

RESPONSES OF THE MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) submits the following responses to the questions posed by the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) regarding the examination into Food Security in Trinidad and Tobago in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger.

1. Inclusion of Fresh Produce in the Retail Price Survey

Recommendation:

- ***The MTI should incorporate market items, such as fresh herbal seasonings, fruits, and vegetables in its RPS as they are often utilised in local dishes and would provide a more nutritionally balanced meal. The MTI should report to the Parliament on the implementation of this initiative by January 29, 2024.***

The Consumer Affairs Division (CAD) of the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) conducts a Retail Price Survey (RPS) of one hundred and fourteen (114) items across forty-one (41) supermarkets in twenty-one (21) areas across Trinidad. A similar exercise is conducted by the Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) in Tobago across eight supermarkets.

The listing of items in the RPS is modified by the conduct of a large survey by the CAD known as the Basket of Goods Survey. The Basket of Goods survey, initially conducted in 2015, identified the baskets of basic food items purchased by different income groups in Trinidad and Tobago. Through random sampling, a sample of one thousand and forty (1040) consumers was targeted for face-to-face interviews at fifty-two (52) supermarkets using a structured questionnaire.

This questionnaire contained a list of suggested basic food items available at supermarkets. This suggested list was informed, in part, by the Household Budgetary Survey (HBS) put forth by the Central Statistical Office (CSO). Consumers were required to indicate whether the suggested item constitutes part of their basic shopping basket. They were also afforded the opportunity to select which brands of the items they usually purchased. Additionally, the questionnaire afforded the opportunity to consumers to identify any food item or brands which were not included in the suggested list, but which they consider to be part of their basic shopping basket.

From the findings of the survey (consumers' responses and feedback), though there were some differences, generally the basic food shopping basket across all

income groups were fairly similar and reflected the same items and brands. The most popular brands selected by the sample group were placed at the top of the list and these are the brands that comprise the publication list.

To ensure relevance of data, the survey is repeated every 4-5 years, therefore, in 2019, the survey was conducted once again with a smaller sample size (using a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 0.05 and a sample size of 384 participants). A third survey is due to be conducted in 2024. During this survey the CAD will seek to implement the inclusion of fresh herbal seasonings, fruits, and vegetables in its RPS. It is to be noted however that price collection and comparison among supermarkets for this type of products may be difficult given the variances in factors such as packaging, suppliers, sizes, brands that affect pricing and will hinder accurate comparative shopping.

In addition, it is to be noted that **the CSO currently collects information on the prices of fifty-five (55) market items for its review of the Retail Price Index.** At this time, this information is not published, however the relevant requests can be made to the Ministry of Planning and Development to consider the publication of this information. This will avoid the duplication of resources and efforts at the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Planning and Development.

2. Reducing the Food Import Bill through Import Substitution

Recommendations:

- ***The MTI should submit a report to the Parliament by January 29, 2024 on the success of each incentive/initiative the Ministry has implemented to mitigate the impact of food price inflation.***

The Ministry of Trade and Industry provides support to manufacturers to assist in increasing their capacity to supply, improving product quality and enhancing access to export markets. The MTI's initiatives will contribute to achieving some measure of economies of scale which would result in lower cost of production. It should be noted however that food price inflation is impacted by a number of factors, including global inflation, energy prices, supply chain disruptions such as the Panama Canal drought and the Russia-Ukraine War. Therefore, the direct impact of the MTI's initiatives on food price inflation may be difficult to measure

▪ **Grant Fund Facility**

The Grant Fund Facility (GFF) provides funding of 50% up to TT\$250,000.00 per applicant for the acquisition of new machinery and equipment, and in some instances technology/software and tools. In fiscal 2023, six (6) applicants were approved for funding enabling several of the beneficiaries to penetrate new export markets, including CARICOM countries, Cuba and the United Kingdom.

Since the establishment of the GFF in 2017, a total of 33 SMEs have received grants which created permanent and temporary job opportunities for over sixty (60) persons. Several of the more recent projects funded by the Grant Fund Facility are expected to facilitate exports to non-traditional markets such as Slovakia, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Germany, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica and Chile.

▪ **The Research and Development Facility**

The Research and Development Facility (RDF) focuses heavily on the innovativeness of products, services and processes, and provides funding from the idea stage, to product/service development, to commercialization. The project is aimed at stimulating exports by supporting investment in new and advanced technology and innovation, and export related product modification as a competitiveness enhancement tool for business enterprises in the non-oil manufacturing and services sectors. In fiscal 2023, four (4) SMEs received funding under this Facility.

