

Mr Chair,

Excellencies,

1. There is a consensus on the need to ensure food security in our net food importing region. The question is how do we create agribased linkages to achieve this goal. True to say that we have maintained our umbilical cords with our colonial masters. It is also true that we have also sourced our food from places where it is cheaper.
2. If only captains of agriculture and agro-industry could talk to each other. I have in mind our Chambers of Commerce, Chambers of Agriculture, Professional associations, farmers, investors, even the middlemen. Why have they not met up to now?
3. There is need for platforms, special buyers-sellers meetings, exchange of people and information. There is also need for on imports, exports, production, market trends, market developments to be readily available for analysis and for commercial decisions. A dedicated website showing dynamic data will surely assist the process.
4. Let us create awareness on the competitive edge each of us have in agriculture. Let us find out how to create or improve our competitive edge and hence create opportunities for export and regional investments.
5. Creating linkages to improve agricultural practices through exchange of different levels of technology available in our region and even from outside the region.
6. Technology in agro-business is certainly required to move on the value chain and add value to our produce. The challenge is in specializing in core products, country or sub-region wise based on the competitive edge that each of us possess and that we can build further.
7. The challenge also lies in producing at lower costs, chemical-free and consumer-friendly produce or products that are competitive and affordable. We can also specialize in high end products for niche markets.

8. The media can certainly assist to create the conditions for linkages by broadcasting success stories, new projects, redesigned policies in agro-industry.
9. Our Parliament has last month passed the Seeds Bills. Our ambition is to set up a seeds industry to supply the region and particularly Africa which we see as the basket for the future. This pillar-to-be of our economy is based on our competitive edge, Mauritius being clean phytosanitarywise. No wonder China has indicated its intention to purchase the totality of our chemical-free tea production.
10. The Seeds industry is an example and an opportunity for linkages. We can join hands to do more.
11. Thank you.