



## Joint Select Committee on Land and Physical Infrastructure

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### Public Hearing Summary

*Tuesday January 17, 2017 at 10:08 a.m.*

#### **Topic:**

Inquiry into the allocation and utilisation of state lands for food production.

#### **Committee Members:**

The following Committee Members were present for the meeting:

- Mr. Stephen Creese – Chairman
- Mr. Rushton Paray, MP – Vice Chairman
- Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP – Member
- Mr. Lovell Francis, MP – Member
- Mr. Nigel De Freitas - Member

#### **WITNESSES WHO APPEARED:**

##### ➤ **Officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF)**

- Mrs. Angela Siew                      Permanent Secretary
- Mr. Claudelle Mc Kellar              Deputy Permanent Secretary
- Ms. Paula Drakes                      Commissioner of State Lands (Ag)
- Ms. Anne Marie Dardaine              Director, Engineering
- Mrs. Jacqui Ganteaume-Farrell      Coordinator, Agricultural Land Administration Division
- Ms. Alison Burkli                      Director, Human Resource
- Ms. Natasha Hosein                    Director, Legal Services
- Mr. Nasser Abdul                      Director of Surveys

## **KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED WITH MALF**

### **1. Human Resources**

- It was stated that there are staffing issues at the office of the Commissioner of State Lands which has ultimately reduced the efficiency of that department and prevented progress.
- Interviews are currently underway to fill the 31 vacant positions, however due to the lack of persons with specialised agricultural degrees, the gap has been difficult to fill.
- Consideration is being given for the use of CEPEP to address the issue of labour shortages.
- The Ministry has a program that can allocate \$30,000 to persons who have businesses in agriculture in order to sustain their business and advance the field of agriculture.

### **2. Boosting Food Production**

- Up to \$2M more in finances is required in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of Zero hunger.

### **3. IT Initiatives**

- It was stated that \$6.5M was allocated to upgrade and improve the Ministry's Information Technology system.

### **4. Land Resources**

- The need for a system to document land efficiently was discussed.
- The MALF was unable to state the status of State lands. No concrete figures were identified.
- The MALF posited that 64,082 parcels were recorded (Field, Caroni and Waste lands were included).
- The land that is utilised for agriculture is allocated by Town and Country, however, technical assessments are conducted by the MALF.
- The data that the MALF currently utilises has been ascertained through maps, surveys and their geographical system.

- The use of drones to conduct surveys was considered, however, Trinidad and Tobago does not have the high quality of fuel needed to efficiently pilot the drone.
- There are currently 340 leases awaiting execution.
- The Chief Solicitor's Office plays a major role in the efficiency of the distribution of leases.

## **5. Partnership**

- There is a need for greater collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Faculty of Agriculture.
- Possible partnerships with private land companies is also being discussed.
- UTT has been utilised in the area of improving on the area of livestock.

## **6. Legislation**

- The division of land into wards and counties is governed by laws established in 1927.

## **7. Youth Participation**

- One of the major issues for the area of agriculture is the challenge of attracting the interest young persons in this field.
- The MALF is currently in discussions concerning the implementation of youth camps. The Committee requested written submissions on this issue.

### **View the Hearing:**

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube page via the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vtPrR3sHlo>

### **Contact Information:**

You may contact the Committee's Secretary at [jsclpi@tparliament.org](mailto:jsclpi@tparliament.org) or 624-7275 Ext. 2828.

*Committees Unit*

*January 17<sup>th</sup> 2017*