

Model Mauritius?

In 1598, when Mauritius was discovered by the Dutch East India Company it was unpopulated. After the French conquered it almost 100 years later, they brought in slaves from East Africa for the sugar plantations. During the war against Napoleon the British took over Mauritius in 1810. They abolished slavery and imported cheap

“Fair” sugar prices provided a massive injection into Mauritius’ economy.

labour from India instead. This is why today seven out of ten Mauritians come from the Indian subcontinent, 25 percent of the population are of African origin and 5 percent immigrated from Europe. The population of 1.2 million speaks 20 different languages and belongs to 87 different religions or churches.

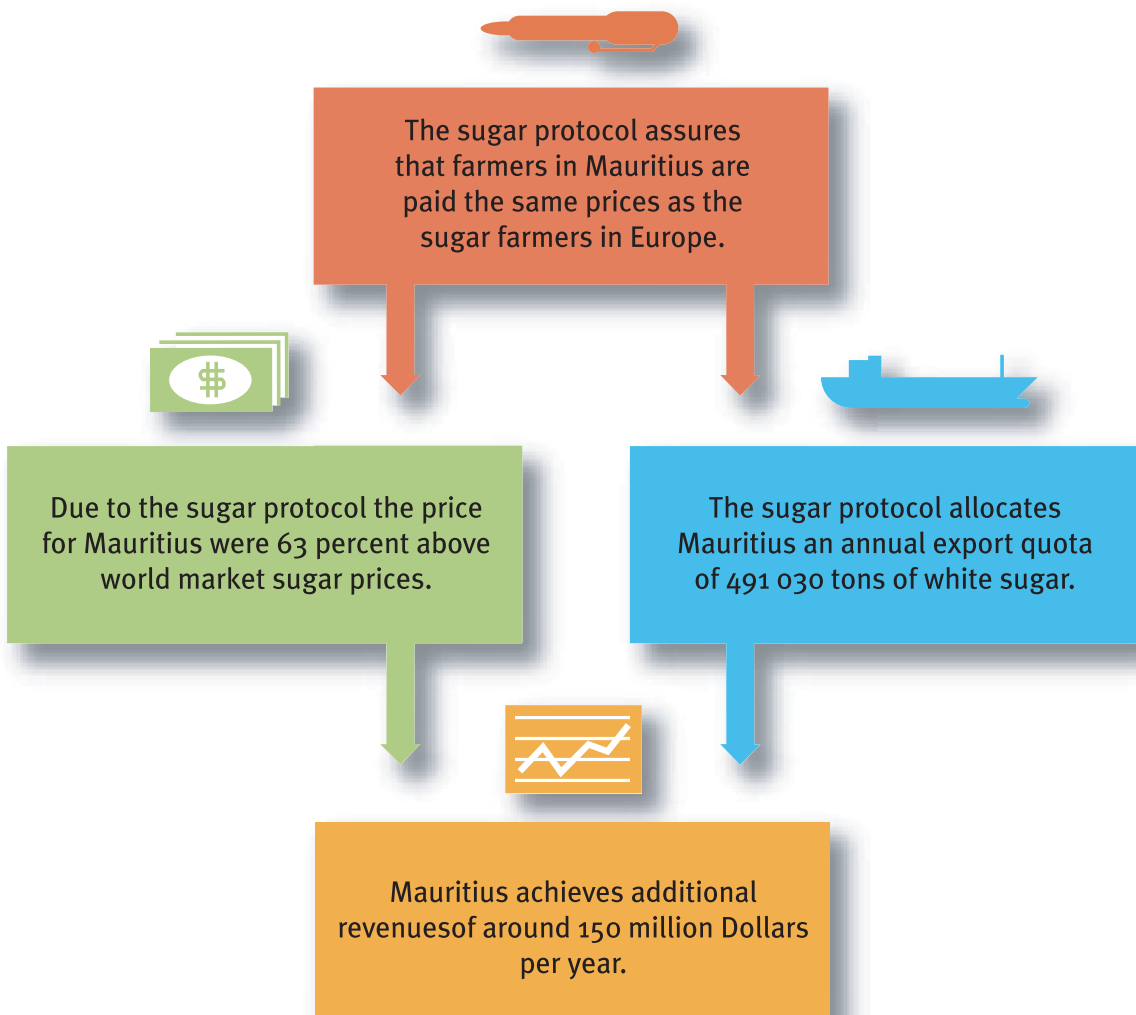
To the general public the East African island of Mauritius is known as an upscale holiday resort. However the small multi-national/multi-ethnic state has more to offer. It provides an object-lesson in development policy. The average income per person per year has increased from 680 dollars in 1975 to 4300 dollars (2003). These are the factors of success:

- Mauritius is a constitutional state and a democracy. In spite of its multi-cultural society consensus was possible in key areas such as family planning, abolition of child labour or social policy. The changing governments pursue a calculable economic policy which consistently increases the economic basis, utilizes market opportunities and makes farsighted investments.
- At the time of independence in 1968 Mauritius – poor in natural resources – depended on its sugar monoculture. In an agreement with the European Union Mauritius was assured a buy-off of a large quantity of its sugar at prices aligned to those of European sugar farmers. Thanks to profits far above world market prices, this long lasting “fair trade” has been a massive financial injection for Mauritius’ economy.
- Being a member of the group of states to which the European Union offers preferential treatment, Mauritius has access to European markets. This market access was/ These open borders were a key element for Mauritius to establish a basis of production for its exports, namely in the textile industry. Furthermore Mauritius has discovered a market opportunity by being a long-distance tourism destination.

Mauritius is not a generally valid model. Each country needs to find its own way. The economic power and the political influence exerted by the European descendants do not comply with the ideals of a balanced society. However the small state of Mauritius has achieved a lot – not only in an economic sense. Between 2000 and 2002 it represented the African continent in the security council of the UN.

Mauritius: sweet sugar

Mauritius illustrates the relevance of foreign support. Were it not for more than 25 years of "fair prices" for its sugar, Mauritius could not have accomplished such a spectacular economic rise. The sugar protocol with the European Union (EU) secured sales for large quantities of the sugar harvest (around 500'000 tons per year) at prices far above the world market. This revenue was used to enlarge the economic basis of the island and to reduce its dependency on sugar. The success of Mauritius is unthinkable without smart investments, rule of law and democracy ("good governance"). Albeit its success, the success story of Mauritius cannot be repeated, because the fair prices of the sugar protocol run counter to market economic basics and will be discontinued soon.



Sources: Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture; Leffler Ulrich, Mauritius. Abhängigkeit und Entwicklung einer Inselökonomie, Institut für Afrika-Kunde, Hamburg 1988; Herrmann Roland, Weiss Dietmar, A Welfare Analysis of the EC-ACP Sugar Protocol, Agrarökonomische Diskussionsbeiträge Nr. 24, Universität Giessen 1994; <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/mutoc.html>; Interviews