

### Private Notice Question

*To ask Dr the Honourable Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries:-*

**Whether, in regard to the African Swine Fever epidemic in mainland Mauritius, he will state-**

- (a) why fair compensation is still not paid to pig breeders;**
- (b) whether monthly income support and free pig feed are available to all breeders;**
- (c) what are the breeding zones from which blood samples have been sent abroad, indicating the dates;**
- (d) whether the risk of permanent endemicity is very high;**
- (e) whether the Pig Section at the central Abattoir will re-open and repopulation start; and**
- (f) where matters stand in Rodrigues?**

### Reply

Mr Speaker, Sir

Allow me right from the outset to state that the epidemic of African Swine Fever prevailing in Mauritius is a matter of national concern and should be placed above party politics.

- (a)** The monthly income support as well as all other incentives and facilities, have been worked out by a Technical Committee in collaboration with the Federation of Pig-Breeders. These are based on the herd size of each farm. In addition, Government had on 19 October, 2007 approved the following measures:

- (i)** Existing Loan

The freezing of payment by breeders of loans contracted with the DBM together with interest payable thereon.

- (ii)** Relaunching of Activities

Government will provide the following support and guidance:-

- (a)** Supply of piglets free of charge;
- (b)** Provision of pig feed including transport facilities;
- (c)** Veterinary assistance and free drugs;
- (d)** Training of breeders by AREU;

- (e) Supply of day old chicks and ducklings to pig breeders willing to start another business in the meantime
  - (f) Supply of protective equipment to all pig breeders;
  - (g) Facilities under the Empowerment Programme will be extended to breeders wishing to move to new economic activities;
  - (h) Setting up of a special loan scheme at the DBM with a maximum ceiling of Rs200,000 per breeder at 5% interest rate repayable over a period of 7 years including a one year moratorium;
  - (i) Payment of a monthly direct income support to pig breeders affected as follows:
    - (a) Small Breeder (1-20 heads): Rs4,000
    - (b) Medium Breeder (21-50 heads) :Rs5,500
    - (c) Large Breeder (more than 51 heads) :Rs6,500
  - (j) Registered workers on pig farms affected will be entitled to social aid;
  - (k) Creation of a solidarity fund for livestock breeders;
  - (l) Non-affected farms will be given full technical support so that they may assist in the re-population of the national pig herd through the provision of piglets;
- (iii) Support from the Cooperative Development Fund (CDF)

A sum of Rs1m. will be put at the disposal of pig cooperative societies affected by the calamity to assist breeders to re-start their activities or to move to any other activity on a co-operative basis.

Mr. Speaker Sir,

Payment of direct income support to pig-breeders, provision of animal feed and the distribution of protective equipment over a period of one year is estimated at Rs 35 millions. In addition, the following measures have also been taken:

- (a) the Federation of Pig-Breeders has been authorized to import frozen pork cuts to supply butchers. This activity will generate additional revenue to the breeders;
- (b) Supply of day old chicks and ducklings to pig breeders. To date 2,000 chicks have already been distributed;
- (c) Meetings have been arranged with the Empowerment Programme to see how the pig-breeders can obtain further assistance to engage in existing and new activities. In this regard, the Empowerment Programme has decided to provide technical assistance in setting-up a networking company and assisting the Federation of Pig Breeders for financing of their project;
- (d) The services of an expert from the OIE, namely Dr. Gaston Funes, have been obtained upon request by my Ministry;
- (e) A request has been made to the FAO for the services of a laboratory expert to advise on techniques of rapid diagnosis using ELISA kit. The expert will be in Mauritius shortly.

On 16 November 2007, Government has decided to release an amount of Rs 1 million as seed capital from the Prime Minister's Solidarity Fund for the setting up of a Solidarity Fund under the aegis of my Ministry to cater for livestock breeders, victims of natural calamities and for animal disease, epidemic and pandemic.

- (i) Procedures are underway for the creation of the fund through regulations and for its eventual setting-up.
- (ii) An appeal has been made to the Private Sector (JEC and AHRIM among others) to contribute to the Fund. Wide publicity will be given to invite contribution to the Fund.

2. The quantum of the money collected to be paid to breeders affected by the African Swine Fever will be determined after consultation with the Federation of Pig-Breeders.