Export Capacity Building

- **International Certification Fund (ICF)**

The International Certification Fund (ICF) under the Exporter Booster Initiative (EBI) was designed to aid companies within the Manufacturing sector (including agro-processing and exporters) in achieving international certification in food/beverage and other product compliance to meet the quality and safety standards of international markets, increase import substitution, and boost the production of Non-Energy exports.

Under the ICF two (2) companies from the Food and Beverage and Construction Sub-Sectors were provided support to attain GMP Compliance, Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) Certification and ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System Certification. To date, fourteen (14) companies have benefitted from this Fund.

One such company is locally-owned Rockland Limited which produces par-baked doughs for breads and pastries out of its manufacturing facility for business- to business clients from local and regional bakeries, supermarkets, hotel chains and entertainment industry companies. Their product is used for a variety of items sold at PriceSmart and they also supply regional school feeding programmes. Since 2018, the company has also been in partnership with PriceSmart Trinidad to supply a number of items for their Trinidad Stores. In Feb 2021, they added 2 new items that were previously imported by PriceSmart from the USA. They currently now supply 5 items to PriceSmart that were previously all imported from the USA. The value of this import substitution is currently USD\$350,000 annually.

Additionally, Rockland Limited supplies Subway International with locally manufactured bread to all local Subway branches, resulting in a reduction in Subway's imports of frozen bread for their restaurants. Rockland has estimated that the value of the import substitution possible as a result of this contract is approximately US\$800,000 annually.

- **Labelling and Product Testing Fund**

The Labelling and Product Testing Fund was launched in March 2022 and seeks to assist exporters in improving their product labelling and reducing the cost of product modification and testing services required by export markets. This Fund assists applicants with meeting mandatory regulatory requirements for entry into certain markets including Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) or Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) such as technical regulations, testing and certification procedures which must be completed by either the local authorities in those markets or by approved and accredited labs and agencies.

The Fund has already provided financial assistance to seven (7) companies to facilitate product testing to meet export market preferences and requirements inclusive of the following agro-processors:

- Farm and Function Limited- Labelling
- Ubergreen Foods Ltd- Labelling
- Handmade by Jeanette Company – product testing and labelling modification
- T&T Fine Cocoa – Labelling and packaging upgrade
- Health Mix - Labelling and packaging upgrade

The aforementioned companies in aiming to meet international regulatory requirements with respect to packaging and labelling, simultaneously improved the quality of their products for domestic consumption. This will contribute to enhancing the local Agri-Processing Sector and by extension, improving food security.

- ***The MTI should submit a report to the Parliament by January 29, 2024 on the success of the incentives and initiatives the Ministry implemented to promote the sustainable development of more local companies that practise import substitution.***

The Ministry of Trade and Industry continues to work assiduously towards creating a healthy and enabling environment for businesses to thrive. The MTI provides support for small, medium and large businesses within the non-energy manufacturing sector. It should be noted that initiatives and incentives are accessible to all businesses that meet the relevant criteria.

- **Increased Supply of Forex**

The Government has set up two (2) USD Foreign Exchange Facilities with the Export-Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited to facilitate allocations to:

- local importers for the purchase of food, pharmaceuticals and other related essential items* - As at December 5, 2023, **97** importers have accessed a total of **US\$896 million** to bring in food, pharmaceuticals, sanitary products, PPE and other essential supplies through the Special Import Forex Window; and
- local manufacturing and exporting companies* – As at December 5, 2023, **164** companies, the majority of whom were SMEs accessed a total of **US\$ 741 million** under this Facility.

Preferential Access to FOREX for SMEs - As announced in the recent Budget, the Government will implement within the next six (6) months, a facility to provide preferential access to foreign exchange for qualified small and medium enterprises and this initiative will provide much needed capital for SMEs.

- **Improving the Ease of Doing Business - Enhancement of the TTBizLink Platform**

The MTI is committed to improving the ease of doing business for all firms in Trinidad and Tobago, including those which practice import substitution. Through the national single electronic window – TTBizLink, businesses can access government services online. On July 18, 2023, the MTI launched the Enhanced TTBizLink Platform which included the enhancement of thirty-six (36) existing services across seven (7) Ministries, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards and exportTT.

Among the key features of the enhanced system, is digital approvals which allows applicants to download signed and stamped approval documents, and the ability

of users to make payments online for permits and licences for all e -services that require payments. These enhancements are expected to lead to even greater time and cost savings as it will further eliminate the inefficiencies associated with paper-based processes.

