

# STRENGTHENING BORDER BIOSECURITY



New Caledonia

French Polynesia

Wallis and Futuna

Pitcairn Islands

 BUDGET: €840,000 (XPF 100.2 million)

 ACTION TIME PERIOD: January 2020 - September 2024

 PARTNERS:


POLYNÉSIE FRANÇAISE

Ministry for Primary Industries  
Manatū Ahu MatuaMinistry for Primary Industries  
Manatū Ahu MatuaWALLIS et FUTUNA  
SERVICE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENTBIOSÉCURITÉ  
POLYNÉSIE FRANÇAISE  
Pu Fa'aterera'a o te Valpāururua'a IhioraBIOSÉCURITÉ  
POLYNÉSIE FRANÇAISE  
Pu Fa'aterera'a o te Valpāururua'a Ihiora

French Polynesia:

- French Polynesia customs
- French Polynesia dog clubs

Wallis and Futuna:

- Customs and Excise Department,
- Maritime Affairs, Lighthouses, Ports and Beacons Department (SAMPPB),
- Economic Affairs and Development Department (AED),
- State Civil Aviation Authority (SEAC)
- Legal Department, Police

## BRIEF SUMMARY

 **Introducing a sniffer dog team in French Polynesia and reviewing regulations in Wallis and Futuna has strengthened biosecurity measures to better prevent the introduction of invasive alien species (IAS).** In order to protect a local biodiversity characterised by a high level of endemism and threatened by these introductions, the two territories decided to strengthen the prevention and control methods available to them.

In **French Polynesia**, a team of three sniffer dogs was set up at Tahiti International Airport and has been operational since April 2023. This stems from the need to improve the efficiency of controls, which until then were mainly based on voluntary passenger declarations. Since then, controls have been carried out on 60-70% of international flights over 13 months, resulting in the seizure of 1,483 undeclared goods, of which 705 presented a high risk of introducing harmful organisms. On the back of this success, the Biosecurity

**“Strengthening biosecurity to prevent introductions”**

Directorate plans to reinforce the team with additional dog/dog handler pairs and to extend its operational scope to cover more flights, the Autonomous Port and the mail sorting office.

In **Wallis and Futuna**, the regulatory framework relating to invasive alien species has been reinforced by two new measures aimed at limiting the introduction and dissemination of IAS in the territory. These measures have created a black list of species already present and a preventative list, which prioritise threats and make managing them easier. These advancements were then put into practice by developing an early detection and rapid response plan, as well as by raising awareness among local residents through videos. The project has therefore introduced a structure that supports action by all relevant departments and has helped to raise awareness among local residents and authorities.

## BACKGROUND

 **Border biosecurity is the first line of defence for biodiversity and the primary sector.** In island environments characterised by a high level of endemism and geographical isolation, invasive alien species are considered to be one of the main causes of biodiversity loss. **In view of this, measures to prevent introductions are the most efficient and cost-effective way to limit potential damage.**

In **French Polynesia**, the decision to strengthen biosecurity measures comes at a critical time for local biodiversity. This territory, with its numerous islands spread over an area the size of Europe and a very high level of endemism, is home to a vast array of threatened species that need to be protected. More than 140 native plants, or 25% of native flora, are considered rare, vulnerable or threatened, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s Red List. At the start of the project, the capacity and means of controlling international passenger arrivals at Tahiti-Faa'a International Airport were limited, mainly relying on passengers' self-declarations.

**Wallis and Futuna** has also been faced with the loss of native species and extensive damage to the primary sector caused by invasive alien species introduced either deliberately or by accident. It is estimated that over the last 30 years, 150 plant species and 164 animal species have been introduced - some becoming invasive, others having naturalised. Faced with this issue, the territory decided to strengthen regulations and train local stakeholders to better target and control IAS that pose a threat to it.



## ISSUES & OBJECTIVES

 Putting biosecurity measures in place requires both clearly identifying the threats and establishing appropriate methods of controlling people and goods. Although the challenge of preventing the introduction of organisms that are harmful to health or biodiversity is gaining more recognition by the Pacific territories, the regulatory framework is still not always clear enough and is not well known by the general public, while the control methods are still underdeveloped.

Strengthening biosecurity is a response to this challenge of preventing introductions, with solutions tailored to each territory. In **French Polynesia**, this means implementing new, more efficient control techniques, without disrupting large volumes of passengers and goods. In **Wallis and Futuna**, this means improving regulations and knowledge of them, as well as detection and rapid response.



