



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, LAND AND FISHERIES
OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARY
Corner of Narsaloo Ramaya, Marg Road and Soogrim Trace, Chaguanas
Tel:220-6253 Ext. 4199, 4195 & 4023 malfps@gov.tt

Ref: AGR: 5/3/5 Vol. VI

January /1, 2024

Mr. Brian Caesar
Clerk of the House
Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
Capildeo Building
St. Vincent Street
Port of Spain

Dear Mr. Caesar,

**The Sixteenth Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee
on an examination of Food Security in Trinidad and Tobago in alignment with
Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger**

Reference is made to your letter dated **December 14, 2023** with subject at caption.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF) submits the status updates to the recommendations contained in the Sixteenth Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on "An examination of Food Security in Trinidad and Tobago in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger", in compliance with Standing Order 100(6) of the Senate and 110(6) of the House of Representatives at **Appendix**.

Should you require any further information, please contact **Ms. Neela Maharaj, Director, Agricultural Planning Division** at 220-6253 ext. 4000 or Nmaharaj2@gov.tt.

Yours sincerely,

.....
Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

**Responses to recommendations contained in the Sixteenth Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on
“An examination of Food Security in Trinidad and Tobago in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger”**

Introduction

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF) has a primary role in ensuring food security. Agriculture is indispensable to the social and economic development of Trinidad and Tobago and is therefore a major component of food security and economic viability. In this regard, the Ministry has strengthened its capacity to contribute to improved food security through the implementation of initiatives that:

- i. Increase agricultural production;
- ii. Create enabling environment to produce key commodities;
- iii. Focus on youth in agriculture;
- iv. Increase access to technical and extension support;
- v. Increase access to grants for agricultural development; and
- vi. Encourage the adoption of technology and innovation to drive agricultural production.

In the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee’s (PAAC’s) assessment of the MALF’s role in the implementation of SDG2, the following outcome targets were utilized and noted:

2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and income of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishermen, through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

2.4 By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

2.5 By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.

By letter with reference PARL: 5/6/26 dated December 14, 2023, the PAAC requested status updates to the proposed recommendations contained in the **Sixteenth Report on an examination of Food Security in Trinidad and Tobago in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger**. The status updates are provided below.

1. Farmer Registration System

1.1. Recommendation: The MALF should provide a status update to Parliament by January 29, 2024, on the development, operationalization and intended launch timelines for the Farmer Registration Programme (page 26)

Response: The online Farmer Registration System (FRS) has been developed and is currently on-going internal testing by the MALF's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Unit. The testing would identify any technical shortcomings to improve the robustness, functionality and reliability of the system. The next step in the development process is a two-pronged approach:

- i. the development of policies governing the use of the FRP; and
- ii. the testing by external stakeholders including farmers and agricultural administrators to evaluate the system in real-time operation.

It is estimated that this programme will be launched during this fiscal year.

1.2. Recommendation: The MALF should also provide a status update to Parliament by January 29, 2024, on the date/timelines by which the AIP, Agricultural Rebate, and soil testing requests will be incorporated into the Farmer Registration System as well as by which the system will be accessible online (page 27)

Response: The additional components to the FRS, such as the requests under the Agricultural Incentive Programme (AIP) and soil testing, would be included after the initial launch of the FRS within the fiscal year. This will ensure that the system is functional and its technical capacity is robust. Subsequently, efforts will be focused on the FRS being available online after appropriate testing is completed.

1.3. Recommendation: The MALF should provide a status update to Parliament by January 29, 2024, on the Ministry's rollout of its awareness and training sessions on the use of the online system to alleviate farmers' concerns and to enhance farmers' digital literacy (page 27)

Response: Upon the FRS becoming fully functional, training sessions with staff will be undertaken by the ICT Unit of the MALF. After the completion of staff training, the Regional Administration Offices North and South will then embark on a clientele sensitization and awareness drive with farmers groups, associations and state land occupants to complete training sessions on the use of the system.

1.4. Recommendation: The MALF should provide a status update to Parliament by January 29, 2024 on the challenges encountered with the farmers, if any, with the implementation of these new technological advancements in the local farming industry (page 27)

Response: The MALF anticipates that new technological advancements may pose a challenge for some farmers who do not have access to requisite hardware and internet, or may not find it easy to navigate the system. Therefore, proactive measures will be undertaken such as:

- engaging and assisting farmers in the utilization of the FRS;
- providing farmers' feedback to the ICT Unit to improve the FRS; and
- continuation of the in-person applications which will be inputted into the system by the staff of the MALF.

