

**FAO CONFERENCE, THIRTY-NINTH SESSION, ROME, 6-13 JUNE 2015**

**BRIEFING DOCUMENT FOR THE GENERAL DEBATE TO BE HELD UNDER ITEM 10:**

**REVIEW OF THE STATE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE RE: BREAKING THE CYCLE OF  
RURAL POVERTY BY STRENGTHENING RURAL RESILIENCE: SOCIAL PROTECTION AND  
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**

**Presenter:**

**Ms Desdra Bascombe**

**Permanent Secretary**

**Ministry of Food Production**

Thank you chairperson,

Prime Ministers

Heads of Governments and their representatives

Colleagues

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning.

I wish to take this opportunity on behalf of the Government and people of the **Republic of Trinidad and Tobago** to congratulate the Director General on his re election for another term of office and wish him well as he seeks to rationalize the operations of this important Organization which he leads.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Conference document postulates that a comprehensive and proactive strategy is required to overcome hunger and extreme poverty and opines that social protection combined with productive support plays a pivotal role in this fight. It is also being suggested that, family farms in rural areas are intrinsic in the battle against poverty.

## **Let me begin with an overview of Hunger and Extreme Poverty Trends and a Review of World Agriculture trends**

The developing world has set 2025 as the deadline to eradicate hunger in their regions, through national and regional actions to contribute towards food and nutrition security. In fact, more than half of developing countries have achieved the Millennium Development Goal target of halving undernourishment by 2015. However, 800 million people still experience chronic hunger, with the global economic and financial crisis and conflicts being contributing factors.

## **Some have theorized that one of the mechanisms for breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty and Hunger is by strengthening rural resilience through Social Protection and Sustainable Agricultural Development**

In fact, it is generally agreed that economic growth is essential to reducing poverty, but is hostage to economic and financial crises. History has shown that countries in prolonged crisis face a combination of these factors. Consequently, it is imperative that governments become more proactive and develop comprehensive strategies to provide support to the vulnerable. These actions should address the **root causes** of poverty and not only the symptoms. There should also be some elements of sustainability in these programmes. This requires **system-wide** action into broader policy domains such as public health, education and agriculture and the food system in general, coupled with productive support.

## **You may wonder, why focus on rural areas and agriculture?**

Rural areas are where extreme poverty and food insecurity are most prevalent. This is more prevalent in developing countries. Approximately 75% of farms in these countries are smaller than one (1) hectare, with these farming families being poor and food insecure themselves.

## **Let us now look at a move from Safety Nets to Social Protection Programmes**

Social protection seeks to ensure that the needs of the poorest are met. Vulnerable households face reduced consumption, face persistent deprivation and are outside the production cycle, thereby providing the rationale for interventions. Social protection comprises all initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor.

## **Let us now examine this issue of breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty and Hunger through Social Protection and Productive Support**

## **Let us summarize TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'S SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES**

**1) Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme:** This is a short-term food assistance and development programme aimed at providing social protection, by **promoting nutritional and food security to vulnerable households**. The Programme will enable families in need to purchase nutritionally sound basic food items, thereby enhancing the health and dignity of those households and reducing the incidents of poverty.

**2) National Poverty Reduction and Eradication Programme:** This Programme is about:

- Fostering an **integrated approach to poverty reduction**, through **stakeholder partnerships**.
- Engaging civil society groups/network as **strategic partners** for poverty reduction in Trinidad and Tobago.

This Programme aims to improve the delivery of poverty reduction services by the decentralization of poverty interventions through the establishment of regional Social and Human Development Councils.

**3) Unemployment Relief Programme (URP):** A social safety net programme aimed at providing **short term employment opportunities**.

#### **SUMMARY OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY INITIATIVES IN CARICOM**

- A regional **Food and Nutrition Security Policy** was endorsed by CARICOM as a comprehensive and integrated framework for action and to guide the interventions of the Region's development partners in the field of food and nutrition security. Member States were encouraged to implement the recommendations of the ***Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy***.
- Another strategy was the establishment of an Information and Early Warning System for Food and Nutrition Security in CARICOM.
- Preparation of **National Food and Nutrition Security Policies and Action Plans**: organized by CARICOM.
- Activities to strengthen regional agricultural development with a focus on supporting the **key regional policies and strategies** in agriculture and food and nutrition security have begun, geared towards promoting regionalism and fostering the regional strategy with the ***Community Agriculture Policy and the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy***.

Ladies and gentlemen these are just a few of the key initiatives which we are embarking upon in the Caribbean region in general and in Trinidad and Tobago in particular.