridays
- Businesses open 0830-1630 Monday through Friday and usually 0900-1300 Saturday

There are 15 Mauritian public holidays. The following are fixed: New Years, January 1 and 2; Independence Day, March 12; Labor Day, May 1; Assumption, August 15; Arrival of Indentured Labor, November 2; and Christmas, December 25. The remaining holidays are religious festivals whose dates vary. The American Embassy is closed on American and local holidays.

### **Temporary Entry of Materials or Personal Belongings**

No duty is levied on apparel and personal effects of a passenger arriving in Mauritius. Articles that are in excess of the concessions and allowances listed below are liable for duty. A passenger 18 years of age or over may bring the following goods, free of customs duty: tobacco (including cigars and cigarettes) not exceeding 250 grams, spirits not exceeding 1 liter; wine, ale, or beer not exceeding 2 liters total.

In addition to allowances and concessions above, a tourist may bring with him/her the following goods free of customs duty:

- One portable musical instrument
- One portable sound and/or image recorder
- One portable radio receiver
- One portable video camera
- One camera
- One sporting firearm with not more than 50 cartridges (police permit is required before importation)
- One non-powered bicycle
- One windsurfer and up to three assorted sails
- One surf board
- Fishing equipment, excluding any type of underwater fishing gun.

[Information on customs formalities](#) is available online.

### **Travel Related Web Resources**

[State Department Visa Website](#)

[U.S. Embassy Consular Section](#)

[Mauritius Revenue Authority](#)

The Embassy's Economic/Commercial Section in Port Louis, Mauritius can be contacted via Email at: [jathoonisx@state.gov](mailto:jathoonisx@state.gov) or [bheenicks@state.gov](mailto:bheenicks@state.gov); Phone: +230 202-4464 or + 230 202-4430; Fax: +230 208-9534 or visit our website <https://mu.usembassy.gov/>