2. Organic Agriculture and Organic Farming

2.1. Recommendation: The MALF should also collaborate with the UWI on the development of pilot projects that are fully organic in nature and have those projects internationally certified so that the MALF could have the necessary certified technical ability to significantly push and support organic agriculture and farming in Trinidad and Tobago. The MALF should provide a status update on the implementation of this recommendation to the Parliament by January 29, 2024 including the challenges encountered and possible solutions (page 27 and 28)

Response: The MALF notes the recommendation to collaborate with the University of the West Indies (UWI) on the development of pilot projects in organic agriculture. The recommendation has not been implemented to date. However, the MALF will engage the UWI to progress this recommendation.

It is noted that there are some challenges in developing pilot projects that are fully organic. Proposed solutions to these challenges include:

Challenge	Proposed Solution
i. Farmers do not have the technical capacity to develop an organic system plan	Access technical assistance to train MALF staff and farmers on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing an organic system plan; • the requirements of ensuring organic compliance are maintained; and • providing technical support throughout the certification process.
ii. Annual inspection is required by international certifying agents to ensure organic implementation continues	
iii. The organic certification process is rigorous to ensure integrity	
iv. There are highly stringent measures to become certified as fully organic	Conduct awareness and sensitization seminars to ensure the measures are simplified and understandable by farmers.
v. The cost of being internationally certified as organic is costly	Consider the identification of incentives for organic farming.

3. Challenges meeting SDG Targets

3.1. Recommendation: The MALF should provide a status update to Parliament by January 29, 2024:

- on the implementation of each initiative to address the challenges, identifying targets and evidence of the improvements measured against those targets achieved (page 28 to 30)

Response:

Challenges	Initiative identified	Target/Achievements
<p>a) Impact of COVID – 19-Hindered Supply Chains</p>	<p>i. “Emergency Food Support Measure” provided by NAMDEVCO</p>	<p>The National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) provided 182,933 Vegetable Bags and 183,837 Root Crop Bags at a cost of \$113,597,000 during the period 2019 to 2021. This exceeded the initial target of assisting 20,000 persons.</p>
	<p>ii. Online appointment system for pre-ordering of plants</p>	<p>The MALF launched the Grow-Trinbago website which allowed the online purchase of plants, seeds and cuttings.</p>
<p>b) Adverse Weather conditions</p>	<p>i. Provision of Flood Compensation to farmers</p>	<p>The MALF paid \$8,035,224.66 in flood compensation for fiscal year 2023 and will continue to facilitate requests for flood compensation, where applicable.</p> <p>The MALF has also taken a proactive approach to mitigate flooding incidents by desilting drainage channels. In fiscal 2024, six (6) contracts for desilting works are being facilitated.</p>

Challenges	Initiative identified	Target/Achievements
c) Pest and Diseases	i. Extension Support	<p>Extension support continues to be provided to farmers on pest and disease management through training programmes and farm visits. A needs analysis is conducted on a yearly basis to identify priority areas of training. The target of one (1) course per district by the Regional Administration Offices is anticipated in fiscal year 2024.</p> <p>Additionally, once a request is made by a farmer at the County Offices, it is expected that follow-up visits by an Extension Officer is completed.</p>
	ii. Giant African Snail (GAS)	<p>Three (3) reels (short videos) were produced on the topic of GAS Management to provide sensitization to farmers.</p> <p>A pilot project was launched for three (3) weeks (January 16 – February 2 2023) that involved citizen participation in collecting and disposing of the 120,000 snails at the Ministry’s County Offices.</p>

Challenges	Initiative identified	Target/Achievements
		<p>Additionally, 8,000 packets of bait were distributed.</p> <p>In fiscal 2024, it is targeted that \$600,00 will be spent on bio-pesticides to control the GAS.</p>
	iii. Rabies Vaccination Drive	<p>The Rabies Vaccination Drive was undertaken during the period January to June 2023 where 10,338 animals were vaccinated and 832 farms visited. This was targeted to livestock farmers in an effort to mitigate the impact and spread of Rabies.</p>
d) Aging Farming Population	i. Youth “Fast Track” Agricultural Finance Support Programme	<p>Twenty-six (26) grants totalling over \$2 million have been distributed to young farmers as part of the first cohort of the Youth “Fast Track” Agricultural Finance Support Programme (Agro-Incentive).</p>
	ii. Youth Agricultural Homestead Programme (YAHP)	<p>The Ministry of Youth Development and National Services advertised the second cohort of this initiative during December 2023 and the review of applications is underway.</p>

