



The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**YOUTH AGRICULTURAL HOMESTEAD PROGRAMME (YAHP)
ORIENTATION SESSION**

Message By

Dr. the Honourable Nyan Gadsby-Dolly

Government Campus Plaza,

Corner Ajax and Richmond Streets,

Friday 13th May, 2022

10:00 a.m.

SALUTATIONS:

- The Honourable Foster Cummings- Minister of Youth Development and National Service
- The Honourable Camille Robinson-Regis- Minister of Housing and Urban Development
- Senator the Honourable Kazim Hosein- Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries
- Senator the Honourable Avinash G. Singh- Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries
- Senator the Honourable Nigel de Freitas- Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries
- Mr. Farook Hosein- Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth Development and National Service
- The First Cohort of 200 trainees of the Youth Agricultural Homestead Programme (YAHP)
- Invited guests
- Members of the media

Good morning ladies and gentlemen,

Congratulations to the 200 trainees that make up the first cohort of the Youth Agricultural Homestead Programme (YAHP)! You are certainly blessed to be a part of this two-year training opportunity that will shape you into successful agricultural entrepreneurs. The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries must be commended for this initiative that offers our nation's youth the opportunity to positively and sustainably contribute to the global economy.

Discovering new methods of reigniting a passion for agriculture among youth has always been a high priority item for the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Getting youth to build careers in the agricultural sector will not only create employment for them, but it will also go a long way towards producing food for our people. With T&T's 2021 food import bill estimated at \$5.7 billion dollars, it makes sense for the Government to invest in the expansion of the local agriculture sector by encouraging young people to become committed to agriculture.

The World Health Organization (WHO) predicts that by 2050, 7 out of 10 people will live in a city, with more young people than ever before moving to urban areas to find work and abandoning farming in rural areas. If these trends continue, the number of young farmers will continue to decline and further negatively impact our nation's

ability to feed itself. Farming is in danger of becoming a dying profession. One way that the Ministry of Education has been working to mitigate this crisis is to encourage agricultural activities in schools. The Curriculum Division is currently working on a gardening programme that integrates literacy and numeracy to teach agriculture in a practical way. This co-curricular approach is expected to awaken a desire in our youth to pursue agriculture as a preferred career.

An example of this would be the excellent work being done with young people through the Laventille Morvant School Improvement Project where the 4H club at Excel Beetham GPS and St Barb's GPS are being utilized to teach agriculture through kitchen gardens. Just last week they reaped their first set of crops which included various types of herbs that are commonly used as seasonings. 4H clubs are introducing similar projects to several schools to promote agriculture.

The leadership of the Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of collaborations and a multi-pronged approach to creating young Agri-entrepreneurs. In 2019, the then Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts launched the '**Grow it Yourself**' project which promotes home gardening. This initiative was successful in getting many young people, families and students

involved in growing food. It continues today under the new Ministry with specific categories for young persons.

Despite the global decline in interest for agriculture as a career, Trinidad and Tobago can be successful in growing our agricultural sector, expanding our food and beverage processing sectors and other downstream business. In this way, other young people will be aware that farming can be a rewarding career with opportunities to trade their produce on global markets. It is important to defy stereotypes and demonstrate that there is a future for young people in the agriculture industry.

As new technologies become available, agriculture is less labour intensive, with crops that are less prone to pests and it is now possible to grow more food with less physical input. Our Government is ensuring that our youth are trained in harnessing new innovations whilst mastering the traditional techniques that are still relevant today. This balance of the old and new holds the key to resolving the most challenging factors facing farmers today.

Farming offers younger generations a chance to make a positive difference by growing enough food to feed the world. Those who choose careers in agriculture now have the opportunity to be the generation that ends world hunger and alleviates malnutrition, as well as diversifying traditionally fossil-fuel dependent economies.

Just like any other profession, agriculture has its challenges but if young people are offered an education in agriculture and the opportunity to innovate, then the agriculture industry can become attractive to youth again. Congratulations again to the trainees and I wish you all the best in the future. May God continue to bless your efforts as you press forward towards excellence.

Thank you all.