

CABINET DECISIONS – 11 JANUARY 2013

1. Cabinet has agreed to the implementation of the Compost Subsidy Scheme to support small planters and promote sustainable agriculture as announced in Budget Speech 2013. Subsidy would be in the form of a Delivery Voucher that would be issued to planters registered with the Small Farmers Welfare Fund, which would manage the Scheme. Vegetables growers would receive three vouchers for a total of three crop cycles on the same plot of land. The Agricultural Research and Extension Unit and the Small Farmers Welfare Fund would carry out sensitization campaigns on the use of compost.

2. Cabinet has taken note that the Freight Rebate Scheme, introduced in 2012, would be extended up to 2015 in view of its positive impact on the exportation of agricultural produce. According to latest statistics, about 2,282 tons of fresh fruits/vegetables were exported in 2012 as compared to 1,940 tons in 2011, i.e., an increase of about 18%. Agricultural produces that have been exported in 2012 include pineapple (1,884 tons), litchi (295 tons), breadfruit (103 tons) and anthurium (2.9 m units).

3. Cabinet has taken note of the successful implementation of the Food Security Strategic Plan 2008-2011 which aimed at mobilizing land and aquatic resources to optimize food and livestock production for domestic consumption, as well as for export.

Cabinet has further taken note that the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, in collaboration with the Agricultural Research and Extension Unit, has prepared the Food Security Strategic Plan 2013-2015, as a continuation of the first Strategic Plan, to improve the level of self-sufficiency in various commodities, promote export and create new opportunities for farmers and entrepreneurs. The Plan provides for the following actions and incentives:

- (a) facilitate access to agricultural land;
- (b) mechanize farm activities and support farmers in crop and livestock production;
- (c) carry out research on the development of sustainable agricultural practices;
- (d) provide efficient and effective institutional support and services;
- (e) provide facilities to modernize existing and set up new livestock farms; and
- (f) facilitate access to market.

4. Cabinet has taken note of the Research and Development Implementation Plan 2012-2016 prepared by the Mauritius Sugarcane Industry Research Institute of the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority. The Plan aims, amongst others, at –

- (a) strengthening, improving and recalibrating research and development efficiency;
- (b) delivering research performance better aligned to the sugarcane industry and national priorities;
- (c) remaining internationally competitive; and
- (d) aiming towards self and long term sustainability.

5. Cabinet has taken note that, following the closing down of the Tobacco Board, its functions would be performed by the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office that would be set up shortly.

Cabinet has also taken note that the employees of the Tobacco Board are being redeployed and compensated. An employee, who accepts redeployment, would be paid an ad hoc allowance equivalent to three months' salary and an employee, who wishes to proceed on retirement, would be paid a compensation equivalent to six months' salary.

Cabinet has further taken note that, as the BAT would stop purchasing tobacco from 2015, planters of tobacco, who have agreed to stop producing tobacco as from 2012, have been paid compensation based on an expected future production of tobacco.

6. Cabinet has taken note that Dr Kanayo F. Nwanze, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, would be on an official visit to Mauritius from 28 February to 5 March 2013. During his visit, Dr Nwanze would pay courtesy calls on eminent personalities, carry out site visits to on-going projects and have working sessions with, inter alia, officials of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, the Vice-Chancellors of Universities and senior officials of Research Institutions. He would also visit Rodrigues.

7. Cabinet has taken note of the status in the implementation of Phase II of the Ring Road Project. The alignment of the Ring Road Phase II starts from the foot of Signal Mountain and extends to Champ de Mars and works are scheduled to start shortly.

8. Cabinet has agreed to Mauritius contributing an amount of US\$50,000 to the Federal Republic of Nigeria for its reconstruction following devastation caused by flood in October 2012.

9. Cabinet has taken note of the status in the implementation of the Land Administration, Valuation and Information Management System (LAVIMS) Project, including the setting up of a Cadastre Unit at the Ministry of Housing and Lands. The main objective of the Cadastre Unit is to update and maintain the digital cadastre. As at December 2012, 880 land survey plans and 9,660 title deeds had been registered at the Registrar General's Department and ingested into the system of the Cadastre Unit and 875 applications for Parcel Identification Number processed. Access to the Digital Cadastre is being extended to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to facilitate investigation into proceeds of crime under the Asset Recovery Act and to Local Authorities for the processing of applications for Building and Land Use Permits and for the identification of owners of bare lands. The Ministry of Housing and Lands also proposes to set up a digital State Land Register which would, amongst others, allow building up an inventory of State lands and facilitate the processing of applications for State land.

10. Cabinet has taken note that, according to the last statistical bulletin, 965,441 tourists visited Mauritius during the period January to December 2012 as compared to 964,642 for the corresponding period in 2011. During the month of December 2012, some 115,465 tourists visited Mauritius and growth had been registered in the following tourist markets: U.K. (+10.6%), Germany (+12.2%), India (+5.5%), China (+44.1%), Russia (+8.0%), South Africa (+12.5%) and Reunion Island (+29.7%).

11. Cabinet has taken note that, following representations received, the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security conducted a survey and field verifications to ascertain whether planters who have been allocated State land for agricultural purposes, had subleased the land or left it in an abandoned state. The Ministry, now, proposes to retrieve State lands, which have been subleased or abandoned, and reallocate them to genuine planters in order to ensure that those lands are used optimally for food production. A first exercise would be carried out on the State land at Plaine Sophie.

12. Cabinet has agreed to any person, who wishes to serve as full-time lecturer in a tertiary education institution, as from 2015, also possessing a postgraduate diploma in higher education, or equivalent, with a view to improving teaching and learning in tertiary education institutions, produce high quality graduates and attract more foreign students.