Challenges	Initiative identified	Target/Achievements
<p>e) Geo-political Instability which affects supply chain of agricultural inputs</p>	<p>i. Reduce fertilizer usage and implement natural strategies</p>	<p>The MALF offers incentives to farmers to utilize environmentally friendly pesticides and fertilizers. In the fiscal year 2023, four hundred and twelve (412) applications were processed in the sum of \$584,752.30.</p> <p>In fiscal year 2023, five hundred and fifty (550) persons were trained in composting through twelve (12) training programmes, which included online, face to face and method demonstration sessions.</p>
<p>f) Praedial Larceny</p>	<p>i. Implementation of Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) “Provision of Infrastructure for the Praedial Larceny Squad (PLS)”</p>	<p>In fiscal year 2023, the MALF recruited seventy-six (76) officers comprising of: sixty-one (61) Constables; seven (7) Corporals; six (6) Sergeants and (two) 2 Inspectors to ensure the strengthening and full complement of staff for an efficient and fully-functioning PLS.</p> <p>Training of the Constables and Corporals was undertaken in November 2023.</p> <p>In addition, the PLS was equipped with ICT</p>

Challenges	Initiative identified	Target/Achievements
		equipment at a cost of \$450,125. Further, the procurement of four (4) vehicles at a cost of \$1,425,272.50 was commenced fiscal 2023 and to be delivered in fiscal 2024.
g) Unavailability of water for irrigation	i. Support to farmers on effective measures for irrigation	Under the AIP, the MALF provides incentives for irrigation equipment/watering systems; ponds; wells and dams; and water pumps. In fiscal year 2023, five hundred and twenty (520) applications were processed in the sum of \$1,795,177.58 under this category of incentives. Additionally, thirty-four (34) farmers were trained on water conservation methods in the last fiscal year.
h) Limited opportunity for value added production	i. Training courses offered on marketing of primary and value-added agricultural products on the local and foreign market	Fifty-eight (58) persons were trained through two (2) training courses conducted on the marketing of primary and value-added agricultural products.
i) Lack of tenure to state lands	i. Implementation of an Electronic Document	The MALF has completed an EDMS Web Application featuring searchable fields

Challenges	Initiative identified	Target/Achievements
	Management System (EDMS)	<p>generated from extracted data, seamlessly integrated with linked GIS Parcel information. This application ensures Windows authenticated access within both the Land Management Division (LMD) and Head Office environments.</p> <p>Additionally, staff were trained to utilize the EDMS Web Application in August 2023.</p> <p>To date, 14,819 files were scanned; data extracted; LMD files barcoded with GIS Unique identification numbers; and created a potential link to Client LandCard and/or proposed Digital Client access platform.</p>
	ii. Use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) provided by the Ministry of Digital Transformation for the conduct of surveys and mapping and land management	<p>The UAV was presented to the MALF with a temporary license of six (6) months for the data processing software. This license has expired and a request has been made to the Ministry of Digital Transformation for the procurement of the permanent license for the processing software.</p> <p>In the six (6) months in which the UAV was used</p>

Challenges	Initiative identified	Target/Achievements
		<p>the following achievements were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping of the flood affected roads at Manzanilla for the Ministry of Works and Transport; and • Mapping of the affected coastal areas of the Valencia to Toco Roadway.

3.1 Recommendation: The MALF should provide a status update to Parliament by January 29, 2024:

- **Identifying long-term solutions and/or strategies to prevent the recurrence of failure to process leases of State Lands in a timely manner (page 31)**

Response: The long-term solutions to increase the efficiency of processing leases at the Land Management Division includes a multi-pronged approach such as the implementation of appropriate processing software; improved facilities to house the physical and electronic vaults and accommodate requisite staffing; shortened lease preparation times; and the establishment of an updated organization structure with enhanced technical, legal and enforcement personnel aimed at providing improved services to tenants; increased capture of revenue; and reduced instances of non-payments of lease rents (which affect lease renewals).

