French Polynesia: Expanding Its Horizons with the USA

French Polynesia, a scattered archipelago of 118 islands and atolls in the vast South Pacific, is the epitome of paradise. Beyond its stunning beaches and clear waters, it captivates travelers with its rich culture, history, and economic opportunities.

midst the turmoil of World War II. the serene shores of Bora Bora emerged as an unexpected bastion of collaboration between French Polynesia and the United States. Over 6,000 American Gls descended upon the island between 1942 and 1946, transforming it into a strategic outpost and fostering a unique cultural exchange with the local Tahitian population. Moetai Brotherson, president of French Polynesia, reflects on this period, noting, "This legacy underscores the strength of our bilateral ties, shaped by shared cultural affinities and mutual interests."

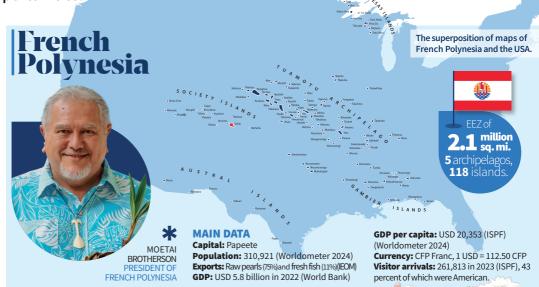
French Polynesia, an overseas collectivity of France, spans over 1,240 miles across five archipelagos: the Austral Islands, the Gambier Islands, the Marquesas Islands, the Society Islands, and the Tuamotu Archipelago. With a population of 310,000, the region boasts an exclusive economic zone of 2.1 million square miles, brimming with potential for sustainable development.

"Our focus lies on tourism, driven by our unparalleled natural beauty," asserts President Brotherson. "Our aim is to welcome 600,000 visitors over a decade, necessitating a redistribution strategy across our five archipelagos."

Tourism serves as the cornerstone of French Polynesia's economic strategy, with Jean-Marc Mocellin, CEO of Tahiti Tourisme, highlighting the sector's growth. "In 2023, tourist numbers reached a new high of 262,000, up from the previous record of 236,600 in 2019," Mocellin notes. "Tourism contributes 9 to 10 percent of Polynesian GDP, providing 18 percent of jobs and involving 5,200 businesses."

President Brotherson underscores the forthcoming surfing event at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Teahupo'o, emphasizing the region's status as a top surfing destination. French Polynesia





aims to seamlessly integrate the Olympics into its culture, expecting a surge in post-event tourism driven by curiosity about the historic Olympic venues.

The nation is diversifying its economy beyond tourism, with a focus on sectors such as agriculture and energy transition. Ambitious plans to triple fisheries capacity sustainably are being outlined, alongside efforts to promote ventures in aquaculture and agriculture.

Several success stories stand out in these fields. Tahiti Marine Products, for instance, specializes in breeding and cultivating tropical sea cucumbers, catering to the demands of food supplements, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics. Meanwhile, the Laboratoire

de Cosmétologie du Pacifique Sud is renowned for its production of Mono'i, exported to global giants like Yves Rocher. Hotu Vanilla is among the few vanilla exporters, showcasing Tahitian vanilla's devoted following in international haute cuisine. Yet, to maximize its potential, the industry seeks investors to expand production and satisfy rising demand.

In the domain of energy transition "French Polynesia aims for 75 percent renewable energy by 2030, primarily through solar projects. Currently, 35-37 percent of Tahiti's energy comes from hydroelectricity" states Didier Pouzou, CEO of EDT Engie. French Polynesia has been at the forefront of implementing Sea Water Air Conditioning technol-

ogy (SWAC) since 2006, utilizing deep ocean water for cooling and emitting 3 to 4 times far less CO2 than conventional methods. Three SWAC systems are installed at prestigious sites like the InterContinental hotel in Bora Bora and The Brando hotel on Tetiaroa atoll.

Moreover, French Polynesia is poised to capitalize on the digital economy with Google being set to lay five submarine cables connecting Tahiti to key global destinations, including the US West Coast, Chile, Guam, Fiji, and Australia. The country also aims to attract major film productions and leverage its cinematic landscapes for iconic experiences.

With its pristine landscapes, vibrant culture, and strategic vision for development, this South Pacific gem invites the world to embark on a journey of discovery and possibility.

