



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, LAND & FISHERIES
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

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MEDIA RELEASE

ADB Launches Cocoa Connector Loan

November 03, 2020:- On Tuesday 3rd October, 2020, the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) launched its “Cocoa Connector Loan – “Valuing Rich Traditions”. The Initiative is a strategic collaboration between the ADB and the Cocoa Development Company Limited of T&T (CDCTTL). The programme is specifically designed to fund value chain activities of selected farmers in the eighteen (18) cocoa clusters under the purview of the CDCTTL, and will also serve as a catalyst to revive the country’s cocoa industry through a loan facility arrangement with the ADB.

Speaking at the launch in Talparo, Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, Senator the Honourable Clarence Rambharat said, the most important thing to consider in accessing a loan is the ability to service it. As with any investment in the agriculture sector, there must be careful consideration before one makes a commitment. It involves examining current market trends, cash flow and associated risks, in addition to the issue of pricing. In this regard, he encouraged both State Agencies (ADB & CDCTTL) under the remit of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, to work closely with its stakeholders in the various communities by sharing their professional knowledge. This intervention will greatly assist them in making better decisions, which will not only be financially viable but will also have long term sustainability and continued success in the industry, the Minister said.

In particular reference to the cocoa industry, Minister Rambharat alluded to multiple streams of local data which in his opinion, could not be ignored. Among those identified were the “*significantly low*” production levels due to the farmer’s inability to “maximize” optimally, the yields of their cocoa trees, the lack of consistency / standardisation on the processing side of the industry (namely in terms of flavour / taste) and the current, technological challenges to predict what the Trinitario seedling would produce in “a few years down the road”. With respect to the latter, he said that both the Ministry and the University of the West Indies (UWI) are presently engaged in a deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and finger printing project which will assist farmers in alleviating the issue.

Also speaking at the launch were the Chairman of the ADB, Mr. Sekou Mark; Chairman of the CDCTTL, Mrs. Jacqueline Rawlins; Chief Executive Officer of the ADB, Mr. Sheivan Ramnath and the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the CDCTTL, Mrs. Mala Partap.

About the 'Cocoa Connector Loan- It targets progressive farmers who are considered by the CDCTTL to be early adopters and innovators in their rehabilitation programme, as well as micro-processors and chocolatiers who participate in the cocoa value chain. Its value propositions entail enabling borrowers to access 100% funding support and to negotiate a short to medium-term loan of up to \$25K. This sum is repayable at 5% effective interest rate in Trinidad and at 4% (effective) in Tobago, over 24 – 48 months inclusive of a 6 to 8 month negotiable moratorium, by small monthly instalments and is expected to give adequate flexibility to acquire assets and meet working capital needs identified by the CDCTTL.

The loan package offers a simple 25% cash collateral option to speed loan access and reduce the cost of borrowing which may also be partially or fully sourced through the option to negotiate ADB's Certificate of Security (COS) with its built in savings opportunity.

The initiative is to be supported by a specific CDCTTL work plan and promotional outreach campaign developed collaboratively by CDCTTL's production team.

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Photo Captions

CCL 1:- Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, Senator the Honourable Clarence Rambharat, fashions some cocoa beans in the image of Trinidad and Tobago, during the tour of a cocoa plantation in Talparo, following the launch of the Cocoa Connector Loan – "Valuing Rich Traditions", on Tuesday 3rd November, 2020. Looking on is ADB's Corporate Manager, Communications, Ms. Dawn Daniel.

CCL 2:- Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, Senator the Honourable Clarence Rambharat (3rd from right), is flanked by cocoa farmers and staff of ADB and CDCTTL, following the launch of the Cocoa Connector Loan – "Valuing Rich Traditions", on Tuesday 3rd November, 2020, in Talparo.

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