4. Non-collection of Income Data from Farmers and Fisherfolk

4.1. Recommendation: The MALF should conduct a feasibility study on the benefits of offering an income incentive grant to farmers and fisherfolk, which mandates the completion of an income means test, which would incentivize farmers and fisherfolk to disclose their incomes for easier data collection by the Ministry. The MALF should provide a status update on the implementation of this recommendation by January 29, 2024 (page 31)

Response: Offering an income incentive grant to farmers and fisherfolk, which mandates the completion of an income means test, may be beneficial, but

support would be required for the legal requirements to collect income data and the accompanying validation systems.

4.2. Recommendation: The MALF should explore the possibility of collating income related data from the programmes provided by other agencies. The MALF should provide a status update on the implementation of this recommendation by January 29, 2024 (page 31)

Response: The information related to income earned can be deemed confidential by external agencies and may not be easily accessed by stakeholders.

5. Improving the number of registered farmers who utilize Resilient Agricultural Practices

5.1. Recommendation: The MALF should submit a report to the Parliament by January 29, 2024, on all the initiatives the Ministry will undertake to secure full adoption of RAPs by all the farmers registered with the Ministry whilst also including the potential challenges incurred and/or foreseeable by the Ministry in attaining this objective (page 33)

Response: The MALF will undertake the following initiatives to ensure the full adoption of Resilient Agricultural Practices (RAPs):

- Promote training and extension support on the implementation of RAPs;
- Promote the agricultural incentives which encourage RAPs; and
- Enhance farmer field schools to transfer knowledge on RAPs.

The major challenges of achieving full implementation of RAPs include:

- Competition from external sources of extension services who promote the usage of unsafe chemicals and fertilizers;
- Unwillingness of farmers to employ crop rotation methods due to the familiarity of one-crop production; and
- High cost of green energy devices.

6. Lands no longer under Agricultural Production

6.1. Recommendation: The MALF should provide a status update to the Parliament by January 29, 2024, on the programmes the Ministry has implemented to revitalize declining crops and include the estimated timelines by which each crop is projected to return to large- scale production (page 34)

Response: Agricultural research and technology improvements are prerequisites for increasing agricultural productivity, generating increased income for farmers and increasing the availability of produce. The MALF continued on its research agenda in fiscal 2023 with a focus on some key areas including:

- Diagnostic, Surveillance and Research – a total of two hundred and eighty-five (285) Pest and Disease Diagnostic were completed and forty (40) samples were diagnosed through the Caribbean Pest and Disease Diagnostic Network; eighty-five (85) Pest Risk Analysis (PRAs) were completed and reviewed; an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Approach was developed to manage the Tuta Absoluta found in two (2) counties (St George East and West); a new vector of Lethal yellowing was also detected.

- In the area of Commodity research – focus was on the conservation, regeneration, and multiplication of germplasm; and climate resilience evaluation of roots and tubers; the collection, regeneration, seed processing and cold storage of three hundred and forty-three (343) vegetable accessions in the seed gene bank; 1000 coconut planting material was distributed to farmers in the East Coast as part of the replanting programme as well as established two (2) new coconut varieties received from the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for characterization, evaluation and germplasm; and collaborated with the Cocoa Research Centre on nine (9) frosty pod tolerant lines to improve our varieties.

It should be noted that the MALF creates the enabling environment to increase productivity but cannot determine the timeline for the large-scale production of commodities.

6.2. Recommendation: The MALF should provide a status update to the Parliament by January 29, 2024 on the implementation of each of the following initiatives as a way of reverting all lands designated for agricultural use into production:

- **providing additional marketing opportunities;**
- **demonstrating agriculture can be profitable;**
- **improving accessibility / infrastructure;**
- **providing agricultural loans; and**
- **enforcement of agricultural lease agreements. (page 34)**

Response:

