

**Comments / Response of the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries Re:
First Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on
Examination into the Recurrent Expenditure of Ministries and Departments
under three 93) Sub-Heads: Current Transfers and Subsidies, Development
Programme – Consolidated Fund and
Infrastructure Development Fund**

Comments on Pervasive Issues

Internal Audit

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF) notes the observations of the Committee with regard to the Internal Audit function within the Public Service. The Ministry recognizes that the issues raised can and do in fact impact negatively on the efficient and effective execution of the Audit function in the wider Public and that a less than effective Audit function can have deleterious consequences for the Ministry or Department in which it operates.

In response to the finding on page 15 of the Report, the Ministry concurs with the recommendations advanced for strengthening and modernizing the Audit function and looks forward to their implementation. A target date of June 30, 2017 has been fixed for a review of the Internal Audit function, including the development and implementation of the required training.

Fraud

The MALF appreciates that the practice of fraud in any form is a source of concern for Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Departments and the Government as a whole. Fraud not only syphons off much needed resources from their intended activities or beneficiaries, it also tarnishes the image of public officers, the organisations to which they belong and the wider Public Service community. As such, the Ministry welcomes the proposed measures for preventing, detecting and treating with fraud in the Public Service. The Ministry will implement the Committee's recommendation on page 58 of the report to implement a fraud policy. A target date of June 30, 2017 has been fixed.

Monitoring and Evaluation

In response to page 17, the Ministry had noted the absence of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M+E) function, as well as the deficiencies in Project Management. In the short term a Project Manager has been recruited and a target date of March 30, 2017 has been fixed for the creation and staffing of the M+E function.

Exclusion of Projects from the PSIP

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries notes and supports the recommendations for rationalizing the suite of projects that comprise a Ministry or Department's PSIP portfolio. In fiscal 2016/17 the Ministry rationalized its Development Programme, reducing the number of projects from 99 to 60, and placing some projects under the recurrent programme. Further refinement of the Development Programme would be undertaken for the 2017/18 programme

Project Management

The MALF supports the view that sound Project Management in Ministries and Departments is critical project execution and ensuring value for money. The Ministry therefore supports any feasible recommendations for strengthening the function throughout the Public Service. In the absence of that function, a Project Manager was recruited in 2016.

Non-profit Institutions

The Ministry supports the proposals for managing the funding / support of Non-profit Institutions by public Agencies. It is critical that where financial support is provided, that such support is:

- provided to *bona fide* entities;
- utilized for the purposes that they were requested; and
- the evaluated or assessed.

Sub-Accounting Units in Small Departments

The Ministry notes the observations of the Committee and supports its recommendations in respect of Small Departments. In large Ministries and Departments, which maintain Divisions / Units which are themselves large and expend significant expenditure it will be necessary to continue with Sub-Accounting Units. The MALF does acknowledge the need for strengthening the supervision of Sub-Accounting Units by parent Ministries and development measures for their improved functioning.

Communications Backbone

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries acknowledges the observations of the Committee regarding under-utilization of GovNeTT, the practice of some Agencies to pursue the acquisition of unapproved hardware and software, and the attendant inefficiencies and expenditure associated with such practices. The MALF supports and

will adhere to guidelines introduced by the Ministry of Public Administration and Communication and the Cabinet. To implement this commitment the Ministry filled the position of Director ICT in 2016 with someone with experience in management of IT in the public sector.