

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

REMARKS

AT

THE INAUGURAL GREAT BRITISH FOOD AND DRINK SHOWCASE

**LOCATION: BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER RESIDENCE,
HILLSIDE, 15 BEAUMONT ROAD, MARAVAL**

WEDNESDAY 24TH APRIL 2024

TIME: 5:00PM

Salutations

- Her Excellency Ms. Harriet Cross – British High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago
- Mr. Randall Karim, Permanent Secretary, MTI
- Ms Carina Cockburn- Country Representative for the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)
- Mr. Stephen Twinings- Twinings Tea
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Members of the Business Community
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good evening.

- I am delighted to deliver remarks at the inaugural GREAT British Food and Drink showcase in Trinidad and Tobago. Events like these are testament of the strong commercial relations enjoyed between the United Kingdom (UK) and Trinidad and Tobago.
- The UK is home to many of the world's innovative, good-tasting and in-demand food and drink products. Today's showcase provides a lucrative opportunity for greater networking between British and local businesses to explore new partnerships and relationships thereby facilitating greater market access opportunities.
- Combining high-quality products with cutting-edge technology, the UK is at the forefront of innovation in the Food and Drink industry with popular global, legacy brands such as Johnny Walker Black, Ribena, Lucozade--I point out that Lucozade is now made in Trinidad for Suntory and that's the kind of synergies that we are looking for, and are happy about--Hellmann's and Cadbury. In addition, the

formerly British-owned Peardrax Brand is now wholly owned by a company in Trinidad and Tobago, Caribbean Distributors Partners Ltd., part of the Agostini Group and so, you see the relationship works to the betterment of both sides.

- We understand the strength of the Food and Drink industry to the UK economy. (According to data from the Department of Business and Trade, the Food and Drink industry is the UK's largest manufacturing sector by turnover, valued at £104 billion (US \$128 billion) in 2023.)
- Our figures are not quite there, but the Food and Beverage sector is very important to us in Trinidad and Tobago as well.

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Trinidad and Tobago-UK Bilateral Trade Relations

- With respect to our overall trade performance with the UK, we continue to experience a trade deficit despite the energy and non-energy products that we expect to be exporting to the UK, but we are going to continue working on ensuring that those figures are increased, particularly on the non-energy side.

- We too will be working to ensure that we get some more of our brands into the UK, in addition to brands such as Angostura and Chief Brand Products that are already successfully exporting to the UK.
- (Within the Food and Beverage sector, for the period 2022 and 2023 (Jan–Aug), Trinidad and Tobago has been a net importer from the UK. While Trinidad and Tobago’s main exports to the UK are Methanol and energy-related products, some food and beverage products, such as the world-renowned Aromatic Bitters and some alcoholic beverages, have been quite successful in penetrating the UK market. Moreover, the top food and drink imports from the UK included whiskey, chocolate and cheese.)
- As you may know-- and this would serve both sides—that in order to increase trade between both countries, we have appointed a Commercial Attaché in London, Ms. Adana Taylor. She is attached to the High Commission there and works with businesses, both local and in the UK, to ensure that we increase trade activity and other types of relationships. We want to ensure that many of those in the culinary profession in the UK also use our products such as cocoa in fine dining and other restaurants that the UK is so well known for.

- Today's event is also an amplification of efforts to promote greater trade in food and beverage products between both countries. The GREAT British Food Programme capitalizes on the growing appetite for British food and beverage products in other countries and connects British food and drink producers with international buyers, agents and distributors.
- This infusion of British products into Trinidad and Tobago will certainly enhance Trinidad and Tobago's culinary experience. It will also promote greater commercial and economic opportunities among producers, importers, exporters and distributors. What we are doing is utilizing the formal relationship formed through the CARIFORUM-UK Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which, amongst other benefits, permits Trinidad and Tobago exporters' preferential, duty-free market access opportunities into the UK.
- In closing, I again congratulate and thank Her Excellency for introducing this initiative in Trinidad and Tobago, which will solidify the trading relationship and strengthen economic ties between both countries.

I thank you.