



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Trade and Industry

Nestle 110th Anniversary Celebration

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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

AUGUST 19TH, 2024

SALUTATIONS

- The Honourable Kazim Hosein, Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries
- The Honourable Foster Cummings, Minister of Youth Development and National Service
- His Excellency Gustavo Martinez Pandiani, Ambassador of Argentina
- Her Excellency Natalie Campbell-Rodriques, High Commissioner of Jamaica
- His Excellency Victor Meléndez, Ambassador of Mexico
- Other Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Mr. Randall Karim, Permanent Secretary, of the Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Mr. Eduardo Garcia, Market Head, Nestlé Anglo-Dutch Caribbean and other Nestlé executives
- Members of the Media
- Specially invited guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my honour to deliver the Keynote Address at this monumental milestone – **110 years of Nestle’s remarkable journey in the Caribbean**. Reaching such a milestone in this ever-changing global landscape, is truly a significant achievement. Nestle’s ability to maintain market presence for over a century is testament to the company’s resilience, adaptability and deep understanding of the Caribbean’s unique needs and culture.

My heartfelt congratulations to the management and staff of Nestle, both past and present, for your excellence and unwavering commitment to our region.

Today, employing approximately 600 persons across 22 countries in the Caribbean through Nestlé Trinidad and Tobago Limited, Nestlé Jamaica Limited and Nestlé Caribbean Incorporated, your company has become a vital part of this region’s industrial tapestry, contributing significantly to social and economic development and employment within the manufacturing sector.

Not only is your factory in Trinidad and Tobago, a well-known branded landmark but your company’s brands have become seamlessly woven into the fabric of our Caribbean way of life, satisfying generations of consumers throughout their life’s stages with locally manufactured products such as Proud Land Milks, Green Butterfly and Orchard and other popular brands such as Nestum, Klim, Milo and Maggi, with one being found in every Caribbean household today.

Impact and Achievements

Today, it is only fitting that we reflect on the profound impact and significant achievements of Nestle to the growth of the food and beverage sector in Trinidad and Tobago and in our Region. In addition to being a major supplier to the domestic market, in 2023, Nestlé’s exports from Trinidad and Tobago were valued at approximately TT\$ 54.4 million, reaching 17 countries within the Caribbean.

One noteworthy recognition, which is exemplary for other manufacturers is the resounding theme at the heart of Nestle’s success, which is **innovation**. Consumers and stakeholders have been able to benefit from the **application of innovation at every stage of Nestle’s operations which have allowed it to produce high quality and new products**.

As is well known, the link between the primary and manufacturing sectors is critical to sustainability and growth of the economy. To strengthen **supplier** relations, Nestle has developed sectoral linkages between the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, specifically supporting the development of the local dairy industry, with a number of initiatives to assist farmers over the years. The recent (March 2023) investment in the Turure Model Farm Project in Sangre Grande will create a self-sustaining circular system on the farm and implement new technologies and strategies to boost dairy production. I was pleased to hear that this model is being rolled out with 15 dairy farmers across Trinidad.

In February of this year, I had the opportunity to meet with some of the employees of the *Nestle Needs YOUth Initiative* and I was happy to note that the Programme was inclusive to youths with special needs. Nestle's contribution to the **wider Caribbean region** is evident through its initiatives such as *Milo Games*, *Nestle for Healthier Kids* and *Wellness on Wheels Programmes* which goes beyond commercial interests and geared toward the development of the Caribbean people.

I also must take a moment to recognize Nestle's business continuity efforts during the pandemic to ensure that much-needed food and beverage products remained available throughout the country. Despite unprecedented challenges, production continued smoothly, and the focused management of the company's supply chain ensured uninterrupted product availability to retail partners and consumers.

The citizens of our country, your consumers, continue to benefit from the company's agility and adaptability, being able to rapidly respond to the changing demands and evolving lifestyles and preferences of consumers over the years.

I have had the opportunity to witness first-hand the integration of cutting-edge technologies, new infrastructure and new processes implemented at Nestle. I am always pleased to be a part of these revolutionary events:

- a memorable one was the new 200ml factory line to manufacture lunch-kit sized options of the Orchard Brand in 2019, in addition to the reduction in sugar content and introduction of new recipes. All of which made Nestle so very deserving of the *Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association's Innovator of the Year Award* in 2019;

- another impressive feat was the launch of the new Nature's Heart line of plant-based milks in 2022, which not only established your company as the first mover in the manufacture of dairy milk alternatives in the region but also complemented regional initiatives to support import substitution and improve food security.

At Nestle, your forward-thinking approach has been the engine of your success. We saw this with the pioneering of the Ultra High Temperature (UHT) process back in 1972, which facilitated packaging of milk in tetra pak packaging, increasing shelf life.

The **Government** of Trinidad and Tobago values the contribution of Nestle, which is underpinned by a mutual commitment to the country's economic growth, public health and sustainable development. The Ministry of Trade and Industry is pleased to continually engage and support your management on your company's operations, innovations and future plans and I am always very happy to welcome the new executives of Nestle and to continually build on our strong relationship.

Looking Forward

As we look to the future, I am confident that Nestlé will continue to lead the way in this new era characterised by environmental sustainability, digital transformation and food security, amongst other areas. Your pioneering work in these areas is aligned with the Government's focus on green manufacturing and the strengthening of regional value chains, nearshoring and building food security in the region through events such as the Agri-Expo 2024 which concluded yesterday, of which Nestle was a part of and a sponsor.

I invite Nestle to continue to invest and expand your operations in Trinidad and Tobago as there exists vast opportunity and potential for growth. This is supported by the recent IMF report which shows that our economy remains a stable one and projects 2.4% expansion of real GDP in 2024. The Government continues to create a facilitative environment for investment as we continue to negotiate new trade agreements, the most recent being with Chile and Curacao, to secure preferential access for Trinidad and Tobago's products and competitive inputs into manufacturing. We have even gone a step further to put the right mechanism in place to support access into new and existing markets through the newly established Trade and Investment Agency and placed commercial officers and trade attaches in select countries.

In addition, the Government continues to invest in our people, through national apprenticeship programmes specifically for the Manufacturing Sector, contributing to a strengthened and highly skilled workforce.

The robust incentive framework for the manufacturing sector, including import duty concessions remain available to support the manufacture of new products by Nestle, along with the new, recently fully proclaimed Special Economic Zones Regime providing a range of incentives to support further investment. As a beneficiary under the old Free Zones Act, the Ministry welcomes Nestle's application under the new Regime.

Conclusion

On behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and indeed, the countless lives you have touched across the Caribbean, I extend sincere congratulations to Nestle on this incredible achievement, which is not only extraordinary and commendable but also crucial for generations to come. There is indeed a lot for you to celebrate and reflect upon. Here's to 110 years of success in Trinidad and Tobago and to continuing to make a positive impact on our country and region in the future.

I thank you.