Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning

I am pleased to be associated with the opening of a Forum on Agribusiness being organised by my Ministry in collaboration of the India Mauritius Trade and Cultural Friendship Forum.

Allow me to extend a warm welcome to the resource persons from India who have kindly agreed to be here amongst us to share their experience on agribusiness with us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Forum on Agribusiness is, one of the initiatives of the India-Mauritius Global Partnership Conference which was hosted in July 2016 and which had witnessed the networking of not only the business community but also professionals, potential investors, artists both from India and Mauritius.

This Forum is being organised at an opportune moment to discuss on agribusiness and seek solutions to the challenges being faced in agriculture.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are all aware, the ability of agriculture to support growing populations has been a concern for generations and continues to be high on the global policy agenda.

In fact, food security will remain a world-wide concern. This calls for a change in the way of doing business in agriculture.

In most countries in the region, agriculture remains the main source of livelihood for quite a large number of people.

The agricultural sector seems sometimes to offer opportunities beyond for inclusive economic growth and is able to help in creating economic opportunities; achieving sustainable livelihoods; and improving sustainable development.

It is the challenge of all governments to achieve balanced economic growth and sustainable food security.
As most Small Island Developing States, we are faced with major constraints in terms of size, vulnerability to external economic conditions, impact of climate change resulting in decreased local food production and consumption.

The success of the agriculture sector in Mauritius has been the result of engagement with local, regional and international players.

However, the present context does not allow us to do agriculture in the same manner. Time has come for us to re-think and re-engineer the sector keeping in mind the new challenges which are yet to come.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The present Forum will allow participants to familiarise themselves with a number of thematic areas such as natural resource management, technological innovations, crop improvement and protection technology, use of technology in the livestock sector, marketing and trade and post-harvest amongst others.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like here to point out that despite our limited natural resources and cultivable land, we are able to supply the local market with fresh produce and besides we are able to export fruits namely pineapple, litchis, poultry meat and ornamentals.
Many projects and schemes have been introduced and many people have been able to take advantage of them.

These are not the only incentives that we are providing.

Many capital projects have been initiated and are under way; some of them are: the setting up of a national wholesale market to ensure that trade of agricultural produce are carried out safely, efficiently and in a fair and transparent manner.

We are also coming up with a new slaughter house to the tune of Rs 325 M which will accommodate all facilities and establish relevant protocol for animal handling practices.

Furthermore, my Ministry is investing Rs 44 M in a project which aims at developing the seed sector in Mauritius.

The project is being carried out under the technical guidance of IFAD.

Its major outcomes would be to ensure that quality planting material is available to planters and also that the right institutional framework is set up and the seed production is regulated in Mauritius.
We are also investing a further sum of Rs 178 M for the setting up of a livestock Zone, a heifer farm, a sheep reproduction farm, a new turkey quarantine project and a fruit fly rearing facilities.

In a nutshell, my Ministry has elaborated many strategies to take agriculture to another level.

These strategies would not only increase our competitive edge but also pave the way to a modern and resilient agriculture.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is sad to say that the Agribusiness component is most of the time neglected – not to say ignored.

Yet agribusiness may well be the perfect catalyst towards economic growth.

The development of the agricultural sector will need to encapsulate the elements of value chain, be able to allow for a shift towards agricultural development as an engine of economic growth and by so doing agriculture can provide the resources for other sectors as well whether it is for education, for health, for poverty alleviation, sustainable development amongst others.
There is no doubt that we need to increase food production to cater for an increasing population and increasingly wealthier population.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In this endeavour, we are condemned to adopt practices to make our agriculture more competitive and India is undoubtedly a glaring example coupled with a perfect blend of technology, management practices and marketing and above all innovation in the agricultural sector.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We cannot talk of agribusiness without an agribusiness park.

An agribusiness park functions by pooling together agricultural players into a hub and ecosystem in which agribusiness start-ups can prosper.

In the present context, an Agribusiness park is likely to:

i. Attract international expertise and FDI

ii. Allow for better knowledge and technology transfers

iii. Create a significant number of jobs

iv. Benefit from economies of scale and increased productivity

v. Enhance marketing, branding, labelling to increase demand for higher quality and healthier foods and agricultural products and
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would rely not only on your response and feedback but also on your engagement as key players of the agricultural sector, to come up with valid recommendations for the setting up of an agribusiness park in Mauritius.

I am confident that this platform will also open the way for an enhanced public-private partnership for growth and development of the region’s agribusinesses as part of building a dynamic and resilient regional economy.

Before ending, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to wish the experts a nice stay in Mauritius.

I now have the pleasure to declare the Forum open.

I wish you fruitful interaction and deliberations.

I shall look forward to be briefed on the outcome of your discussions.

Thank you for your attention