



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade and Industry

Opening of the Moruga Agro-Processing and Light Industrial Park

ADDRESS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON,
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

14TH JULY, 2020

This is a watershed event!

Today marks the official opening of the first agro-processing park in Trinidad and Tobago. It is and will remain a tangible representation of this Administration's commitment, to not only producing the food we eat and building food security, but purposely strengthening the value added as we now develop this new industry, for domestic and foreign markets, and for developing linkages with the manufacturing sector.

This new Agro-Processing Facility which also caters for light manufacturing, is not simply a government project—it is an investment by the Government for the people of Moruga and the wider agricultural counties of Victoria, Nariva/Mayaro and St. Patrick East and West. Ladies and Gentlemen, we are building communities! The Government has invested TT\$90 Million in the Park and created close to 100 jobs during construction and even more jobs are expected when fully occupied. But more than jobs, we see this Park as creating countless opportunities for business.

Moruga has a long tradition of agricultural commodities production. Through collaboration between experienced farmers (who are committed, resilient and resourceful) and young well educated agri-entrepreneurs, a number of very promising, farm-based value chains, co-operatives and, new agro-clusters can emerge.

This Park will harness the human capital within this Region by encouraging the transformation of existing farming systems, that will now create value-added exportable products with high standards and levels of technology.

On engagement with UDECOTT, the Project Manager, the services of GSAL Designs was contracted to complete a comprehensive Master Plan for the Project. For the purpose of determining whether this Park will be of net benefit to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, a number of commodities with the potential for providing adequate supplies of raw material for agro-processing, were identified. Baseline data sourced from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF) was used to zero-in on the list of commodities, based on acreages that are now under cultivation: Cassava and other root crops, Fish, Pineapple and other fruits, Cocoa, Moruga Red and Scorpion hot peppers and Teak were determined to be most feasible. The results of the financial analysis of Park operations show that this Project is financially viable.

The Park

The Park which is close to forests, fisheries and agricultural commodities will provide leasable shared space at very low rates. The Park consists of eleven (11) developed land lots—five (5) lots for purpose-built factory shells available for leasing, while six (6) are developed sites for leasing. In addition to the Park having all the essential infrastructural facilities necessary for conducting business such as an established road network and all necessary utilities (telecommunications,

electrical and water supply, drainage, sewerage and a waste treatment facility), the five factory shells are also outfitted with offices and washrooms, and cold storage spaces where needed.

To date, during construction, and through the activities of investTT, more than 50 persons and entities have shown interest in the Park and there are nine constructive leads which are now being followed.

A unique advantage offered to potential tenants of the Park is the availability of support services by affiliated Agencies such as:

- the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO), which provides various capacity building programmes and marketing services.
- the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) Trinidad and Tobago, which has both in-house capacity and external access to technical expertise, best practices, practical experiences, knowledge platforms and expert networks.
- the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI), which provides a comprehensive range of support services for food processors, including product and process development, product consultancy, training, food safety systems and audits, contract processing, facility layout, product testing and business support services.
- the Agricultural Development Bank of Trinidad and Tobago (ADB), which specializes in development financing for firms in the agricultural sector.
- ExporTT Limited, which will assist firms in building capacity to export.

I wish to remind all existing and potential agro-processors that the Grant-Fund Facility under the Ministry of Trade and Industry (which gives matching support of up to TT\$ 250,000 for machinery and equipment) together with the wide portfolio of incentives under the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries remain available to you.

I am satisfied that we have transformed good intentions and a Plan into an Asset which will create opportunities for the people of Moruga and neighbouring communities. We believe in the people of Moruga and know that they are ready to take that bold step to improving their future and in so doing, contribute to the transformation of the domestic economy. We remain at your side as together, we can see this project developing to its fullest. Thank you to Rosscon, the contractors of this project and who have done exceedingly well.

Thank you to our Prime Minister, Dr Keith Rowley for your commitment to this project and also to my Cabinet colleagues.

Thank you.