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

- Stable political environment: Recent reforms ensure governance continuity, encouraging sustained investment.
- Advanced infrastructure and amenities: Robust healthcare system and top-notch facilities offer peace of mind for residents and investors.
- Favorable regulations: Tax incentives and land ownership

- mechanisms attract foreign investment, especially for tourism development.
- Tourism growth opportunities: International tender invites investors for hotel construction on prime sites, fostering strategic partnerships.
- Digital revolution: Collaboration with Google to lay five submarine cables promises a significant connectivity leap, positioning the country as a hotspot for digital innovation.

Tourism KAORI MEDIA COUNTRY REPORT FOR NEWSWEEK



Bora Bora: Preserving Paradise, Pioneering Sustainability

Balancing luxury and sustainability in the Pearl of the Pacific. A tale of innovation and conservation in French Polynesia's premier destination.

ora Bora, often hailed as the "Pearl of the Pacific," holds a unique position as not only a breathtaking destination but also a beacon of sustainable development in the heart of French Polynesia. Nestled amidst crystal-clear waters and embraced by lush landscapes, Bora Bora's charm transcends its natural beauty; it exemplifies a dedication to responsible tourism and environmental stewardship, aspiring to become a 100 percent green, carbon-neutral destination by 2050.

In a recent interview with Mayor Gaston Tong Sang, the rich history of Bora Bora's evolution emerged. Since his election in 1989, Mayor Tong Sang has spearheaded transformative initiatives to address the island's pressing challenges. These include not only pioneering wastewater sanitation systems but also innovative solutions for providing clean drinking water through advanced desalination technologies. Moreover, Mayor Tong Sang's administration has prioritized modern waste management facilities, ensuring that the island remains clean and attractive to visitors. Embracing renewable energy solutions has been another cornerstone of Bora Bora's sustainability efforts, with



"We want people who set foot on our island to be considered not as tourists or visitors, but as our guests, our hosts, with all that implies in terms of exchanges, sharing, and mutual respect."

ambitious projects underway to transition towards greener energy sources including hydrogen and ocean thermal energy. Mayor Tong Sang aptly emphasizes, "Responsible resource management is the key to success." Furthermore, Mayor Tong Sang's vision extends to future endeavors such as the utilization of ocean thermal energy (OTEC) to propel Bora Bora towards a 100 percent carbon-free destination, a project undertaken in collaboration with the IANOS European consortium (H2020).

Despite the island's enduring charm, Bora Bora faces contemporary hurdles, as highlighted by the president of the Tourism Committee, Rainui Besineau. With fluctuating tourist numbers and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining a delicate balance between economic development and environmental preservation is paramount. Rainui Besineau underscores the importance of sustainable tourism practices, ensuring that the island's natural wonders remain unspoiled for generations to come.

Looking ahead,
Director General of
Services, Maireraurii Leverd, paints
a visionary picture
of Bora Bora's future.
Through ambitious
projects like the Vaitape
(town) development and
innovative environmental programs, Bora Bora seeks to rede-

fine luxury tourism while staying true to its cultural heritage. Leverd's emphasis on sustainability and conservation reflects a steadfast commitment to safeguarding the island's unique ecosystem.

At the heart of Bora Bora's ethos lies a profound dedication to preserving its pristine environment and cultural identity. Through collaborative efforts and forward-thinking initiatives, Bora Bora sets a global benchmark for sustainable tourism. As Mayor Tong Sang aptly states, "With vision and perseverance, everything is possible."

As Bora Bora welcomes guests from around the world, it extends an invitation not merely as tourists but as honored guests. Mayor Tong Sang's sentiment resonates deeply: "We want people who set foot on our island to be considered not as tourists or visitors, but as our guests, with all that implies in terms of exchanges, sharing, and mutual respect."

With each passing year, Bora Bora continues to evolve, driven by a commitment to sustainability and a reverence for its natural wonders. From innovative environmental programs to responsible tourism practices, the island charts a course towards a future where paradise remains unspoiled, and every visitor becomes a custodian of its beauty. As the world seeks models of sustainable development, Bora Bora shines as a beacon of hope, proving that preserving paradise is not just a dream but a shared responsibility.

