

**Address By Mr. Joseph Howard, Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Planning and
Development**

**RELEASE OF THE PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE 2004 AGRICULTURAL
CENSUS**

Mr. Chairman,

**UNDP Resident Coordinator and Representative of the Food and Agricultural
Organisation, Dr. Inyang Ebong-Harstrup**

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (MALMR),

Mr. Trevor Murray

Director of Statistics, Mr. Peter Pariag

Principal Statistical Officer, Mr. Basook Mahadeo

Representatives of the various Farmer Organisations

Members of the Media

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

My apologies for the absence of the Minister of Planning and Development, The Honourable
Camille Robinson-Regis.

It is indeed an honor and pleasure for me to be here today to share with you the preliminary
results of what represents the culmination of an arduous and challenging yet successful
undertaking by the staff of the Agricultural Census Unit of the Central Statistical Office
(CSO) over the last nine (9) months. These results are contained in the Preliminary Report of
the 2004 Agricultural Census, which we are releasing at today's function. The information
garnered as a result of their efforts during this exercise could not have come at a more

opportune time. Given the Government's vision and thrust towards developed country status by 2020, the data will play a significant role in informing the many plans, programmes and policy decisions that we will be required to make so as to achieve our goals for a vibrant, efficient and competitive Agricultural Sector that can effectively contribute to economic diversification and employment generation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, prior to 2004, the last Agricultural Census in Trinidad and Tobago was conducted in 1982. Since then, there have been many significant institutional and structural changes in the National Economy, which have impacted severely on the Agricultural Sector and its stakeholders. It has therefore become extremely imperative to establish an up-to-date, reliable and comprehensive national information system of food and agricultural statistics which would assist not only in determining the assets and productive capacity of the Agricultural Sector but also assist in the development of programmes and strategies relating to food, agriculture, land distribution and rural development as we compete in an increasingly globalized economy. It is with this in mind therefore and within this context, that the 2004 Agricultural Census was undertaken.

Apart from being designed to urgently fill the void in benchmark agricultural data, the undertaking of this Census also marks Trinidad and Tobago's participation in the Program of World Censuses of Agriculture for the decade 2000-2010. The Ministry of Planning and Development, Central Statistical Office (CSO) undertook the gigantic task of conducting the 2004 Agricultural Census in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (MALMR) and with the technical assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In addition, a Temporary Agricultural Census Unit was also established to plan and manage the day-to-day operations of the exercise, as well as to support all the other related activities of the Census.

As an indication of the magnitude of the exercise, the planning process of the 2004 Agricultural Census was initiated in October 2002. The specific objectives of the census were:

- 1. To collect data on the structure of agricultural production in the country.*
- 2. To provide a frame for use in updating existing current survey registers.*
- 3. To obtain benchmark data for improving current crop production.*
- 4. To obtain detailed data on livestock characteristics.*
- 5. To obtain detailed data on various inputs used for agricultural production, and*
- 6. To provide a database for the determination of rural income.*

Two (2) Cabinet Appointed Committees were also established to provide technical advice and overall direction in the planning and execution of the census so that its overall objectives could be achieved.

- A Technical Advisory Committee, chaired by the Director of Statistics and comprising representatives of Central Statistical Office (CSO), Ministry of Finance, Agricultural Development Bank (ADB), National Agricultural Marketing Development Company (NAMDEVCO), University of the West Indies (UWI) and other research agencies, to determine data needs, and
- A National Advisory Committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (MALMR), comprising representatives of various agricultural institutions, farmer organization and other stakeholders where all proposals were discussed and evaluated.

In addition, a number of data user and producer workshops were held in both Trinidad and Tobago in order to solicit the views and recommendations of the various stakeholders, especially the farming community.

Another critical aspect of the 2004 Agricultural Census was the field enumeration phase, which was conducted during the period 6th July to 15th August 2004. A total of 962 field staff including enumerators, editors and supervisors were involved. Data was collected on all aspects of primary agriculture including the holding, holder, population and employment, land use, crops, livestock, machinery and equipment, selected practices and facilities used in agriculture. Activities such as fisheries, forestry, hunting and game production were not included since by international standards these are not considered primary agricultural production.

For the 2004 Census, the CSO was, and continues to be the beneficiary of technical assistance from the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) particularly in the areas institutional strengthening and capacity building. The census data was captured electronically using two (2) High Speed Image Scanners, which greatly reduced the time required for inputting data obtained by enumerators in the field. As a result of this assistance the CSO will be better equipped and positioned to respond by providing data in a timelier manner from future censuses and surveys. It should be noted that this is the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean that agricultural census data was captured using image-scanning technology. The smooth transition in the implementation and use of the modern data capture technology was made possible as the staff of the Central Statistical Office (CSO) embraced and greatly accepted the challenges associated with the new technology. I wish to place on the record the Government's heartfelt thanks to the Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and their local representatives for their continuing assistance and commitment to this exercise.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the stakeholders and in particular all farmers who co-operated with the enumerators and willingly gave of their time and provided the invaluable information, which is contained in this report. While it is expected that the data from the 2004 Census will provide a source of guidance to the Ministry of Planning and Development and other Government Ministries in informing policy decisions, I also hope that it would be fully utilized by academics, researchers, students, farmers and other stakeholders in making their contributions to the thrust for sustainable agricultural development in Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank You.

April 27, 2005