



Joint Select Committee on Land and Physical Infrastructure

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 or 624-7275 Ext. 2828.

Committees Unit

January 17th 2017