

AGRITECH GRANT KICK-STARTS MAUKE ROYAL OIL PARTNERSHIP

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) is pleased to announce it has awarded a SMART AgriTech Scheme grant to Rarotonga's Mauke Royal Oil, the produce coconut oil from Mauke on a commercial scale in partnership with local Landowners. The new Mauke Royal Oil venture aims to explore the process of extracting coconut oil using modern methods improving efficiency and greater returns.

Mauke Miracle Oil (Akari Pi), is valued by local and overseas Cook Islanders for its proven healing properties. Akari Pi is used in massage, on sensitive skin and allergies, and it also helps to ease scarring. The aim of the Mauke Royal Oil project is to produce a constant, good quality, reliable supply of the oil on Mauke that can then be shipped to Rarotonga for packaging and distribution internationally via a dedicated website.



Mauke Royal Oil's co-owner Mark Boyd explains that this partnership will be beneficial to the Mauke Landowners involved: "The Landowners are shareholders and investors in our company

through their labour and also resourcing of assets not included in the project," said Mark, "Our agreement will ensure that they will receive a portion of the financial benefits derived from this venture."

Mark says that with the landowners "we have already identified a suitable piece of land for the new production building, on the main road in Kimiangatau". The new production plant will incorporate solar panels so that the plant can be run off-grid as much as possible. There are also plans to make the business as sustainable as possible by reusing the coconut waste products, for example as pig food.

"At present the oil extraction process is very long with lots of manual labour involved, Mark says. "My aim is to shorten the process and reduce manual labour with better equipment. Once in operation, a small team of people locally employed in Mauke should be able to do the process in half the time." "It is not our intention to compete with the Mamas who already supply for the local market" said Mark "but to supply for tourists and overseas markets using internet sales and if we can also buy the oil off the Mama's

and onsell them then we both benefit".

Mauke Royal Oil will initially focus on producing Akari Pi, with plans to expand the line to include other natural products in future such as the maire, the morenga which all grow naturally on Mauke. The oil will be extracted from coconuts from the Mauke land, supplemented by coconuts purchased from others when larger oil volumes are required. Mauke Royal Oil hope to market their product through local sellers as well as through a new online store, to make their products available to overseas customers.