The Westin Bora Bora Resort & Spa: The Dream Like Never Before

Well-being, sustainability, and cultural immersion converge in a luxurious paradise.

estled amidst the breathtaking land-scapes of French Polynesia, The Westin Bora Bora Resort & Spa offers an elevated wellness experience amidst a luxurious paradise. With its azure lagoons and lush greenery, Bora Bora stands as a premier destination for travelers seeking a rejuvenating escape.

"French Polynesia is synonymous with peaceful and relaxing vacations, where one can enjoy true serenity," says Melinda Wane, general manager for the Hospitality Division of the Wane Group, emphasizing the allure of the destination.

Mr. Cesar Marques, general manager at The Westin Bora Bora, highlights the resort's commitment to providing guests with a unique and unforgettable experience. From the Eco Center Bora Bora promoting environmental awareness to the holistic spa treatments at Heavenly Spa rooted in local traditions, every aspect of the resort reflects a dedication to sustainability, cultural immersion and wellness.

The planned opening in summer 2024 marks the beginning of a new chapter for The Westin Bora Bora. Positioned facing the majestic Otemanu mountain, the resort promises breathtaking views and a serene atmosphere for guests to unwind and recharge.

With a focus on catering to diverse travelers, from honeymooners to families, The Westin Bora Bora offers an array of amenities and activities to suit every preference. Whether it's participating in yoga sessions overlooking the crystal-clear waters, indulging in nutritious cuisine made from locally sourced ingredients, or enjoying holistic spa treatments inspired by

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MELINDA WANE

traditional Polynesian practices, guests are invited to immerse themselves in a culture of wellness and relaxation.

As travelers consider their next tropical getaway, The Westin Bora Bora emerges as a premium destination, where wellness, sustainability, and cultural immersion combine to offer an unparalleled experience. With its unwavering commitment to providing an unforgettable journey that nourishes the body, mind, and spirit, the resort invites guests to embark on a transformative retreat amidst the luxurious paradise of French Polynesia.

Eco Center Bora Bora:
Protecting French Polynesia.

Overwater Villas.

Overwater Villas.

Overwater Villas.

n the midst of French Polynesia's enchanting Bora Bora lies a sanctuary unlike any other: the Eco Center Bora Bora, located at the heart of The Westin Bora Bora Resort, where a declicated team is on a mission to safeguard one of the ocean's most cherished inhabitants—the sea turtle. "Sea turtles are not just creatures of the sea; they are ambassadors of our planet's health and vitality," says Ms. Bonfanti, the center's manager, who has dedicated her life to their conservation.

Originally developed in 2000 by the owners of the hotel, who are committed to investing, supporting, and protecting all ocean activities, this haven serves as a lifeline for these majestic creatures, offering refuge, rehabilitation, and a renewed lease on life. The dedicated team at the Eco Center shares insights into their tireless efforts and the challenges they face in preserving the region's marine heritage.

Sea turtles face perilous threats, ranging from plastic pollution to relent-less poaching. The Eco Center Bora Bora champions conservation measures and raises awareness among both locals and visitors, participating in global sustainability events, and engaging local staff.

Since its inception, the Eco Center has cared for over 700 sea turtles, high-

lighting the critical need for conservation efforts. With a release rate of 74 percent, the center's impact offers hope for the future of these majestic creatures.

From state-of-the-art hospital facilities to groundbreaking research initiatives, the center stands at the forefront of marine conservation. As the center undergoes a transformative renovation, it will emerge not just as a sanctuary for sea turtles, but as a beacon of sustainability and ecological stewardship. The reimagined Eco Center Bora Bora promises to protect not only sea turtles but the entire Polynesian marine ecosystem.

Tourism KAORI MEDIA COUNTRY REPORT FOR NEWSWEEK



Unveiling Moorea's Natural Treasures: An Expedition of Discovery and Adventure

In the embrace of French Polynesia, lying close to the shores of Tahiti, lies the enchanting island of Moorea, a hidden gem waiting to be explored. With its pristine lagoons, lush valleys, and rich cultural heritage, Moorea offers a paradise for tourists and a promising landscape for responsible investment.

n a recent interview with Mr. Evans Haumani, mayor of Moorea-Maiao, we delved into the economic dynamics, sustainable initiatives, and tourism prospects of Moorea.