Fourteen (14) new e-services will be added to the TTBizLink platform during Fiscal 2024 with the EMA, Fisheries Division, Food and Drugs Inspectorate, TTCIC, Plant Quarantine Services, Poultry Surveillance Unit and Transport Division.

- **E-Commerce**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, focus was placed on assisting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) with expanding their business models from traditional brick and mortar establishments to online, contactless operations. Towards this end, the Ministry of Trade and Industry hosted a series of webinars promoting the adoption and use of e-commerce by businesses. These webinars focused on a number of topics, including:

- How to establish an online presence;
- How to market goods and services online;
- E-payment options; and
- Digital opportunities for MSMEs.

Work has also commenced on the development of a National E-Commerce Strategy to further support the reach and growth of local companies, including those which practice import substitution. The removal of geographical boundaries which e-commerce facilitates will provide greater opportunity to increase agribusinesses' customer base and ultimately their profit margins.

The National E-Commerce Strategy 2024-2029 commenced in December 2023 and is being developed in collaboration with UNCTAD.

- **SheTrades**

The Ministry is currently implementing SheTrades, which is an initiative of the International Trade Center that seeks to help women owned businesses reach international markets. SheTrades offers opportunities for training - both from the ITC and locally, networking and participation in international, regional and local trade shows and missions. The initiative supports women in all categories of business, including those which practice import substitution (agriculture).

In 2023, the SheTrades Project funded the participation of 17 women from the agricultural sector at the Madrid Fruit Festival. Through this, these women-owned businesses benefitted from 15 leads generated from foreign companies.

- **Scale Up Trinidad and Tobago Business Accelerator Programme (Scale Up TT)**

ScaleUp TT is a fourteen (14) month business accelerator programme executed in collaboration with the Unit Trust Corporation. It entails innovative methods for using entrepreneurship to drive real economic growth. The objective of the programme is to increase the growth rates of participating firms through increased exports, increased revenue and increased job creation of the local economy by enhancing their entrepreneurial knowledge, and improving their technical and managerial competence.

To date, twenty-four (24) companies spanning Cohort 1 and 2 have completed the Scalerator. These companies were from the following sectors:

- agro-processing;
- manufacturing;
- distribution;
- information and communications technology;
- consultancy services;
- printing and publishing;
- medical services; and
- security.

Cohort 3 of ScaleUp TT was launched on November 9, 2023 with thirteen (13) persons.

- **Green Manufacturing Initiative**

In early Fiscal 2024, the MTI will launch the Green Manufacturing Initiative (GMI) to assist manufacturers in the non-energy sector with adopting or improving green manufacturing practices. Through the GMI, manufacturers (including those which support import substitution) can access funding for the conduct of an Energy Efficient Audit, financing for the implementation of the green solutions arising from the Audits and training and green upskilling of human resources.

- ***The MTI should submit a report to the Parliament on the necessary stakeholder collaborations, infrastructure, human and financial resources and local food consumption/marketing campaigns required to culturally shift local consumption towards buying local over foreign goods.***

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT), led by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) have continued to aggressively address the issue of rising domestic food prices and overall dietary health. In a post-Covid 19 context, where global supply chain disruptions have been, for the most part, abated and shipping, logistics and freight costs have been decreasing, it is vividly apparent that these reductions have not been reflected domestically. It was made clear through dialogue with industry players that despite these overall international declines, costs of imports and distribution still remained the main catalysts for their higher pricing arrangements.

Through the Consumer Affairs Division (CAD), the MTI has consistently sought to create behavioural interventions that induce large-scale and permanent change in consumer food purchasing habits.

In 2018, the Division conducted a research study that investigated trends in food purchasing behaviour in Trinidad and Tobago. This report revealed a trend towards low-fat and health foods, and to a lesser extent towards organic products in Trinidad and Tobago¹. This resulted in partiality towards fresh locally produced food as clearly seen in products such as meat and poultry; as the local poultry industry provides 65% of the nation's protein needs²; and the popularity of the National Agricultural and Development Company NAMDEVCO Farmer's markets. In the post-Covid19 context however, with rising food prices, consumer purchasing habits focused on **value and cost-cutting**, making clever and informed decisions intended to make their money go further while avoiding too many compromises³.

