Joint Select Committee on Land and Physical Infrastructure

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@ttparliament.org or 624-7275 Ext. 2828.

Committees Unit
February 21st, 2017