ECOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE ACTION PLAN

(No. B/280) Mr O. Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the proposed preparation of an Ecological Agriculture Action Plan, in line with Maurice Ile Durable, as decided by Government in March 2013, he will state where matters stand, indicating if a list of the pesticides, chemical fertilizers, fungicides, insecticides and herbicides which can be withdrawn from the market, either immediately or in a phased manner, is available and, if so, indicate the actions, if any, taken or that will be taken in relation thereto.

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I am informed that a High-Level Steering Committee was set up in August 2013 at the level of the Ministry to work out a list of pesticides which could be withdrawn from the market, either immediately or in a phased manner, and to prepare an Ecological Agriculture Action Plan for both Mauritius and Rodrigues. A list of 20 pesticides was consequently identified for withdrawal and safer pesticides/bio-pesticides were proposed as alternatives. I am tabling the list of pesticides which have been recommended for withdrawal.

Upon the recommendation of the High-Level Steering Committee, the Dangerous Chemicals Control Board, which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, decided to stop issuing permits for the importation of three pesticides in January 2014 and six pesticides in January 2015. These pesticides are highlighted in the statement I am tabling.

This new Government, Madam Speaker, is conscious of the abusive use of pesticides in agricultural production, and the problem will be tackled in a holistic way. My Ministry will now be implementing the bio-farming/organic farming projects where the use of agrochemicals in agricultural production will be minimised.

As regards the withdrawal of additional toxic pesticides from the market, this is currently being worked out by my Ministry, and the specific timeframe for the total ban of these products from the market will be established.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that, in regard to the preparation of an Ecological Agriculture Action Plan for Mauritius and Rodrigues, technical assistance from FAO has been solicited.

Mr Mahomed: Would the hon. Minister clarify, for the benefit of the House, whether the list that he has just tabled will be active, meaning all these pesticides will be immediately banned in the country?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I have just mentioned that all those pesticides that are on that list have already been banned. So, no import permit is granted for the importation of those pesticides.