

Sea moss farming in St. Lucia presents a clear opportunity for the application of ecological economic principals. Sea moss is grown in Praslin Bay, which is protected from the Atlantic Ocean by reefs, and surrounded by mangroves along the coast. Located just a few yards from the water is the small and underdeveloped community of Praslin. Several of the Praslin residents have taken to growing sea moss on rope lines floating on the water. The sea moss is collected, processed within the community and sold.

Expanding sea moss operations would have significant effects within such a small town, but there are complications. Most notable is the remarkable presence of e-coli and fecal coliforms in the mangroves. This appears to be due to poor waste practices within the community. Though it does not affect the sea moss directly, the bacterial presence is damaging to the mangroves, which protect the sea moss from silt and freshwater runoff – both are detrimental to the health of the aquatic plant. Additionally, contaminant-free water is necessary in order to acquire the proper certificates for exportation of the product.

Additional barriers to growth include a limited market, inconsistent agricultural and business practices, insufficient infrastructure, and land-use regulations. Research identifies high-impact/low-cost adjustments that could be made to ensure growth of the Praslin economy without jeopardizing the health of the mangroves on which the farm operations are dependent.