Bearing this in mind, over the period 2018-2022, the CAD has carefully curated a number of public education campaigns aimed at guiding healthy, fiscally and environmentally responsible food purchasing decisions prioritizing buying locally produced goods. Known as *"Eating Healthy on a Budget"* and *"Smart Consumer Purchasing Habits"*, these campaigns employed both traditional and social media platforms to provide consumer tips and relevant information with regard to consumer rights and responsibilities, healthy consumer practices and the benefits

¹ Gonzalez, Omar. USDA Foreign Agricultural Service. GAIN Report Number: CB1611. Trinidad and Tobago Retail Food Sector Report. December 28th, 2016. Retrieved April, 2018 from https://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Retail%20Foods_Miami%20ATO_Caribbean%20Basin_12-28-2016.pdf

² Committee to Review the Poultry Industry of Trinidad and Tobago. Towards Sustainable Growth and Development of the Poultry Industry of Trinidad and Tobago: The Way Forward. December, 2010.

³ <https://www.euromonitor.com/voice-of-the-consumer-lifestyles-survey-2023-key-insights/report>

of buying local. (An example of this content is attached in **Appendix I**). The Consumer Protection and Services Unit (CPSU) of the CAD conducts a monthly Facebook Live program highlighting these topics providing an opportunity for viewers to present questions and for Advocates to provide real time feedback/solutions to consumers.

While these efforts and campaigns garner a consistent audience; given the overall reach of 363,014 users on Facebook alone in 2023; **sporadic, persuasive campaigns by themselves are not effective enough to truly change eating behaviour**. Previous efforts have focused primarily on closing intention-behaviour gaps through increasing consumer knowledge on the health and economic benefits of buying local. While this is good, a behaviour will not be adopted if the total force toward adopting it is less than the power of opposing forces⁴. One of the main opposing forces to prioritising buying local is affordability. Locally produced products have become just as or more expensive than conventional comparable products. The MTI, has had, on numerous occasions, dialogue with both the Supermarket Association of Trinidad and Tobago (SATT) and the Poultry Association of Trinidad and Tobago (PATT) to highlight consumer concerns and create a facilitative environment for the growth of the local food landscape.

Therefore more robust collaborations with the SATT, PATT, Association of Trinidad and Tobago Table Egg Producers (ATTTEP), Pluck Shop Association of Trinidad and Tobago (PSATT), the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Health, Fair Trading Association and the MTI to create a facilitative environment for more affordable local goods would be effective in **reducing obstacles** toward food purchasing behaviour change.

Simultaneously, a **collective, consistent, inter-agency public education programme** would help to inform and establish **modified** (as opposed to brand new habits) as changing desired habits to already established ones is the fastest way to achieve uptake.

The Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) Proudly TT Initiative seeks to appeal to national pride in its calls for citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to support local or buy local products. They continue to highlight Trinidad and Tobago as the Caribbean's dominant manufacturing territory with over one (100) manufacturers offering world-class award winning products. The campaign includes a ProudlyTT sticker on locally manufactured products which signals to consumers an opportunity to support indigenous market options.

⁴ <https://www.cscp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Valumics-Report-3-Behaviour-change-interventions.pdf>

- ***The MTI should submit a status report to the Parliament by January 29, 2024, on the yearly decreases in the volume of goods imported into Trinidad and Tobago since the Ministry began focusing on utilizing its import substitution incentives and initiatives to reduce the food import bill.***

SDG 2: Zero Hunger, was established by the United Nations in 2015 to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Since its establishment Trinidad and Tobago has made significant strides in reducing its national food import bill and increasing food security through targeted Government interventions and import substitution incentives.

According to data from the Central Statistical Office (CSO), during the period January to September 2023, food imports increased slightly when compared to the same period in the previous year (January to September 2022).

During the period January to September 2023 there have been noticeable declines in the importation of goods under some subsectors. Additionally, the HS Chapters listed below fall under the industries/subsectors that reported increases in domestic production levels within the same period as highlighted in Table 2.

It should be noted that the MTI is committed to implementing measures and initiatives targeted towards reducing the food import bill; however, an all-of-Government approach is required to reduce the food import bill.

