SIGNATURE CEREMONY OF THE
REIMBURSABLE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
AGREEMENT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
THE SEED SECTOR IN MAURITIUS
BETWEEN IFAD AND THE MINISTRY OF
AGRO INDUSTRY AND FOOD SECURITY
THURSDAY 26 MAY AT 18H30
CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE MINISTRY
Mr Sana Jatta, Regional Director of East and Southern Africa, IFAD

Mr Valantine Achancho, Programme Officer, IFAD

Mr V. Gondeea, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry

Senior Officers of the Ministry

CEOs of parastatal bodies falling under the aegis of the Ministry

Members of the press

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Evening
I am pleased to welcome in our midst this evening Mr Sana Jatta, Regional Director of IFAD for the East and Southern Africa and Mr Valantine Achancho, the Programme Officer, IFAD for the signature of the Agreement between my Ministry and IFAD on the Reimbursable Technical Assistance for the development of the Seed Sector in Mauritius.

Mr Sana Jatta, I know that you are very tired after this long trip and I would like to express my thanks to you for having accepted the invitation of the Ministry to proceed with the signature of this Agreement today itself, only a few hours after your arrival.
• At the very outset, I would like to thank IFAD for all the assistance that it has always provided to the Government of Mauritius for the promotion of the agricultural sector.

• In fact, we have a very privileged relationship with IFAD and we have, over the years, benefitted from various loan lending programmes for the implementation of numerous projects in the agricultural sector.

• The latest loan lending programme was in 2009 where IFAD provided a loan of 5.6 M USD and a grant of 0.40 M USD to the Government of
Mauritius for the implementation of the Marine and Agricultural Resources Support Programme (MARS) over a period of six years.

- The objective of that programme was to facilitate adjustment of vulnerable groups to pressures imposed by changing circumstances through the development of pro-poor policies to, inter alia, manage fish resources sustainably and profitably and provide support to rural households, including small holder cane planters to diversify and improve their prospects for gaining employment.
• This MARS programme was, however, closed in June 2013 by IFAD in view of the Middle Income Country Status attained by Mauritius.

• It was also found that IFAD support to agricultural development in Mauritius required a different kind of instrument instead of the conventional programme based assistance.

• Accordingly, a Reimbursable Technical Assistance Agreement was proposed as the future collaboration instrument between Mauritius and IFAD.

• In line with national priorities and regional commitment to reduce food insecurity and poverty,
we negotiated with IFAD for assistance for the strategic development of the Seed Industry including the preparation of a number of Regulations under the Seeds Act 2013.

- The Seeds Act 2013 makes provision to, inter alia, regulate the cultivation, production, trade, exportation and importation of seeds of any variety of any kind of plant.

- However, as at date, the Seeds Act has not been proclaimed because we lack the required expertise in the field to prepare the required Regulations.
• I am informed that Mauritius is the first country to sign this Reimbursable Technical Assistance Programme with IFAD and to benefit from this new type of assistance.

• In fact, IFAD has issued a worldwide press release on the signature of this Reimbursable Technical Assistance Agreement with Mauritius.

• As per this Agreement IFAD will *inter alia* provide the following technical assistances to my Ministry:

  1. Expertise to carry out a review of the existing Seeds Act 2013 and develop draft priority Regulations, in alignment with the
Regional Regulations in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern African Development Community (COMESA) and other relevant international frameworks for the set up and operations of institutions created by the Seeds Act and advice on the related preparation and validation of the applicable Regulations.

(2) Preparation of detailed roles and responsibilities of each of the National Plant Varieties and Seeds Office’s sections and the development of the terms of reference for staff
positions as well as the determination of the related equipment needs in accordance with the provisions of the Seeds Act 2013;

(3) The Setting up of management systems (administrative, technical and financial) for the running of the National Plant Varieties and Seeds Office, including management of the registration of varieties process, of seed dealers (import/ export/trade) and of seed producers, the establishment of a related computer/web-based data management system for said registrations, seed testing and certification and maintenance of
a database for a seed import/export/national variety list;

(4) Development of seed testing capacity through provision for an assessment of staff, facilities and equipment required for the national seed testing laboratory and the preparation of recommendations, carrying out of in-country workshops on seed sampling and testing procedures, seed health testing, management of seed testing results and computerized data management and issuance of seed testing reports.
(5) Capacity development for certification of seeds and planting materials, with the review of current practices for seed, root and tubers and preparation of draft certification schemes in consultation with stakeholders.

(6) Review of the current Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU) procedures and related training needs, development of VCU protocols and data analysis, and lastly

Carrying out of an assessment of the national seed production and marketing with a view to developing a National Seed Policy and Strategy.
• The duration of the Agreement for the Reimbursable Technical Assistance is 30 months as from the date of the Agreement and the total costs for the Reimbursable Technical Assistance are USD 1,193,071 i.e around Rs 44.15 M.

Ladies and Gentlemen

• Seed is one of the most critical and also costly inputs in agricultural production.

• It is also widely recognized that improved crop varieties and high quality seeds have a significant potential of increasing on-farm productivity and farmers’ revenue and enhancing food security.
• Indeed, many authorities have emphasized that seed security is a precursor to food security.

• Over the years, the Seed Industry has undergone dynamic changes worldwide and these changes have come with challenges that require institutional reforms in the local seed industry.

• Regional Integration and International Trade, together with scientific advantages in the area of biotechnology have posed additional challenges that require the local industry to quickly adapt to the changing environment in order to remain competitive both locally and regionally.
• For the time being, the seeds produced by the Ministry and planters are mainly of open pollinated traditional varieties which are well adapted to our agro-climatic conditions and have proven to be successful over the years.

• Most of these traditional varieties are, however, old and some are more than 40 years old and now showing varying degrees of degeneration and are more susceptible to diseases.

• This is why there is an urgent need to promote the introduction and development of new improved varieties of crops with features such as improved
yield, high quality and resistance to plant pests and diseases.

• The legislative framework has been put in place and now to be able to exploit the full potential of the seed industry, we need to proclaim the Act and put in place all the required facilities.

• We want this agri-business industry to become a main sector of the economy in future.

• It is against this backdrop that we welcome this technical assistance from IFAD to enable us to achieve these objectives.
I would like once again to express my thanks to IFAD for their continued support and collaboration with my Ministry for the promotion of the agricultural sector.

Thank you for your attention.