### STRENGTHENING BIOSECURITY HAS 3 GOALS:

- ☒ Improving the effectiveness of biosecurity controls in French Polynesia
- ☒ Revising the Environmental Code regarding the identification of priority IAS, governance and border control methods in Wallis and Futuna
- ☒ Implementing operational measures to detect and respond rapidly to new introductions, as well as raising awareness among the residents of Wallis and Futuna



## OUTCOMES

 Collaboration between the authorities and project partners has enabled operational choices to be refined, resulting in the implementation of detection, control and prevention methods adapted to the needs of each territory.

**“A partnership  
with New Zealand”**

In French Polynesia, an operational dog team has been put in place within the Biosecurity Directorate (DBS), a Polynesian administration department. Training dog handlers and obtaining dogs has been made possible thanks to a partnership with New Zealand's Ministry for Primary Industries. Comprising of three dogs and their respective handlers, this team was set up on the DBS premises, located near Tahiti-Faa'a Airport. This involved turning the site into a dog kennel, including indoor and outdoor areas, with the capacity to eventually accommodate up to six dogs. The size will enable the anticipated increase in dog detection resources and the extension of the scope of activities required by the country.

Over the first 13 months of operation, the team was present on 60-70% of international flights, enabling the screening of 40-50% of passengers and their baggage from international commercial flights (excluding private jets) at Tahiti Faa'a Airport.

The biosecurity sniffer dogs intercepted 1,483 undeclared goods (products of plant or animal origin). 705 did not comply with local regulations and therefore represented a high risk of introducing harmful organisms (insects, bacteria, viruses, invasive plants and animals) that could devastate agriculture and the environment.

The operation also represents a success in terms of the speed of controls, a key challenge. Originally planned to equip Tahiti's port and airport with X-ray machines, the Biosecurity Directorate (DBS)'s project was reviewed to avoid lengthening delays on arrival in French Polynesia, where bottlenecks are common due to inadequate space.

In terms of publicity, the dog team was officially launched on 11 July 2024 by the French Polynesian Minister of Agriculture, Marine Resources and the Environment, responsible for Food, Research and Animal Welfare (MPR). This occasion showcased the team's work on international flight arrivals and kennel refurbishments, and received media coverage from Polynésie Première, Radio Polynesia, Tahiti Infos and Radio Te reo Tefana.

**“3 sniffer dogs  
and 70% of  
flights screened”**

## KEY FIGURES

**At Tahiti-Faa'a Airport:**

**1**  
**kennel**  
purpose built

**3**  
**pairs**  
of sniffer dogs/dog  
handlers trained in  
New Zealand

**40-50%**  
of passengers screened  
(international commercial flights  
arriving in French Polynesia)

**1,483** undeclared  
goods  
intercepted over 13 months  
of operation





In Wallis and Futuna, the project led to a review of the regulations in 2024, aimed at strengthening the biosecurity measures on the islands faced with invasive alien species. The “Black List” was updated, and a “Preventive List” was developed. The black list identifies 68 invasive species, including 38 plants and 30 animals, already present in the territory and causing significant negative impacts. The preventive list, on the other hand, includes 123 species absent from the territory but present in the region, and that Wallis and Futuna wishes to preserve itself from. These lists are essential tools for preventing or stopping the spread of IAS, while establishing priorities for managing departments and serving as a communication tool for the general public and associations.

These lists are the result of work begun in 2022, involving consultations with technical departments and local stakeholders (traditional authorities and local associations), an analysis of the potential financial impact and a comparative study of regional regulations. This process led to the proposal of seven other sections of the Environmental Code, which can be subsequently implemented by local authorities. They relate in particular to border biosecurity controls, import/export procedures, quarantine, internal controls and penalties.

In addition to this regulatory review, the work carried out as part of the project led to the development of a detection and rapid response plan. This protocol includes identifying biosecurity areas, as well as methods for monitoring, reporting, collecting information, assessing the management plan, implementing responses to the introduction and post-operational follow-up. In December 2023, six technical departments were trained to implement the protocol.

### **“A regulatory review and an early detection and rapid response plan”**

A communication strategy has been rolled out to ensure that this regulatory review is adopted and promoted locally. Booklets detailing the black and preventive lists, as well as a paper version of the early detection and rapid response plan have been distributed to the departments. In addition, two animated videos have been made for the general public, in French, Wallisian and Futunan, that explain the black and preventive lists. These videos aim to raise awareness of the priority species on these lists, to explain their negative impacts and to educate local residents about best practice.

