

Tree Netting

Fruit growers in Mauritius have been claiming that bats cause all the damage to their lychee and mango crops. In recent years the extent to which fruit bats take lychees in comparison to other fruit eaters (such as the Ring-necked Parakeet, Common Mynah, Red-whiskered Bulbul, and rats) has been assessed. The Mauritius Fruit Bat is considered by the general public as a major pest to exotic fruit crops, mainly litchis and mangos, although the real extent of their damage to these fruit crops has only recently been studied. (Dr Ryszard Oleksy/MWF 2014/2015, 2015/2016: North of England Zoological Society/MWF 2016/2017). The Mauritian government reported 42% to 73% damage to litchis and mangos attributed to bats, but ignored the fact that damage to fruits are also caused by introduced birds, winds and diseases. The post-doctoral study on the damage that bats cause to litchi, longan and mango trees shows that damage is on average around 20% and that there are geographical and inter-annual variation in the extent of damage.

In 2009, a positive step was taken when the Government carried out a sensitization campaign for the protection of farmed fruit and promoted the use of nets to protect fruit from bats and birds, along with a grant scheme to purchase the nets, which was extended into 2017. The nets, if lifted from the tree and sealed to prevent birds accessing the tree, is a very effective way of protecting the fruit. **(Protection of Fruit 2019 - Download pdf here: <https://adobe.ly/2m6C6ri>)**. We encourage the Government to continue with this scheme and to provide advice and support to growers to net their trees, promote pruning of trees and the propagation of dwarf fruit trees which will improve fruit protection and ease of harvesting. **(Pruning Fruit Trees-FAREI-Download pdf here: <https://adobe.ly/32yfocv>)**.