

**WELCOME ADDRESS AND OPENING REMARKS AT MEDIA RELEASE OF
THE PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF THE 2004 AGRICULTURAL CENSUS**

UNDP Resident Coordinator

Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Affairs,

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Planning and Development

Representatives of the various Farmer Organizations

Staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Affairs

Staff of the Central Statistical Office

Other distinguished guests, members of the media, ladies and gentlemen.

Good afternoon and welcome to the Media Release of the Preliminary Results of the 2004 Agricultural Census. It is indeed an honour to welcome this august body and chair this event.

The Central Statistical Office began planning for the 2004 Agricultural Census since 2001. The Cabinet of the Republic Trinidad and Tobago gave its approval on March 13, 2003 and agreed to the conduct of an Agricultural Census in 2004 at an estimated cost of \$17.6 million.

Today, I am extremely happy and delighted to share with you the preliminary results of the 2004 Agricultural Census.

The Central Statistical Office has been in the business of collecting, compiling, analyzing and disseminating official economic and social statistics for over fifty (50) years. This organization possesses many unique skills, which are not easily available in the market place. Hence the Central Statistical Office must be in a continuous learning mode, allocating resources towards the development of experts in the areas of sampling, national income, economic statistics and social statistics. The Central Statistical Office follows international best practices; adhere to internationally accept concepts, definitions, classifications and methodologies. Ladies and Gentlemen, it is within this environment of international acceptability that we present the preliminary results of the 2004 Agricultural Census.

There exists in the Central Statistical Office the practice of documenting the methodologies for all major surveys and data series. These methodologies are published and are available to the public. In this light, the preparation of the 2004 Agricultural Census Administrative Report is underway and in a similar vein work has commenced on the 2004 Agricultural Census Report. A data dissemination strategy is in place, and I give the assurance once more that the data collected will be available to all our stakeholders.

In the Central Statistical Office there are both technical and professional staffs who have worked on three consecutive Population and Housing Censuses, and two Agricultural Censuses, comprising a period of at least 20-25 years. There is a dedicated cadre of staff in the department who has devoted their entire working life to the production of statistics and who takes pride in their work and strives to lift the image of the Central Statistical Office.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we glance into the future, we see the Central Statistical Office as the premier information and research institution, committed to being a learning and innovative organization, staffed by well motivated personnel and enhanced through continuous quality improvement, to provide timely, high quality and relevant goods and services utilizing state of the art technology for customer satisfaction.

For this vision to be a reality the proposed restructuring of the Central Statistical Office must gain momentum. The internal restructuring committee of the Central Statistical Office envisages an independent organization outside the purview of a Ministry and more in line of a Statutory Authority.

There are many challenges and opportunities ahead.

- There exist the challenges of changing the culture of the organization, embracing a user culture where the needs of the stakeholders become paramount.
- There is the challenge of coordinating the statistical activities of the various line ministries and at the same time establishing standard concepts, definitions and methodologies.
- There is the challenge of formulating a strategy for encouraging stakeholders to make greater use of the available statistics i.e. developing a statistical culture in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. In this strategy the Central Statistical Office must also address the low response rate to our various surveys.
- There is opportunity to make and implement recommendations on how to standardize and improve data quality, with respect to accuracy, timeliness relevance and reliability.
- There is the opportunity to continue working with the international agencies, like the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), International Development Bank (IDB) The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nation Statistical Department (UNSD) and the World Tourism Organizations. These agencies have recognized the areas where we fallen short and are prepared to provide the necessary assistance.

Ladies and Gentlemen on this occasion I wish to single out the contribution of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). This organization has made a sterling contribution to the 2004 Agricultural Census. They have been our partners since the planning stages of the Census and along the way have provided several consultancies in the area of Agricultural Statistics. Through their generous support, the Central Statistical Office was able to introduce the Scanning Technology in 2004 Agricultural Census. A special thank to the FAO for their continued support.

Taking a cue from my concluding statements it is with great pleasure that I invite to the podium, Dr. Inyang Ebong Harstrup, United Nations Resident Coordinator and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Representative to Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Suriname.