(b) A monthly income support is being paid to all breeders registered with AREU. Payment for the month of October has already been effected. With regards to feed, distribution is being made free of charge through the 24 feed sale centres on a priority basis to breeders in low risk areas. Breeders in high risk areas are being supplied feed on a pro-rata basis as follows:

| Categories    | Quantity allocated |              |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------|
| 1-20 heads    | 1 bag of 50 kg     | Weekly basis |
| 21-50 heads   | 2 bags of 50 kg    | "            |
| 51-100 heads  | 3 bags of 50 kg    | "            |
| 100 and above | 4 bags of 50 kg    | "            |

Breeders in low risk areas are being supplied with the normal feed ration. The actual production of feed at the Richelieu Feed Factory is 110 tons per month. Measures are being taken to increase production to meet the needs of breeders.

(c) Blood samples from the following breeding zones have been sent to the Ondertepoort Veterinary Institute (OVI) of South Africa:

| <b>Date</b>      | <b>Breeding zones</b>   |
|------------------|---|
| 11 October 2007  | St Martin, Roche Bois, Flacq  |
| 23 October 2007  | St Martin, Pailles, Albion  |
| 8 November 2007  | St Martin, Case Noyale, Albion, Calebasses, Roche Brunes, Rose Belle and St Hilaire |
| 15 November 2007 | St Martin, Palmar, Baie Topaze (Rodrigues) New Grove and Rose Belle                 |

The results for the last batch are still awaited. The results of previous batches are all negative, except for one case in Roche Bois.

(d) I am advised that it is very difficult to forecast the progression and outcome of a viral disease. Permanent endemicity will result following spread of the disease among the population of wild pigs. At present, the population of wild pigs is around 6,000 to 7,000 heads. So far, 3 sites namely Wolmar, Case Noyale and Roches Brunes

(Sodia) which is next to St Martin have been affected. However, it is to be noted that in these places, the animals (1700 in all) are reared on a feedlot system and are completely isolated from real wild life. Stamping procedures and sanitary disposal are in progress. The Forestry Services of my Ministry along with the Natural Parks and Conservation Services are working in very close collaboration with Veterinary Services with respect to implementation of strict bio-security and surveillance measures. Over the last two weeks, the number of cases reported island-wide for domestic pigs is on the decline with few sporadic outbreaks which are quickly attended to. As at 19 November 2007, 7,787 domestic pigs (deaths 1,751, animals stamped out 6,036) have been disposed under strict sanitary conditions. Thus, the risk of permanent endemicity, although not high at this moment, will have to be reassessed at the end of this year.

- (e) The Pig Section of the Abattoir was closed on 11 October 2007 and will be re-opened as soon as it is considered safe to authorize the transportation/movement of pigs to the abattoir. Transportation/ movement of pigs will be authorized when:
- (i) the stamping out process and the disinfection of the infected sites are completed; and
  - (ii) pigs in low risk areas have been tested and found to be free from the disease.

In the meantime, arrangements are in progress to receive pigs from Rodrigues for slaughter.

Repopulation will start once all necessary measures have been taken to ensure that the disease has been eradicated. It is proposed to use pig stocks from Rodrigues, Palmar Livestock Production Unit and farms found free of the disease for the repopulation process.

(f) Rodrigues

African Swine Fever has not affected the Porcine Population in Rodrigues. A visit was effected last week by a Veterinary team who assessed the Animal health situation in Rodrigues and reported that a normal; situation is prevailing in Rodrigues. The health of pigs housed at Baie Topaze Pig Breeding Station, including the 21 animals shipped from Mauritius to Rodrigues on 4th October, are in perfect health.

The team had several meetings with the Commissioner for Agriculture, the Crisis Committee which comprises of officials of Health, Customs, Environment, Police, Airport, Seaport and other Stakeholders.

Preventive measures are already in place on farms, and at the airport and seaport.

In the course of special meetings held with pig farmers, emphasis was laid on the importance of prevention against the disease.

In a dedicated session, Staff of the airport and seaport were again briefed about the importance of exercising extreme care at both points of entry.

The Commission for Agriculture has also offered to ship to Mauritius about 500 pigs for December 2007/January 2008 when demand for pork meat is high.

We are already working on this possibility, in consultation with the Federation of Breeders Ltd Mauritius Meat Authority.