Initiative	Status Update
<p>Provision of additional marketing opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NAMDEVCO remains committed to providing critical marketing services to stakeholders along the value chain and maintained oversight of three (3) Packing Houses, two (2) Retail Markets; five (5) Wholesale Markets and nine (9) Farmers' Markets. - NAMDEVCO facilitated the distribution of produce to five (5) distributors. The NAMDEVCO also facilitated the delivery, storage and packing of 12.5MT of cocoa beans for export to Switzerland on behalf of a Cocoa Cooperative; - NAMDEVCO has collaborated with the Food and Agriculture Organization to develop the FarmVue App for farmers to improve digital farming records to improve ease of access to marketing opportunities; - The Farmers' Markets, weekly allocated vending spots increased from three hundred and fifty-seven (357) in fiscal 2022 to three hundred and ninety-one (391) in fiscal 2023; and - NAMDEVCO has facilitated training of three hundred (300) persons in the Preventative Controls for Human Food Rule under the Food Safety

Initiative	Status Update
	<p>Modernization Act resulting in sixty-five (65) persons being able to export to the United States.</p>
<p>Demonstrating agriculture can be profitable</p>	<p>The MALF continues to offer training in the marketing of agricultural produce including opportunities for value-added products. In fiscal year 2023, fifty-eight (58) persons were trained in this area.</p>
<p>Improving accessibility/ infrastructure</p>	<p>The MALF continued to actively improve accessibility to farms by enhancing infrastructure of five (5) roads and three (3) bridges in fiscal 2023. The MALF also sought funding under the Agricultural Stimulus Package (\$80.5m) and the Infrastructural Development Fund (\$150m) to improve agricultural access roads.</p> <p>The MALF has engaged in activities in several flood-prone farming areas such as Plum Mitan to mitigate against the occurrence of flooding which causes losses to farmers. The following are notable achievements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rehabilitation of Pump House Facility and Intake Structure from Caroni River; - Repairs and Upgrade of Electrical System and Equipment at La Compensation Irrigation Project; - Rehabilitation of Re-Alignment of Drainage/ Irrigation Earthen Channels

Initiative	Status Update
	<p>La Compensation Irrigation Project;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Network System Cleaning and Desilting of Retention Pond at Depot Road Irrigation Project; and - Desilting of Perimeter Cut Channel at Plum Mitan Project.
<p>Providing agricultural loans</p>	<p>In fiscal year 2023, the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) held a substantial market share (average of 68.35%) of the agricultural credit market and provided eight hundred and two (802) loans to farmers with a value of one hundred million, five hundred and twenty-five thousand, seven hundred and one dollar and ninety-two cents (\$100,525,701.92). Notably, of the total 802 loans, three hundred and fifty-eight (358) were for the development of the food crop sector; two hundred and eighty-two (282) for agricultural services; and one hundred and thirteen (113) for the fisheries sector.</p>
<p>Enforcement of agricultural lease agreements</p>	<p>Following the April 26, 2023 proclamation of the Public Procurement and Disposal Property Act 2015, the MALF adopted the Handbooks and Guidelines developed by the Office of Procurement Regulation for its business purposes. However, further to the provisions of the Act, the MALF was advised that in respect of state lands, additional regulations were required and are to be developed</p>

Initiative	Status Update
	by the Ministry of the Attorney General. In the interim, the MALF continues to operate cautiously and responsibly in the processing of leases.

7. Sustainability of the Local Fishing Industry

7.1. Recommendation: The MALF should conduct a sensitization and education drive on the objectives, requirements and benefits of the new legislation aimed at:

- highlighting the state of the local fishing industry, and
- getting stakeholder buy in on the long-term benefits of a regulated fishing industry.

The MALF should provide a status update on the implementation of this recommendation to the Parliament by January 29, 2024. (page 36)

Response: The MALF has conducted several sensitization and education drives to improve understanding of the new legislation and its impact on the fishing industry. Six (6) National Consultations on the Draft Fisheries Management Bill (FMB) were completed in November 2023 as follows:

Date	Venue	Catchment of Stakeholders
5 th November 2023	Bagatelle Community Centre	North West fishers, long liners, processors. Fishing gear and supplies business operators and general public in Port of Spain and environs
6 th November 2023	NESC Couva	Fishers and Fishing Industry Stakeholders, Government agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and the general public in Central Trinidad
8 th November 2023	Pleasantville Community	Fishers and Fishing Industry Stakeholders, Government agencies, NGO's, CBO's and the