"Tourism is the backbone of our economy," Mr. Haumani stated. Despite facing economic challenges exacerbated by the closure of upscale hotels due to the COVID crisis, Moorea remains resilient. Its population, which nearly doubles on weekends, relies heavily on tourism-related jobs. "Our goal is to create employment opportunities for our youth while preserving our environment". With initiatives such as infrastructure improvements and the establishment of a tourism committee. Moorea aims to



enhance its attractiveness to visitors while ensuring the sustainable development of its resources.

A significant aspect of Moorea's appeal lies in its natural beauty. which is carefully preserved through regulatory tools like the PGEM (Maritime Space Management Plan) for lagoon protection and the promotion of bioclimatic constructions. "We are proud that Moorea is devoid of electric pylons, as electricity is transmitted underground," Mr. Haumani noted, emphasizing the commune's dedication to environmental conservation. Additionally, the municipality has implemented decisive measures to preserve its forests through rigorous policies and partnerships with conservation organizations.

"Tourism in Moorea has experienced significant growth in recent years, with over 130 cruise ship stops recorded in 2023, attracting visitors from around the globe. Out of the 90,000 tourists received last year, approximately 70 percent were American," shared Mr. Haumani. American visitors, in particular, appreciate Moorea's natural splendor and warm hospitality, making them a vital market for the commune's tourism sector.

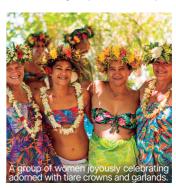


"Our goal is to develop sustainable and inclusive tourism."

To cater to the growing demand for authentic experiences, Moorea offers a plethora of activities, from diving in the crystal-clear lagoon to exploring lush valleys and cultural landmarks. "We aim to offer an authentic and memorable tourist experience," affirmed the mayor. Moorea's allure lies in its ability to encapsulate the diverse range of tourist activities found across Polynesia within its shores. From exhilarating water sports to immersive cultural encounters, Moorea offers a comprehensive showcase of Polynesian hospitality and adventure.

Furthermore, Moorea's proximity to Tahiti and its unspoiled environment are highly valued by neighboring islands, fostering a commitment to local tourism. By preserving its natural splendor and cultural heritage, Moorea ensures that visitors and locals alike can continue to bask in its splendor for years to come.

For investors eyeing Moorea's potential, the message is clear: responsible investment aligned with sustainable development is key. "Our goal is to develop sustainable and inclusive tourism," Mr. Haumani stated, extending a warm invitation to American investors interested in Moorea's offerings. Moorea stands as a testament to paradise preserved, where natural beauty meets cultural heritage in perfect harmony.



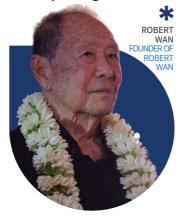
Robert Wan: A Legacy of Pearl Excellence and a Symbol of French Polynesia

French Polynesia is home to a thriving pearl industry led by Robert Wan, focusing on quality, sustainability and global market adaptability.

n today's world flooded with artificial products, natural treasures like pearls stand out for their rarity and enduring value, cultivated sustainably and with generational expertise. Graded for size and luster, pearls symbolize prosperity and purity, appreciating over time due to limited supply and rising demand. Investing in pearl jewelry offers both aesthetic appeal and potential financial rewards.

For five decades, Robert Wan has been a stalwart in pearl cultivation, a beacon of innovation and resilience amidst the shifting tides of the industry. In an exclusive interview, Mr. Robert Wan, the visionary behind his namesake brand, provides insights into the present condition of the pearl sector, discussing its hurdles and prospects.

The pearl market was valued at USD 10.5 billion in 2022, and it is projected to soar to USD 25 billion by 2030 as per Zion Market Research study. The exports of raw black pearls, which account for more than half of local product exports in French Polynesia, brought in USD 150 million in 2023 (+182 percent compared to 2022) according



"Come, let the allure of pearls guide you on a journey where luxury meets sustainability."

to IEOM. Historical buyers of Tahitian pearls, Hong Kong and Japan remain the top two customers in 2022: Together, they account for 92 percent of the pearls exported, followed by the United States. "While the United States and Japan have traditionally been our mainstays, the rise of Asian economies, particularly

China, has ushered in a new era of demand" explains Wan.

