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
  - Mr. Claudelle Mc Kellar
  - Ms. Paula Drakes
  - Ms. Anne Marie Dardaine
  - Mrs. Jacqui Ganteaume-Farrell
  - Ms. Alison Burklies
  - Ms. Natasha Hosein
  - Mr. Nasser Abdul
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 of 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@ttparliament.org or 624-7275 Ext. 2828.

Committees Unit
January 17th, 2017