## **KEY FIGURES**

### **In Wallis and Futuna:**

**2** **videos**  
to raise public awareness

**1** **plan**  
adopted for early detection  
and rapid response

**68** **species**  
on the IAS black  
list in Wallis and  
Futuna

**123** **species**  
on the IAS preventive  
list in Wallis and  
Futuna

**1** **training  
programme**  
across departments to implement the early  
detection and rapid response plan

## FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS



### HUGO OUDART

*Head of the Dog Team, Biosecurity Directorate,  
French Polynesia*

*After a year, we can say that it was a very good choice in terms of the infrastructure we have. Two dogs are enough to screen nearly 100% of passengers without having to unload suitcases to put them through an X-ray or open them.*

### TAIVINI TEAI

*Minister of Agriculture, Marine Resources and the  
Environment, responsible for Food, Research and Animal  
Welfare (MPR), French Polynesia*

*We have islands very far from the mainland coasts,  
which are protected and preserved environments.  
It's important to have a security system that complements  
what already exists.*



### ISSAM DJENIDI

*Head of the Veterinary, Food and Phytosanitary  
Inspection Department, Wallis and Futuna*

*The issue of invasive species is significant for a relatively small island territory, since the arrival of a new species can very quickly have a visible impact, even destroying local plant or animal species. It is therefore important to contain them as soon as they arrive. The idea of border control makes perfect sense.*





## PROSPECTS AND SUSTAINABILITY

🐾 Over the next few years, **an increase in the number of sniffer dogs in French Polynesia is anticipated, in view of the positive feedback from the project.** These new resources could strengthen the existing team at Tahiti Airport, so as to cover a larger proportion of the passenger volume. An extended roll-out to the port of Papeete and the mail sorting office is also expected. These developments will depend on the results obtained and the experience acquired thanks to the dog team set up within the PROTEGE programme. In addition, French Polynesia is part of a regional biosecurity initiative and could serve as a reference for other Pacific island communities or states, to share experiences.

**In Wallis and Futuna, the technical departments in charge of biosecurity will ensure that the revised regulations are enforced, drawing on the operational early detection and rapid response plan.** The specifications, detailing trapping devices which can be purchased or made cheaply, are a key tool for implementing the plan. The regulatory review has also encouraged discussions on the clarification of biosecurity capabilities and the acquisition of extra control resources within local authorities, which are studying the relevance and feasibility of incorporating X-ray equipment or a dog team into border control procedures. Meanwhile, the animated awareness-raising videos will continue to be broadcast on local television channels.



## DOCUMENTARY RESOURCES



PROTEGE



Scan or  
click to  
access  
resources

### REPORTS

- Marie FOURDRIGNIEZ (2022), Preventive list of invasive species and intervention plan.
- Territorial Environment Service (2024), Black list of invasive species present in the Wallis and Futuna Territory.
- SPREP (2022), Protect our islands with biosecurity.
- SPREP (2016), Catch it early: invasive species early detection and rapid response.
- DOMINIQUE Yannick (2023), Development of an early detection and rapid response plan against invasive alien species in Wallis and Futuna. Purpose of the paper. Phase 3: The ED&RR Plan, Wallis & Futuna.



DOCUMENTS

The dog team in action,  
featured in the local media  
in French Polynesia

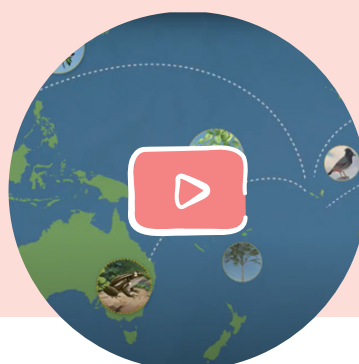


MEDIA

Raising biosecurity awareness:  
best practices highlighted in Wallis and Futuna

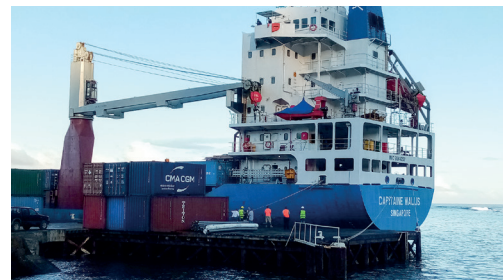


Black list  
video



Preventive list  
video

VIDEOS



Find all the lessons-learned factsheets on invasive alien species **freely available on our website.**



PACIFIC TERRITORIES REGIONAL PROJECT FOR  
SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

[protege.spc.int/en](https://protege.spc.int/en)



Pacific Community  
Communauté du Pacifique



Funded by  
European Union



GOVERNEMENT DE LA  
POLYNÉSIE FRANÇAISE



FRENCH POLYNESIA



WALLIS AND FUTUNA



PITCAIRN ISLANDS

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