During our visit to the Robert Wan Pearl Museum in Papeete, Richard Wan, manager of Wan Group boutiques, kindly explained the process of creation of the French Polynesia's black pearl. "It starts with nurturing blacklipped pearl ovsters in the region's pristine lagoons. After two to three years, skilled divers collect and carefully graft the oysters, stimulating pearl formation. Over time, layers of nacre develop around the nucleus, resulting in the pearl's formation. After two additional years, pearls are harvested, cleaned, sorted, and crafted into exquisite jewelry, highlighting their distinctive allure."

Celebrating its 50th anniversary, Wan provides a compelling narrative of the pearl market's evolution. From its humble beginnings in 1973 to its current prominence on the shores of Marutea, Wan's journey is one of resilience and adaptation. It began in Gambier before expanding to Marutea in 1984. "In 2006, our production soared to a staggering 4 million pearls, a testament to our commitment to excellence" says Wan.

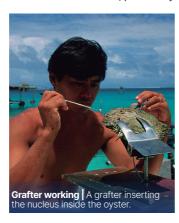
However, he acknowledges the challenges of recent years, noting a decline in production to around 600,000 large-sized pearls by 2023, emphasizing the imperative of quality over quantity in today's market.

Pearl Farming

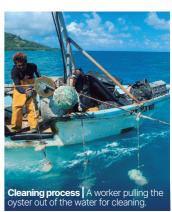
In a candid exchange, M. Bruno Wan, Director of Robert Wan, discusses the industry's resilience in adversity. Bruno Wan reflects on COVID-19's impact, emphasizing the company's adaptability. Despite challenges, Wan remains committed to sustainability, exemplified through educational initiatives and community engagement, showcasing Wan's dedication to environmental stewardship and cultural preservation.

As the interview draws to a close, Wan extends a warm invitation to Newsweek readers, welcoming them to explore the enchanting shores of French Polynesia and immerse themselves in its rich tapestry of culture and natural beauty. "Come, let the allure of pearls guide you on a journey where luxury meets sustainability."









Transportation & Infrastructure

Transport and Infrastructure Advancements Pave the Way for Tourism Growth in French Polynesia

French Polynesia is poised for significant advancements in its transport and infrastructure sectors, aiming to bolster its tourism appeal and enhance connectivity both regionally and internationally.



resident Moetai Brotherson highlights the substantial increase in international flight capacity, with a 40 percent rise witnessed in recent years. Established carriers like Air France and

newcomers such as French Bee, Delta, and United are expanding their frequencies, complementing the local international airline, Air Tahiti Nui.

Moreover, plans for a second international airport in the Marquesas

Islands, particularly on Nuku Hiva, are underway, promising enhanced tourism potential and vital security measures. Minister of Public Works Jordy Chan emphasizes the importance of the Marquesas Islands' International Airport project, envisioning it as a gateway to tap into tourist traffic from Hawaii. Feasibility studies explore options ranging from a full-fledged international airport to upgraded local facilities, requiring substantial investments and potential public-private partnerships.

In the cruise sector, significant developments are on the horizon. Tahiti Tourisme's CEO Jean-Marc Mocellin, discusses the upcoming new cruise

terminal designed to accommodate more passengers comfortably, with facilities akin to those found in airports, ensuring seamless arrivals and departures. According to Bud Gilroy, chairman of Tahiti Tourisme, cruise tourism represents 25 percent of tourism revenue and 30 percent of air arrivals.

Belinda Hindmarsh, group deputy CEO Global Business at Ponant, notes the post-COVID growth in cruise passenger numbers, signaling promising demand. The acquisition of the Paul Gauguin vessel and its success in the region underscore the allure of luxury cruise experiences in French Polynesia. Ponant will further expand its fleet in French Polynesia by introducing another vessel, the Jacques Cartier, during the winter of 2026-2027.

With these strategic initiatives, including the Aranui luxury cruise offering immersive journeys through the Marquesas, French Polynesia is set to elevate its status as a premier destination, blending natural beauty with modern amenities and unparalleled hospitality.