Table 1: Food Imports by HS Chapter for the Period 2021 – September 2023

HS Chapter Description	2021	2022	Jan-Sep 2022	Jan-Sep 2023
Cereals	\$650,297,419	\$838,852,959	\$647,512,805	\$449,444,616 (-31%)
Fish and crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic invertebrates	\$173,673,591	\$246,281,704	\$187,958,032	\$150,547,694 (-20%)
Meat and edible meat offal	\$595,139,139	\$744,350,384	\$543,494,895	\$465,227,203 (-14%)
Oil seeds and oleaginous fruits; miscellaneous grains, seeds and fruit, industrial or medicinal plants; straw and fodder	\$95,055,412	\$103,664,193	\$78,907,664	\$74,394,278 (-6%)
Meat, fish or crustaceans, molluscs or other aquatic invertebrates; preparations thereof	\$250,101,752	\$294,784,451	\$197,011,685	\$186,172,728 (-6%)
Preparations of cereals, flour, starch or milk; pastrycooks' products	\$446,775,659	\$497,690,073	\$356,391,777	\$352,873,808 (-1%)

Source: Central Statistical Office

- ***The MTI should also submit a status report to the Parliament on the local commodities production being promoted under import substitution initiatives and the yearly value of the corresponding HS Chapter description since the increase in the MTI's initiatives and incentives by January 29, 2024.***

According to CSO, the Index of Domestic Production is a quarterly indicator showing changes in the volume of production over time of resident manufacturing establishments at the national level (Base year is 1995). As presented in Table 2, there have been noticeable increases in domestic production during the period 2021 to 2022. Similar trends were observed during the first three quarters in 2023 when compared to the previous year.

As displayed in Table 2, the “Food Processing” industry increased its yearly average volume of production by 73 percent moving from 2977.4 in 2021 to 5151.4 in 2022. The increase in the “Food Processing” industry was strongly influenced by “Fruit and Vegetable Processing”. A similar trend was observed in the “Drink and Tobacco” industry with the yearly average volume of production increasing by 67 percent moving from 1729.4 in 2021 to 2891.7 in 2022, steering this increase in production was “alcoholic drinks”.

Table 2: Index of Domestic Production for the Period 2021 – September 20

Industry/ Sub-Sector	2021	2022	Jan-Sep 2022			Jan-Sep 2023		
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q1	Q2	Q3
Food Processing	2977.4	5151.4	4005.2	4882.3	5039.5	5989.6	4903.7	5082.1
Meat, poultry and fish	670.1	790.8	746.0	780.3	797.6	817.7	801.4	866.6
Dairy Products	148.3	153.9	149.9	153.8	152.9	155.8	160.5	159.5
Fruit and vegetable processing	51451.0	93423.6	71142.5	88214.9	91455.2	109779.7	89086.1	92358.5
Grain and feed mills	170.7	194.6	191.8	189.3	195.0	199.9	199.0	205.0
Vegetable oils, animal fats/fats	97.4	94.6	94.4	95.9	94.8	90.7	92.1	91.0
Drink and Tobacco	1729.4	2891.7	2572.1	2962.1	3040.0	2853.1	2715.8	2788.0
Tobacco	195.1	156.1	161.2	161.2	139.6	128.9	128.9	111.7
Alcoholic drinks	2779.9	4784.7	4239.2	4903.4	5042.6	4738.6	4505.1	4633.0
Non-alcoholic drinks	308.8	276.9	272.4	271.7	285.4	246.7	245.7	258.1

Source: Central Statistical Office

- ***The MTI should also submit a status update on the revitalisation efforts made on all targeted local commodities including the rice, coconut and cocoa industries.***

Revitalisation efforts geared at boosting local primary production of commodities such as rice, coconut and cocoa falls within the remit of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry continues to provide support via the Grant Fund Facility for the acquisition of new equipment and machinery for companies that are involved in supplying or processing products to and from primary processors of food:

- Cocoa, vegetable and fruit, meat/fish and coffee processing; dehydration;
- Agricultural equipment and chemical manufacturing;
- Sugar and confectionery; chocolate; dairy and sauces;
- Beverages (tea, non-alcoholic beverages, fruit juices and alcoholic beverages);
and
- Oil extraction.

3. Enhanced Cooperation with the Cooperative Republic of Guyana

Observation:

- The Committee notes the MTI's involvement the priority area of food distribution as part of a Technical Task Force established under the MOU for the removal of trade barriers and for regional food security.

Recommendation:

- ***The MTI should provide a status update on the drafting and approval of the MRAs for the Trade in Products of Plant and Animal Origin between Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana to the Parliament by January 29, 2024.***
- ***The MTI should also provide a status report on the proposed amendments to the 2009 Protocol Agreement for Trade in Fresh Agricultural Products between Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago to the Parliament by January 29, 2024.***

In the MTI's previous submission to the PAAC on the matter in 2023, it was indicated that a Task Force, Co-Chaired by Senior Officials of the respective Ministries responsible for Agriculture in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago was formed to undertake technical level work between the countries. It was also indicated that the MTI is a member of the Task Force, and that two initiatives being pursued at the technical level are the following:

- i. Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) for the Trade in Products of Plant and Animal Origin between Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana; and
- ii. amendments to the 2009 Protocol Agreement for Trade in Fresh Agricultural Products between Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago

The MTI is aware that technical level discussions have been ongoing between Officials of Guyana's and Trinidad and Tobago's Ministries responsible for Agriculture. The Task Force has not been convened subsequently, to provide an update on the status of the technical discussions on the aforementioned matters. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, the technical level discussions are under the remit of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF).

