



**REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**PRESENTATION**

**BY**

**THE MINISTER IN THE  
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, LAND & FISHERIES**

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE AVINASH SINGH**

**ON**

**TRINITARIO COCOA WEBINAR SERIES 2022**

**Episode 2**

**Trinidad and Tobago:**

**An International Centre for Cocoa Excellence and Innovation**

*Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022*

*10:00 a.m.*

- **Minister of Trade and Industry, Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon;**
- **Ambassador, Delegation of the European Union to Trinidad and Tobago, His Excellency Peter Cavendish;**
- **Director, Cocoa Research Centre, The University of the West-Indies, Professor Pathmanathan Umaharan;**
- **President, Investment Promotion Agency of Trinidad and Tobago (InvesTT), Mr. Sekou Alleyne;**
- **Chairman, Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI), Mr. Hayden Ferreira;**
- **Other specially invited guests;**
- **Members of the Media;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Good morning and thank you for having extended to me the privilege of addressing this, the second Episode of the Trinitario Cocoa Webinar Series for 2022.

Permit me as well to extend my heartfelt courtesies to the organisers of this event, and in particular, to Ms. Jessie-May Ventour - the veteran media and communications practitioner who has the distinct honour of serving as moderator for this morning's session.

Allow me at this juncture, to capture as briefly and as comprehensively as I can – the Ministry's vision and strategies on the revitalisation of the cocoa industry and the many agricultural and agro-processing incentives available to farmers and entrepreneurs within the sector.

### **Ministry's vision and strategies on the revitalisation of the cocoa industry**

In its thrust to diversify Trinidad and Tobago's largely energy-based economy, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, has identified cocoa as a strategic crop because of its global potential and Trinidad and Tobago's comparative advantage as an exclusive fine/flavour cocoa producer; a status which it has continued to retain. The country's reputation for this premium crop continues to be cemented through its successes at the International Cocoa

Awards, growing demand and the premium prices it fetches in the global marketplace.

It is acknowledged that cocoa production has been on the decline and the country is not benefitting from the full potential of the crop in terms of foreign exchange earnings, contribution to food security, increased entrepreneurial activity, agrotourism, employment and rural development.

The Ministry is committed to revitalising and expanding the sector through the development of the entire cocoa value chain and by making it an integral part of the country's agroforestry systems thereby creating environmental, economic and social benefits for citizens. The Ministry is pursuing this objective through its implementation agency, the Cocoa Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago, which is tasked with implementing various strategies, which include:

1. Increasing the national production of high quality fine/flavour cocoa beans from current acreages in the short/medium term to serve

mainstream fine /flavour export markets, ultra-niche export markets and domestic value add markets;

2. Creating and managing a recognisable TT Brand image to assure that our cocoa and its products maintain their high-quality reputation in the global marketplace;
3. Developing new acreages and rehabilitating abandoned acreages to boost production to meet growing global demand for sustainable fine/flavour cocoa;
4. Training farmers to grow cocoa using different cropping systems such as agroforests and multi companion cropping which are more sustainable in the long term as they increase farmer earnings, contribute to national food production and food security and preserve the environment;

5. Supporting and promoting the development, manufacture and use of local cocoa value added products and seeking lucrative export markets for these products;
6. Promoting agrotourism by creatively using Trinidad and Tobago as a cocoa destination;
7. Increasing entrepreneurial activity in cocoa to boost rural development and employment; and
8. Supporting and facilitating private investment in the sector by identifying cocoa lands available for investment and brokering discussions with potential investors.

Despite the challenges facing the sector and the Ministry's implementation agency, there has been some success in rolling out these strategies and excellence and innovation in cocoa is being pursued by activities such as:

1. Promoting quality by providing training in processing techniques that have resulted in farmers producing very high- quality beans with unique and exceptional flavours. These farmers' achievements have been showcased via the National Cocoa Awards which led to the country capturing five (5) international awards in the two most recent editions of the Cocoa of Excellence Programme in France. These processing techniques have been formalised in a Total Quality Management System for producing fine/flavour cocoa which is being rolled out to more farmers;
  
2. Promoting quality by creating and registering a quality Certification Mark with the Intellectual Property Office and plans have been developed to launch this Mark internationally;
  
3. Supporting improvements in production volume and yields by executing trials of new fertilisers and fungicides;

4. Exploring innovative, non-invasive and environmentally safe ways to secure cocoa pods from pest damage by conducting trials of a new parrot deterrent device;
5. Assisting farmers with efficiency improvements and cost savings by implementing an equipment rental programme to encourage farmers to use mechanised pruning;
6. Responding to the food safety demands of major export markets through collaboration with the Cocoa Research Centre at The University of the West Indies (UWI), to conduct cadmium research and demonstrate cadmium mitigation techniques on numerous farms across the country;  
and
7. Addressing the information needs of stakeholders and improving communication through a collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) to develop a digital market intelligence system for the sector.

## **Agricultural and Agro-processing incentives available to farmers and entrepreneurs within the sector**

The Ministry is also increasing its focus on providing support to cocoa farmers and entrepreneurs by:

1. Mobilising resources to increase the supply of high-quality planting material that are disease resistant and high yielding and to continue its work to develop new varieties;
2. Conducting critical research through its Research Division and in collaboration with the Cocoa Research Centre of the University of the West Indies and ensuring that these research are implemented in the field; and
3. Providing a range of growth stimulating incentives to farmers to defray costs in land preparation, soil conservation and amelioration, water conservation, establishment of infrastructure, security and

establishment/expansion of value add processing facilities. Details of these latter incentives can be obtained by contacting the Ministry and by visiting its website ([agriculture.gov.tt](http://agriculture.gov.tt)).

The Ministry is pleased to partner with the Ministry of Trade and Industry and looks forward to deepening the collaboration of our respective implementing agencies – the Cocoa Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited and InvesTT – as well as with other supporting agencies to develop and extract the full potential of this unique cocoa sector.

Do have a very insightful and productive panel discussion and Q&A session ahead and all the best for the remainder of this webinar and for the upcoming ones.

I thank you all.