Air Moana: Navigating the Skies of French Polynesia

Amidst the azure waters and lush landscapes of French Polynesia, Air Moana emerges as a beacon of excellence in the domestic airline sector.

rench Polynesia is currently experiencing a transformative phase in its domestic airline industry, led by the rapid ascent of Air Moana, a recently established carrier that has quickly solidified its position since its inception in 2023. Olivier-Jean Breaud, CEO of Air Moana, describes their journey as "remarkable, marked by resilience and unwavering commitment to excellence."

Within just one year, Air Moana has secured a significant market share, amounting to around 20 percent according to its CEO. Raitini Rey, the airline's deputy general manager, stresses that their success goes beyond numbers, reflecting their focus on safety, innovation, and customer satisfaction. Operating with two leased ATR 72-600

tion,

aircraft and a team of 250 professionals, Air Moana has broken a long term monopoly in French Polynesia.

Setting itself apart with a dedication to modernization and digitaliza-

tion, Air Moana ensures operational efficiency and passenger confidence

tion, Air Moana ensures operational efficiency and passenger confidence through advanced technology and stringent safety protocols.

Looking forward, Air Moana aims to expand into the lucrative American market, recognizing the appeal of French Polynesia to American travelers. With stra-

tegic plans in place, the airline seeks to strengthen its presence locally, exploring new routes to destinations like Huahine, Fakarava, and Tetiaroa and improve regional connectivity.

Strategic partnerships are integral to Air Moana's growth strategy, exemplified by agreements with key players like Air Tahiti Nui. According to Mr. Breaud, partnerships are crucial for sustainable growth, allowing the airline to leverage expertise and resources for mutual benefit.

Beyond aviation, French Polynesia offers diverse investment and tourism prospects, with its natural beauty, cultural richness, and favorable economic policies. Mr. Rey invites both investors and travelers to explore the untapped potential of the territory.

As a pioneer in French Polynesia's aviation industry, Air Moana is poised to redefine travel experiences and explore new horizons. With the region promising opportunity, the airline invites the world to embark on a journey of discovery and prosperity.

Digital & Telecommunications

Digital Economy and Telecommunications Sector: A Gateway to Innovation

French Polynesia is rapidly emerging as a hotspot for digital innovation and telecommunications advancements. Spearheaded by president Moetai Brotherson, the digital economy has been identified as a priority sector, with immense potential to drive economic growth and foster collaboration in IT, telecommunications, and film production.

significant milestone in this endeavor is the partnership with Google, which is set to lay five submarine cables connecting Tahiti to key global destinations, including the US West Coast, Chile, Guam, Fiji, and Australia. According to President Brotherson, this infrastructure upgrade not only meets Google's data needs but also unlocks vast bandwidth potential for local operators, multiplying current capacity by 50 times. Such a leap in connectivity elevates French Polynesia's appeal to foreign IT firms and cinema industry players, positioning it as a hub for digital innovation and collaboration.

Mme. Hina Delva. CEO of OPT.PF. shared insights into French Polynesia's telecommunications sector, valued at USD 222 million in 2023 as stated by OPT.PF. With subsidiaries like ONATI and Tahiti Nui Telecom (TNT), OPT.PF plays a crucial role in shaping the digital landscape, boasting an 61.7% market share and serving 300,000 inhabitants with mobile, fixed-line, fiber optic, and postal services according to its CEO. The upcoming introduction of e-SIM technology promises simplified connectivity for international tourists. Additionally, OPT.PF is in discussions with Eutelsat, a major satellite operator, aiming to enhance telecommunications services across French Polynesia. This collab"French Polynesia offers a unique blend of connectivity, innovation, and opportunity for those looking to invest or vacation."

oration would leverage Eutelsat's satellite network to further improve connectivity for residents and businesses.

Moreover, investments in submarine cables and infrastructure development by OPT.PF have ensured widespread connectivity across the archipelago, with 32 islands connected by undersea cables and satellite coverage for remote areas. Notably, French Polynesia boasts 2 international submarine cables linking to Hawaii and Samoa, forming a vital loop for the security of international communications. Efforts are underway to enhance connectivity further, with discussions regarding the deployment of 5G technology in Tahiti.

As French Polynesia invites investors and tourists to explore its shores, it boasts not only natural beauty but also a robust digital infrastructure conducive to business and leisure. With a strategic location in the heart of the Pacific, French Polynesia offers a unique blend of connectivity, innovation, and opportunity for those looking to invest or vacation in this vibrant archipelago.

