



## **Joint Select Committee on Land and Physical Infrastructure**

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### **Public Hearing Summary**

*Tuesday February 21, 2017 at 10:10 a.m.*

#### **Topic:**

Inquiry into the strategies for diversifying the type and number of agricultural commodities produced locally.

#### **Committee Members:**

The following Committee Members were present:

- Mr. Stephen Creese – Chairman
- Mr. Rushton Paray, MP – Vice Chairman
- Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, 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
- Ms. Patricia Maharaj                Chief Technical Officer
- Ms. Neela Maharaj                  Director, Agricultural Planning Division
- Ms. Patricia La Borde Grant      Technical Adviser, Policy and Planning

##### ➤ **Officials from the Caroni Green Limited (CGL):**

- Mr. Sharma Lalla                      CEO
- Ms. Savitri Ramgoolam            Accountant
- Dr. Bibi Ali                              Consultant
- Mr. Dinesh Goolcharan            Farm Operations Coordinator

➤ **Officials from the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO):**

- Mr. Dennis Ramdeen            Chairman
- Mr. Wayne Inniss            Deputy Chairman
- Ms. Juliana Davis            Board Member
- Mr. Ayoub Mohammed        Chief Executive Officer Ag.

**KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED**

1. The relationship between MALF, NAMDEVCO and CGL;
2. The policy directive of the MALF, NAMDEVCO and CGL;
3. The procedure and qualifying mechanism for accessing the Disaster Assistance Programme;
4. The MALFs engagements in stakeholder consultation's such as supermarkets and other actions to improve consumer acceptance and market assurance;
5. MALFs assistance to farmers to engage in export;
6. Establishing an organisation to certify farms;
7. Training for farmers;
8. The measures taken by the MALF to ensure that farmers adopt Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) policies;
9. The measures taken by the MALF with regard to ensuring grades and standards;
10. The status of the packaging houses located at Tabaquite and Brechin Castle;
11. The next step with regards to developing cold chains;
12. The LEND programme and advertisement of the programme in rural communities;
13. The mechanisms used by the CGL to gauge success of the LEND programme;
14. Whether the CGL markets the LEND programme;
15. The number of access roads provided under the Agriculture Infrastructure Programme;
16. The qualifying mechanism for the Agriculture Infrastructure Programme;
17. Whether the MALF has been reviewing legislation to strengthen manpower in the Praedial Larceny Unit;
18. Interagency, interstate collaboration to improve the agricultural sector;
19. The average dominant farm in Trinidad and Tobago;
20. The mechanisms to increase participation and to incentivise farmers;

21. Increasing land acreage beyond five acres to incentivise farmers;
22. Cooperative arrangements that allow for collaborative meetings with the MALF;
23. How the MALF is dealing with the issue of imported meats;
24. How the mandate of the CGL differs to the NAMDEVCO;
25. The need to take into account the existing infrastructure that can be converted into agriculture such as Taska and Oil Field Roads;
26. The reason behind the lack of coordination, in terms of policy direction and strategies;
27. The MALFs position on genetically modified seeds;
28. The need to engage new farmers and the marketing policy in place to engage in farming as a profession; and
29. Changing the approach used to present farming, for example, registering farming companies rather than farmers to attract individuals to the sector.

**View the Hearing:**

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

<https://youtu.be/iwNEiQHBfuM>

**Contact Information:**

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

*Committees Unit*

*February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017*