

Fifteenth Meeting of the PAAC, Third Session, 12th Parliament

Public Hearing Summary

Wednesday May 17, 2023

Inquiry Subject:

An inquiry into Food Security in Trinidad and Tobago in Alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger;

Committee Members:

The following Committee Members were present at the meeting:

- Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George - Chairman
- Dr. Lackram Bodoie - Vice-Chairman
- Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julien - Member
- Mr. Laurence Hislop - Member
- Ms. Amrita Deonarine - Member

Witnesses who appeared:

Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF)

- Mrs. Nela Dwarika-Ali - Deputy Permanent Secretary
- Mrs. Nerissa Lucky - Director (Ag.) Fisheries
- Mr. Nigel Grimes - Project Coordinator/Technical Advisor

Ministry of Health (MOH)

- Mr. Michael Reid - Deputy Permanent Secretary
- Dr. Mark Dookeran - Chief Public Health Inspector

Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD)

- Ms. Karlene Roach - Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
- Ms. Debra Dipchansingh - Director (Ag.), Socio-Economic Policy
Planning Division
- Ms. Erica Fortune - Director (Ag.), Project Planning and
Reconstruction Division

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS)

Ms. Wendy Guy-Hernandez	-	Deputy Permanent Secretary
Dr. Seon Raymond	-	Director, Social Investigation Division
Ms. Christine John-Guy	-	Director (Ag.), Social Welfare Department
Ms. Angelique Taylor	-	Senior Planning Officer, Policy, Programme, Planning and Development Division

Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI)

Mrs. Ayleen Alleyne-Ovid	-	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Candice Lackhansingh	-	Director, Policy/Strategy unit
Mr. Neville Alexander	-	Assistant Director, Trade

Office of the Prime Minister - Gender and Child Affairs (OPM-GCA)

Mr. Vijay Gangapersad	-	Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Mr. Ian Ramdahin	-	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Makandal Caesar	-	Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator

Key Issues Discussed:

1. The goal of the MPD to eliminate the issue of hunger by 2030 in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger;
2. The definition of the terms “poor”, “vulnerable” and “indigent”;
3. The use of the 2005 Survey of Living Conditions results in 2023;
4. The status of the Survey of Living Conditions undertaken by the Central Statistical Office (CSO);
5. The status of the determination of the current poverty line and the methods used to calculate it;
6. The inflation of the 2005 poverty line to reflect current food prices by the MSDFS;

7. The status of the National Register of Vulnerable Persons;
8. The recruitment of additional staff for Phase 1 of the data collection for the Register;
9. The launch of the MSDFS's Computer Based Data System by the end of 2023;
10. The status of the data verification measures undertaken by the MSDFS;
11. The data sharing and data collection activities between the MSDFS and the MPD;
12. The determination of the grants provided under the Food Support Programme;
13. The revision of the grants provided under the Food Support Programme given the current rise in food prices;
14. The Retail Price Survey conducted by the Consumers Affairs Division on a "basket of goods" at 41 supermarkets across 21 areas in Trinidad and Tobago;
15. The inclusion of market goods in the "basket of goods" provided by Ministries;
16. The strengthening of the monitoring mechanisms of the SDGs implementation by the MPD;
17. The status of the achievement of the specific targets of Zero Hunger by 2030;
18. The goals set by the MALF to assist in the achievement of SDG 2: Zero Hunger;
19. The benefits of being a registered farmer;
20. The status of the data capturing mechanisms in place at the MALF;
21. The timeframe between applying for an incentive and the receipt of the incentive by farmers;
22. The inclusion of fisher folk in Tobago in the MALF's registry for fisherfolk;
23. The existence of a partnership between the MALF and the Department of Marine Resources and Fisheries in Tobago on the thrust to achieve Zero Hunger;
24. The use of Bio-Pesticides and Solar by the MALF;
25. The grants available to persons interested in Agro-Processing under the MALF and the MTI;
26. The annual expenditure incurred under the Food Support Programme;
27. The mechanisms in place to ensure effective oversight in the use of food cards by citizens to purchase foods that are of a nutritional value;

28. The approach of the MOH to address the number of overweight, underweight and obese students;
29. The collaborative effort between the Ministry of Education and the MOH to ensure the meals prepared for students are of nutritional value;
30. The efforts taken by the MALF to encourage Organic Farming in Trinidad and Tobago;
31. The mechanisms implemented to address the challenges faced in promoting the use of a sustainable food production system by the MALF;
32. The staffing challenge at the Praedial Larceny Squad of the MALF;
33. The MTI's target to reduce the Food Import Bill;
34. The measurement of the quantity of food being produced and the amount needed to become self-sufficient;
35. The collaborations between the MALF and the MTI to reduce the Food Import Bill by 25%;
36. The monitoring and evaluation of food production from local farmers by the MALF;
37. The methods used to increase the number of farmers who undertake resilient agricultural practices;
38. The status of the 35% of agricultural lands not in use;
39. The measurement and management of the country's fish stock;
40. The education initiatives undertaken by the MALF given the impending Legislation currently before the Joint Select Committee on Fisheries and Management (No. 2) Bill 2020;
41. The timeframe for the receipt of rebates from the MALF;
42. The reasons for the absence of mandatory standards for good agricultural practices and water reuse;
43. The public awareness initiatives undertaken by the MALF and the MTI regarding the standards for good agricultural practices and water reuse initiatives etc.;
44. The status of the Value Chain Study on the Cocoa Industry;

45. The status of the Study on Strengthening Sectoral Linkages in Trinidad and Tobago within the non-energy sectors and increase non-energy sectors;
46. The status of the Regional Value Chain Study;
47. The mechanisms in place to ensure accountability and transparency in the use of international financing; and
48. The benefits derived from the Moruga Agro-processing and Light Industrial Park.

Next Meeting:

The next Public Hearing of the Committee will be held on **Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.** At this meeting, the Committee will commence an examination into the Management and Operations of the Secondary Road and Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited (aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 9 and 11).

PAAC Secretariat
May 17, 2023