Date	Venue	Catchment of Stakeholders
	Centre San Fernando	Public in South Trinidad from Moruga, Erin, Morne Diablo and San Fernando to Cedros
10 th November 2023	North Eastern Community Centre Sangre Grande	Fishers and Fishing Industry Stakeholders, Government agencies, NGO's, CBO's and the Public in North East Trinidad from Balandra to Matelot and in east Trinidad from Manzanilla to Guayaguayare.
15 th November 2023	Betsy Hope Community Centre Delaforde Tobago	Fishers and Fishing Industry Stakeholders, Government agencies, NGO's, CBO's and the Public in North East Tobago
15 th November 2023	Shaw Park Cultural Complex, Scarborough Tobago	Fishers and Fishing Industry Stakeholders, Government agencies, NGO's, CBO's and the Public in Tobago

The MALF plans to continue the interventions with key stakeholders and fishing groups for direct interaction and interface to better understand the Bill and address fisher's concerns/questions. The schedule of interventions listed below is expected to be executed as follows:

- January 2024 – Fisheries Division Staff. La Brea Fishing Association
- February 2024- Fishermen and Friends of the Sea and associated members
- March 2024 - Moruga - Gran Chem and La Ruffin Combined
- April 2024 -San Fernando and Carli Bay

In addition, as part of MALF's sensitization program on the FMB, MALF completed the following:

- Newspaper Advertisements highlighting the dates for Consultations on the FMB;
- Radio Advertisements;
- Interviews or Information Segments on the Consultation sensitizing persons on the need for updated legislation was completed in the early half of November 2023;

- Three (3) influencer videos; and
- A series of flyers and info material were prepared and shared on the Ministry's Website.

8. Outreach Initiatives

8.1. Recommendation: The MALF should prepare a SWOT analysis of the different outreach initiatives the Ministry's Divisions offer to farmers and fisherfolk, also providing solutions to achieve greater participation in the lesser utilized programme and provide a status update on the implementation of this recommendation to Parliament by January 29, 2024. (page 37)

Response:

The SWOT analysis for training activities is presented below:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualified technical staff • Knowledge of clients/ farmers groups • Adaptable methods and timing of disseminating information to suit the farmer knowledge level • Decentralized locations to meet the clients • Expansive curriculum in both crop and livestock production • Strengthened stakeholder cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff shortage • Lack of resources • Staff motivation • Infrastructural needs such as fully equipped training centres
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased stakeholder interactions • Further training of staff • Use of ICTs • Advancements towards food security • Markets and value-added production potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness of stakeholders • Other training institutions may become the first choice by farmers for extension training programmes • Adaptation of recommended practices • Climate change issues

An assessment and analysis of training courses offered to farmers must be undertaken to determine the reasons for reduced participation. The assessment will also determine which subject areas should be reviewed and

revised. Based on the findings of the assessment, less-subscribed courses may be offered at reduced intervals with a view to phase out and include new topics of interest and relevance based on the developmental plan of the MALF.

9. Enhanced Cooperation with the Cooperative Republic of Guyana

9.1. Recommendation: The MALF should provide a status to Parliament by January 29, 2024, on the renewed and enhanced cooperative pursuit with the Cooperative Republic of Guyana in each of the priority areas listed i.e.:

- **Aquaculture;**
- **Rice;**
- **Livestock Production;**
- **Corn and Soya;**
- **Shade house and coconut;**
- **Human Resource Development; and**
- **Agro-processing. (page 44)**

Response: The status update as at December 31, 2023 is at **Attachment 1.**

10. Development of Standards for the Agriculture Sector

10.1. 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. (page 45)**

Response: The development of standards for agricultural produce is being undertaken. The National Good Agricultural Practices Certification Scheme for Trinidad and Tobago was approved by Cabinet in December 2020. To date, an international consultant was selected to provide guidance on the oversight of the establishment of the scheme and implementation of the certification framework. The consultant has initiated works with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to complete a Gap Analysis of the Scheme and propose the Standard and Regulation Legislation.

Once Phase 1 is completed, the implementation plan through the NAMDEVCO will be initiated as Phase 2. This phase will involve the establishment of the certification framework to identify the key players of

the scheme; setting up of the certification body; outlining the approval process for the certification body; provide detailed recommendations of the governance structure of the certification framework; and training of persons involved in the process to meet the requirements (on-site).

