**GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS**

**Submission of inputs for the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food focusing on violence and the right to food**

The Constitution of Mauritius provides an unequivocal right for every citizen to be treated equally and to live a life free from discrimination.

Mauritius is a trade-dependent island economy which imports most of its food products. The main imports consist of wheat flour, rice, milk, meat and fruits which are primary basic staples.

**Challenges faced by the Agricultural Sector**

Mauritius is not spared from the negative impact of climatic change. Flash floods can heavily impact on the agricultural production. Prolonged dry spells are also a major emerging constraints that are being encountered by the food sector.

Moreover, since Mauritius is a tropical country, agricultural production varies with the seasonal changes, hence, causing the country to rely on importation. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted heavily on food supply.

Shortage of labour, mainly manual workers, in the market has heavily impacted on agricultural production. Other factors involve the unavailability and shortage of planting materials, scarcity of raw materials for agro-processing and limited access to land for agricultural activities which is coupled with land degradation.

The agricultural producers face difficulties in obtaining agri-inputs as the prices are prohibitively expensive, hence, causing a huge set back to sustain agricultural production.

Further constraints include the lack of storage facilities, failure of farmers to regroup themselves and low farm productivity. The livestock sector also faces numerous constraints such as lack of good breeding animals and inadequate veterinary services, insufficient fodder and low adoption of good animal husbandry practices. In addition, the lack of coordination among value chain actors, inadequate infrastructure for slaughter and inadequate food safety system, further cause inconvenience to the livestock sector.

**Obligations of the State**

1. Agricultural sector

The overall goal of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security is to raise the national food security level by maintaining self-sufficiency in those agricultural products whenever possible and by generating a significant, concomitant increase in local production of others. This is achieved through a shift to sustainable agricultural practices and eco-friendly methods of production and protection conducive to safer and better human nutrition.

Besides providing a regulatory framework and creating an enabling policy for the practice of biofarming, institutions uplift their methods and tools to support the producers and help them through this transformation away from high-external-input production systems. This requires appropriate technologies and sound management practices for both production, processing and marketing to make them competitive. Specific objectives are to:

1. improve the level of food security in the country;
2. provide safe and quality food for the local population and for export;
3. improve the contribution of agriculture to national economic and social development;
4. promote the sustainable management of land, water and other natural resources;
5. build capacity for enabling farmers to face climate change and move on to ‘climate-smart agriculture’; and
6. implement institutional reforms for service delivery and to empower farmers towards

entrepreneurship and professionalism.

The Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, through the Agricultural Marketing Board (AMB) diversifies the sources of procurement of strategic crops in order to prevent shortage. The AMB ensures that the population is fully supplied with produces at all times.

Small-scale producers are trying to produce their own vegetables. A grant is also being provided by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security to backyard owners for the purchase of mini sheltered farms to be used for year round crop production.

1. Fisheries sector

The priority objective of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping is to ensure sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources and the conservation and protection of marine ecosystem to ensure their long term viability for food security and poverty alleviation thus promoting the right to adequate food and decent living and cleaner and safe environment.

The Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping intends to implement an exploratory fishing project to identify new fishing grounds for the establishment of new fisheries that can be the source of livelihoods of fishermen. Various restoration and conservation programmes (mangrove propagation, coral farming, seagrass project and marine ranching) are being implemented to maintain the ecosystem capital that is essential for fishermen livelihood. Fishers are encouraged to conduct off-lagoon fishing around Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) installed by the Ministry and fishers are provided with grants and loan facilities to purchase more robust boats for off-lagoon fishing.

The Budget Estimates 2022-2023 made provision for the following measures for small fishers:

(a) the issuance of 500 additional fishermen cards;

(b) provision of Rs 5,000 per fisher for the purchase of materials to construct fish traps;

(c) the annual financial assistance to the tune of Rs 2,500 for the purchase of hooks; and

(d) increase of the daily Bad Weather Allowance for fishers from Rs 475 to Rs 575.

1. Cooperatives sector

The following support are provided to the cooperative businesses, namely:

1. access to Market – Cooperative Market Fairs are held to provide a marketing platform to cooperative societies;
2. training and Capacity Building – Online training programmes are organised by the National Co-operative College; and
3. financial schemes to Cooperative Societies to boost local production of food. The Scheme has financed equipment, machineries and other related accessories to a maximum of Rs150, 000 per co-operative society related to local production of agricultural produce and food items. Co-operatives have been encouraged through this scheme to embark in or increase the local production of agricultural produce and food items to give a boost to our economy and also assisting the country in attaining food security.

**Training and sensitisation programmes**

The Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping is providing ongoing training to 500 applicant fishers who would eventually be registered as fisher. The training is being carried out by the Fisheries Training and Extension Centre and the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy of this Ministry, and the training programme includes modules relating to safety at sea, fishing techniques, communication, mounting of gears, outboard engines and practical at sea.

A project to help improve self-sufficiency in fresh vegetables and fruits has been implemented by the Home Economics Unit of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare which consists of empowering selected households including women in setting up of organic container and vertical gardens in particular for those who have limited space for growing and help particular segments of the population to become more resilient in food security. A starter kit with different vegetables seeds are being provided to each participant.

Together with the different schemes being offered by the Government such as the Water Tank Scheme, Household Gardening Scheme, the Backyard Gardening available to encourage women in food crop cultivation, the Sustainable Development and Food Security Programme and the Agricultural Women’s Club pave the way for trainees to benefit from these facilities to kick-start their own gardens. Hence, the Unit is involved in creating national awareness in promoting and in planning the cultivation of fruits and vegetables for self and to supply the local market.

The Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity provides training with respect to income generating projects and self-sufficiency to beneficiaries registered under the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) in the fields of Home Gardening, Poultry Rearing, Pastry, Bee Keeping, Quail Egg Production and Farming.

In the year 2021, the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation organized a hybrid/live and online symposium on Transforming Food System in collaboration with the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security and Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) to sensitize young people about the importance of indulging in Food Transforming System to address the food security issue in Mauritius.

Some 100 young people aged 18 -35 years of both genders were selected by the National Empowerment Foundation from vulnerable families to participate in this online symposium through zoom from 10 regional Youth Centres scattered across the island.

With a view to support the 100 youth in starting their own Food Transforming initiative, a project has been developed by the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation in January 2022 on a one-year pilot basis whereby the 100 youth from vulnerable families had the opportunity to be exposed with the following activities:

1. a guided visit to agro-based enterprises including hydroponic and aquaponic parks, livestock production, Bio-Culture Technologies and mushroom production;
2. focus group discussions with the 100 youth in the month of June to enable the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation determine the area of interest in Transforming Food System in which the youth show particular interest;
3. tailor made trainings in the different Transforming Food Systems fields are offered free of charge to the youth followed by free training on Entreprenariat Jeunesse; and.
4. follow up on the setting up of the different youth initiatives are ensured by the “*Comité de Soutien et de suivie*” of the Entreprenariat Jeunesse Unit of the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation.

**Protection to vulnerable persons**

A National Database for Vulnerable Groups for households, earning a monthly income between Rs 10,500 and Rs 14,000, has recently been set up. These households receive support in kind by the National Social Inclusion Foundation through registered Non-Governmental Organisations.

All those in receipt of (a) Social Aid and (b) those in receipt of Basic Pensions who would qualify for Social Aid in the absence of the basic pension, are entitled to an Income Support of Rs 353 per member of family for the purchase of rice and flour;

During flood, on submission of a police memo, a flood allowance of Rs 250 per day per member of household is also payable when foodstuffs are damaged.

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