Inception Workshop on
TCP on Agroforestry development in Mauritius

Holiday Inn Hotel

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Mr. Louis Muhigirwa, Deputy FAO Regional Representative for Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles;

Mr. Bojrazsingh Boyramboli, Senior Chief Executive of my Ministry;

Mr. Vishnu Tezoo, Conservator of Forests;

Dr. Seelavarn Ganeshan, Chief Executive Officer of the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute;

Deputy Permanent Secretaries;

Chairpersons and Heads of Parastatal Organisations;

Representatives of the private sector, planters’ associations, NGOs and academia,
Representatives of the media;

Staff from my ministry, and FAO staff present here today,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to you all

I am very pleased and honoured to address you this morning on the occasion of the opening of the inception workshop for the Technical Cooperation Programme between the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United States Nations and my Ministry on agroforestry sector development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Goal of my Ministry is to boost agricultural production and improve the national food security level while at the same time preserving natural resources, including forests for the provisioning, regulating and cultural services they provide.
Agriculture used to be the main economic industry of Mauritius in the 1970s. It is now contributing only a mere 3% to the GDP.

However, I still believe that agriculture play an essential role in our country and in our economy and that we should boost local production and enhance the livelihood of farmers which will in turn enhance the well-being of the people of our country.

In this context, this Government has explored several avenues to revamp the agricultural sector in Mauritius.

Support is being provided to encourage farmers to adopt sheltered farming.
Two sheltered parks have already been set up at Plaine Magnien and Ville Bague and put to the disposition of young entrepreneurs.

Several others are being constructed across the island.

Five Bee Reserve Zones have been set up at Bras d’Eau, Petit Sable, La Ferme, Le Morne and Dauguet with the support of the Forestry Service and the Entomology Division.

Additional Bee Reserve Zones are currently being set up along River Takamaka (La Marie) and in Palma to boost the local production of honey.

The introduction of high-value agricultural products such as macadamia are being studied to help improve the livelihood of farmers and diversify production.
My Ministry is also encouraging the introduction of organic agriculture so as to increase food safety while at the same time protecting the environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the same context, agroforestry is being viewed as yet another avenue which will contribute towards the enhancement of agriculture, and also the environment, in Mauritius.

Agroforestry involves the planting of trees, shrubs and crops simultaneously so as to manage land in a more sustainable and natural way.

Agroforestry is definitely an avenue which I invite not only the Government, but also the private sector and individual farmers to explore in order to innovate agriculture in Mauritius, increase the level of food security and seize
markets of high value agricultural crops while at the same time protecting their lands.

The Forestry Service and the FAREI have already started trials in this direction.

Forested land suitable for agroforestry in the country have been identified and four sites have since been identified for piloting.

The first agroforestry pilot demonstration site has been inaugurated two weeks ago at Petit Sable and is of an extent of 1.12 ha.

Petit Sable furthermore has a great potential for honey production due to the presence of melliferous trees which attract bees.

Other sites proposed by my Ministry include, Daruty, L’Esperance, and Britannia.
However we will work with you stakeholders during this initial phase of TCP project to ensure we have representation of pilot sites that have potential for agroforestry, as well as identify unutilized/and abandoned lands which could be available for promotion of agroforestry.

**Distinguished Guests,**

Agroforestry has the potential to improve the livelihoods of farmers as its adoption would increase crop yield.

Agroforestry will provide farmers with the opportunity to diversify their fields and access new markets through the production of high-value agricultural produce.

The population will also benefit from healthier food since the use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides will be greatly reduced and may even be eliminated.
The increase in tree cover will also contribute to the aesthetic of the environment and the agroforestry sites may eventually also appeal to the population as recreation sites.

I am convinced that the adoption of agroforestry techniques will enormously benefit the local population.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Agroforestry also provides opportunity for job creation, support mitigation for climate change (through carbon sequestration from trees/shrubs), and increase availability of wood energy/chips and timber products, and among other things.

I therefore invite the private sector, entrepreneurs, and individual planters to explore the potential of agroforestry and contribute towards the upliftment of agriculture in Mauritius.
Furthermore, agroforestry has the potential to address the objectives set in the Strategic Plan for the Non-Sugar Sector (2016-2020).

These objectives include:

(i) improving the level of food security in the country;

(ii) provision of safe and quality food for the local population and for export;

(iii) Improving the contribution of agriculture to national economic and social development;

(iv) promoting the sustainable management of land, water and natural resources; and lastly building capacity for enabling farmers to face climate change.

I wish to seize this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations for extending their support to explore the potential for the implementation of agroforestry in Mauritius.
The FAO has previously supported my Ministry with other initiatives such as the Forest Code Revision, the Institutional Reform of the Forestry Sector, and development of the biosecurity plan for the agricultural sector.

The FAO is also currently supporting us with the national legislation and implementing regulations for organic farming, as well as the Programme Régional de Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

I strongly believe these projects will help us to reform the agricultural and forestry sectors in Mauritius.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I thank you all for your attention. I now, have the pleasure to declare the workshop open and wish all participants a fruitful discussion and deliberations.