Additionally, the MALF and NAMDEVCO are currently represented on a Specification Committee for Good Agricultural Practices and Produce Grading. The committee is chaired by a representative of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) serves as the secretariat. The Committee has been preparing drafts for Agricultural Produce Grading Standards specifically for hot pepper; pineapple; dasheen leaves; and pumpkin. These standards outline the requirements for each of these commodities in alignment with internally approved standards to address consistency, communication and standardization in the market and along the distribution channel. Public consultations were held in March 2023, for the hot pepper; pineapple and pumpkin standards. The final review of these standards is on-going and will be completed in the upcoming months.

Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries
January 11, 2024

Implementation of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana /Trinidad & Tobago Food Development Plan

UPDATE AS AT 31/12/23

Components	Activities	Status/Comments	Timeline
1. Aquaculture	Guyana to provide a technical team to evaluate and provide recommendations for Aquaculture production in T&T (Brackish, Marine, and Fresh).	<p>MALF</p> <p>Cleaning of aquaculture ponds in preparation for visit by technical team from Guyana.</p> <p>Team will evaluate MALF's pond infrastructure and facilities and, in collaboration with TT technical aquaculture team, determine what projects can be undertaken to support the development of the aquaculture sub-sector in TT.</p> <p>Ministry of Youth Development and National Service (MYDNS)</p> <p>The MYDNS and the University of the West Indies (UWI) St. Augustine to prepare curriculum for an accredited one-year certificate course on aquaculture production for 100 youths.</p>	<p>Pond cleaning exercise completed in April 2023.</p> <p>Technical visit to T&T still to be finalized.</p> <p>The programme started in September 2023 with a first cohort of students.</p>

Components	Activities	Status/Comments	Timeline
2. Rice	<p>Guyana to assist with rice seed and to assist with technical support for Traditional and Aromatic Rice (Basmati) production for 5000 acres. (Guyana to engage the High Commission of India)</p> <p>Guyana Scientist to visit.</p>	<p>a. Revitalization of the Rice Industry in Trinidad and Tobago through access to new varieties of seed and technical support from Guyana commenced in January 2023. 91 tons of certified disease resistant rice seed was purchased by GORTT from the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRAD). The rice seeds were received in July 2023 and subsequently distributed to approximately 25 rice farmers in Central, South and East Trinidad. To-date approximately 1000 acres of rice have been planted across the three zones. This represents an increase of 900 acres from the previous year where approximately 100 acres of rice was planted.</p> <p>b. 1st Technical visit by GRDB's Plant Breeder/Geneticist is being planned to conduct training with local rice farmers on the GRDB varieties that will be received for commercial production.</p> <p>c. 2nd Technical visit on New and Improved Rice Production Technologies.</p>	<p>a. Completed</p> <p>b. 1st technical mission to T&T scheduled for 3rd week of January 2024.</p> <p>c. Details of 2nd technical mission to TT to be confirmed by January 31st 2024.</p>
3. Human Resources	Exchange Programmes for Students, Technical	MYDNS has initiated contact with the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA) through the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). The student agreement has been shared with GSA and preparations are ongoing between GSA, UTT and the University	MYDNS to finalize details of the programme and commencement date for exchange programme.

Components	Activities	Status/Comments	Timeline
	Staff and Farmers.	of the West Indies (UWI) for the Student Exchange Programme in the Youth Agricultural Homestead Programme and the Youth Agricultural Shade house Project. It was agreed that eight students will be selected to travel for a two-week period.	
4. Agro Processing and Food Distribution Network	<p>Guyana to be a hub for investors to obtain raw materials for processing and also to establish processing facilities (ground provision, peanuts, etc.)</p> <p>T&T to establish Agro-processing facilities in Guyana for regional distribution.</p>	<p>a. The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) TT to arrange meeting of interested local stakeholders with Guyanese counterpart Ministry.</p> <p>b. Ministry of Agriculture, Guyana (MOA) met with NOVO Inc. who indicated that they will procure raw materials from Guyana at this point and later set up a plant in Guyana.</p> <p>c. MTI to identify Ministry official to collaborate with MALF and the Ministry of Agriculture, Guyana on this action item.</p>	<p>a. March 2024.</p> <p>b. The MALF to follow up on this initiative and provide further details for action going forward by end of February 2024.</p> <p>c. March 2024</p>

