THE INDIA-MAURITIUS GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FORUM

Break out Session: Challenges and opportunities in the agro economy and progressive farming

Monday 25 July 2016

16h45

Intercontinental Hotel
Mr Pritpal Singh Pannu, Global President of the India-Mauritius Trade Cultural Friendship Forum, (IMTCFF)

Mr Sunil Kumar Chadda, Strategic Adviser and Secretary General of the IMTCFF

Mrs Jacqueline Sauzier, Director of the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture

Distinguished Guests and Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon
• It is indeed a great honor and privilege for me to address you this afternoon on the occasion of the break-out session on Agro-Economy and Progressive Agriculture held in the Context of the India-Mauritius Global Partnership Forum.

• I would like at the very outset to congratulate the organisers of this event for their very laudable initiative.

• This meeting will no doubt create opportunity for stakeholders from Mauritius and India to interact and identify feasible business ventures in the field of
agriculture for the mutual benefits of our two countries.

- The Mauritian Agricultural sector, albeit a relatively low contributor to National GDP, still holds a prominent and very important place in the national economic landscape.

- For years to come, it will no doubt continue to be a significant foreign exchange earner.

- This Government strongly advocates policies aiming at further consolidating and strengthening the agricultural sector to render it more responsive to the needs of a modern Mauritius.
• These needs will necessarily concern food security and food safety for the population, job creation for the youths and women in particular.

• In addition, the modern agricultural sector is equally expected to integrate related industrial activities to leverage its contribution to renewable energy production and stimulate as well the emergence of a strong and sustainable agri-business sub-sector.

• It is worth to note that my Ministry introduced early this year a new strategic plan for the food crop,
livestock and forestry sub-sectors covering a five-year term ending 2020.

- This new plan instills a paradigm shift which gives the necessary orientation to better address pertinent issues associated with food security and food safety.

- It also purports development strategies to boost food production.

- Implementation of our plan is backed up with a package of incentives, both in terms of financial and technical assistance.

- These have been put in place to help the farming community in meeting exigencies inherent to
modern agriculture and cope as well with challenges particularly, in the difficult context of climate change.

• In line with Government policy aiming at production of 50% of our food under bio-farming systems by 2020, several accompanying measures are being proposed to achieve this ambitious objective.

• These measures include:

1. The setting up of the Mauritius Agricultural Certification Body;
2. Training of staff and farmers in Good Agricultural Practices under the MauriGAP Protocol (MG 1)

3. Introduction of the Bio-farming Incentive Scheme which provides investors with 8-year tax holiday; Value Added Tax Exemption on production equipment and other inputs including financial assistance at concessionary interest rate and lastly

The implementation of technical cooperation project entitled ‘Support for the Development of Organic Farming and institutional capacity Building’ with the collaboration with the FAO.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- As you are all aware, agriculture in Mauritius is dominated by sugar cane which occupies more than 50,000 hectares of our agricultural lands compared to only 8,200 hectares for food crops and a mere 700 hectares for tea.

- The sugar cane industry currently contributes 1.8% to GDP with sugar export as main activity. Sugar industry also accounts for production of renewable energy from bagasse, ethanol and molasses.

- It is the declared policy of this Government to maintain the current acreage of 50,000 hectares under sugar cane plantation to guarantee at least a
minimum annual sugar production of 400,000 tonnes in addition to generation of 15% of electricity needs from bagasse.

• An ethanol framework is being equally developed which will allow the blending of ethanol with Mogas.

• My Ministry is working on the 2030 Economic Vision with the theme ‘climate smart’ and ‘nutrition sensitive agricultural sector’.

• In 2030, we envision to transform the agricultural sector into a vibrant sustainable agro-industry with focus on high value production for an enhanced food
security and safety as well as environmental sustainability.

- This long term objective is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal 2: that is, ‘End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture’.

- For the sugar cane sector, the aim will be to promote a sustainable and a financially viable cane industry by increasing in the first instance production of value added sugar and secondly, encouraging further diversification through production of ethanol, sugar chemicals and other by-products.
• In addition, small planters will be provided with technical guidance and logistics to help them in increasing their revenue potential from cane production, bagasse and other crops.

• For the Non-Sugar Cane Sector, our main aim is to raise the national food security level by increasing the self-sufficiency level in strategic crops and other agricultural products and improve the livelihoods of small farmers.

• We want to achieve this target by encouraging a shift to Good Agricultural Practices and promoting the use of farming systems which are eco-friendly and contribute also to safer and better nutrition.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Within this short time slot, I have attempted to give a brief overview of the objectives and targets which my Ministry has set to achieve in order to foster agricultural development and leverage food production capacity.

- I have also shared with you the economic vision of this Government for 2030.

- As you can see, the challenges lying ahead are quite daunting and we would require the collaboration and cooperation of all stakeholders to successfully meet these challenges.
• Some positive signs in the right direction are apparent since last year and we have also noted growing interest among the farming community to embark on the new ventures.

• I must say that the private sector is also playing an efficient and effective role.

• However, Mauritius being a small island economy does not have all the required resources, be it natural, technical and financial to face the challenges alone.
• We still depend on international agencies like FAO and IFAD and friendly countries like India to accompany us.

• I, therefore, welcome the presence of Indian businessmen at this important forum and hope that they will meet their Mauritian counterparts to discuss and identify potential areas of cooperation and feasible business proposals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

• I would now conclude by once again thanking the organisers of the forum for their excellent initiative
and wishing them plenty of success in their future venture.

I thank you for your kind attention.