4. Development of Standards for the Agriculture Sector

Recommendation:

- ***The MTI and MALF and NAMDEVCO should host stakeholder meetings with agricultural and livestock farmers, fisherfolk, food processors and manufacturers on the need to develop standards for their respective fields to:***
 - ***facilitate increased trade,***
 - ***benchmark against international requirements,***
 - ***manage risks,***
 - ***improve the quality of goods and services,***
 - ***assist in improving sustainability,***
 - ***ensure health and safety and:***
 - ***promote more efficient and effective practices.***

The Ministry of Trade and Industry acknowledges the PAAC recommendation to collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF) and the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) in hosting stakeholder meetings with various actors within the food production system.

It should be noted that a National Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Standard currently exists and it establishes the minimum requirements of good agricultural practices for fresh produce, inclusive of fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs, spices and root crops, at production, harvesting, post-harvest handling, packaging, storage, or transportation stages and where offered for sale or supply for direct consumption or further processing.

The need for this standard was identified by NAMDEVCO in order to build and assure food safety and quality for primary production of fresh produce. This standard establishes the relevant elements that are compatible with comprehensive food safety management systems, including Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), Global G.A.P, ISO/TS 22002-3, Prerequisite programmes on food safety — Part 3: Farming, Food Safety System Certification (FSSC 22000) for Food Safety Management System and BRC Global Standard for Food Safety, and any other associated certification schemes⁵.

⁵ NAMDEVCO <https://namdevco.nucleusltd.com/website/gaptt>

The Trinidad and Tobago Standard for Good Agricultural Practices – Fresh Produce Requirements (TTS 648:2020) was developed by a Specification Committee for Good Agricultural Practices lead by the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS), chaired by Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture – Trinidad and Tobago (IICA-TT).

The current standard does not include livestock, fisheries or aquaculture and whilst the aforementioned is voluntary rather than mandatory, awareness of the importance of good agricultural practices in food production, inclusive of food safety and trade implications should be highlighted amongst all actors along the value chain.

5. Moruga Agro-processing and Light Industrial Park

Recommendation:

- ***The MTI should submit a status update on the letting of the Moruga Agro-processing and Light Industrial Park, also including the scheduling of the promotional activities geared towards marketing the facility, to the Parliament by January 29, 2024.***

The Moruga Agro-Processing and Light Industrial Park consists of twelve (12) developed land lots, six (6) of which comprise purpose-built factory shells available for leasing, while the other six (6) lots are developed sites for leasing. The factory shells are outfitted with all major utilities, offices and washrooms; and have the potential to process fruits, fish, root crops, cocoa and pepper.

As at January 17th 2024 the Moruga Agro Processing and Light Industrial Park has seven (7) committed tenants. Two (2) of these tenants are fully operational, specializing in fruit and vegetable processing and processing and packaging of meals and root crops. The others are at different stages of the onboarding process.

At this time, there is one (1) factory shell and four (4) land lots available.

There are currently three (3) potential tenants in the pipeline; one interested the final factory shell and the other two interested in land lots. These potential tenants are finalizing their applications. Additional details on the letting of the Moruga Agro-processing and Light Industrial Park are attached at **Appendix II**.

In Q3 2023, InvesTT staged more targeted interventions with potential investors in its pipeline. Two of those investors are currently completing applications for the Park, in addition to one investor was sourced in Q1 of 2024.

For the rest of fiscal 2024, InvesTT will continue to promote the Moruga Agro-Processing and Light Industrial Park via its social media platforms. With an application pending for the final Factory Shell, should that investor be successful, promotions will be adjusted to highlight that factory shells are 'Sold Out' and pivot to targeting tenants for the remaining four (4) land lots. It should be noted that applications for two (2) of the remaining four (4) land lots are being finalized by the potential investors. Further plans to promote the Park include a 'Movements at Moruga' PR and advertising campaign which will showcase the current activity at the Park and feature video testimonials from operational tenants in an effort to attract new businesses.