Components	Activities	Status/Comments	Timeline
5. Livestock Production	<p>Embryo Genesis – to introduce new and improved breeds in both countries.</p> <p>Hatchery development – both countries, with support from Brazil, to develop the hatching egg industry.</p> <p>Private Sector investment and youth participation (business and job creation).</p>	<p>a. MALF’s Animal Production and Heath (AP&H) Division is preparing a brief for technical engagement with Guyanese counterparts on the use of embryo genesis and the introduction of new breeds into Trinidad and Tobago.</p> <p>b. MOA & MALF to collaborate on an approach in undertaking this action item.</p> <p>c. Discussions on this item with the relevant liaison officers at the Ministries of Trade and Industry, and Youth Development and National Service.</p>	<p>a. April 2024</p> <p>b. This is to be finalized by 31/01/24.</p> <p>c. To be undertaken by week ending 27/01/23.</p>
6. Shade house and Coconut	Guyana to assist with technical support, design, layout, building and planting material for the Shade-house project.	<p>a. MYDNS has received building material for the construction of 12 Shade-Houses from Guyana. The MYDNS is in the process of arranging payment to cover the freight cost.</p> <p>b. Seed Nuts planted at MALF’s Research Division and Agricultural Services Division respectively.</p>	a. March 2024.

Components	Activities	Status/Comments	Timeline
	Guyana to provide 5000 Coconut seedlings.		Seedlings generated from these plantings to be multiplied by MALF's Divisions in 2024.
7. Technical Taskforce	Both countries to set up technical working group for the removal of trade barriers and to ensure regional food security – to be led by Ministers.	<p>Technical Taskforce</p> <p>A Technical Task Force and working group formed.</p> <p>The working group's focus is on the removal of existing trade barriers with the aim of facilitating increased bilateral and regional Agri-Food Trade.</p> <p>The membership in both countries include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Ministers with responsibility for Agriculture; ii. Permanent Secretaries; iii. Chief Technical Officers; iv. Competent Authority for Trade in Animal and Plant Health; v. Any other technical officer(s) as required. 	<p>Technical task Force met in January 2023.</p> <p>Working group met on three occasions in 2023.</p> <p>Technical Advisers to Bilateral on Food and Agriculture met on 8 occasions in 2023.</p> <p>Documents Revised by Working Group:</p> <p>1. Trinidad and Tobago/ Guyana Fresh Agricultural</p>

Components	Activities	Status/Comments	Timeline
		<p>The Technical Task Force will convene meetings once per quarter (on a date and time to be agreed to by the Minister's with responsibility for Agriculture) and sub-committees of the Task Force may meet as required to support the work of the Task Force.</p>	<p>Produce and Forest Products Trade Protocol. (Please see attached document with comments).</p> <p>2. Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) for the Trade in Products of Plant and Animal Origins between Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana.</p> <p>Outcome: There is agreement on proposed changes for updating both documents.</p> <p>A Sub-Committee was formed with technical officers from the Ministry of Agriculture of both countries. The Committee held 3 meetings and reviewed the protocol and MRA. The MRA provides a framework upon which Guyana and TT agree to recognize the results of each other country's testing,</p>

Components	Activities	Status/Comments	Timeline
			inspection, certification and accreditation processes and procedures. Continuing discussions are planned on these two documents.
8.	<p>Guyana to expand production of key commodities of interest to TT to supply both countries.</p> <p>T&T to provide investment through private sector to secure supplies for value-added production.</p>	<p>a. This action item is being developed and coordinated by the Special Advisor-CARICOM Agri-Food System; Ministry of Agriculture-Guyana with support from the Project Coordinator/Technical Adviser, MALF, T&T.</p> <p>b. MTI will engage local investors to identify T&T private sector interest.</p>	<p>a. MOA Guyana, MALF and MTI will collaborate on the preparation of a draft proposal. April 30th 2024.</p> <p>b. This element will constitute part of the work being undertaken in the preparation of a draft proposal. April 30th 2024.</p>

Abbreviations

MOA – Ministry of Agriculture, Guyana
MALF – Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries; Trinidad and Tobago
MOFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MYDNS – Ministry of Youth Development and National Service
MTI – Ministry of Trade and Industry Trinidad and Tobago
MINTIC – Ministry of Trade, Industry and Commerce, Guyana
GRDB – Guyana Rice Development Board, Guyana
GSA – Guyana School of Agriculture, Guyana
UTT – University of Trinidad and Tobago
NAREI – National Agriculture Research Extension Institute, Guyana