

Mr Speaker, Sir,

I shall, with your permission, reply to PQs B/1051, B/1066 and B/1090 as they all relate to the African Swine Fever.

2. I am advised that the first signs of the disease were detected around the end of September last and confirmation was obtained on 17 October following tests carried out by a reference laboratory in South Africa, namely the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute.

3. We have no definite proof of the origin of the disease in Mauritius. It is highly suspected that the virus has been brought from Madagascar (where the African Swine Fever is prevalent) though the illegal entry of infected port meat products by passengers and sailors which might have been fed to pigs in the Roche Bois region.

4. My Ministry has been advised by the World Animal Health Organisation and the reference laboratory in South Africa that there is no cure for the disease and the only way to abate it is through the stamping out of all pigs on infected farms.

5. The pig breeders were immediately informed of the situation. They were also apprised of a number of measures being taken to prevent the spread of the disease to non-infected farms, given that the number of pigs dying from the disease was on the increase.

6. At the request of my Ministry, the World Animal Health Organisation provided the services of an Expert in the field for one week duration to assist us to address the situation.

7. The preventive measures taken are as follows:

(i) The Pig Section at the Central Abattoir was closed to prevent movement of pigs;

- (ii) The three clusters, i.e Roche Bois, Bassin Requin and St. Martin, were declared quarantine zones and restriction of movement of pigs, persons and vehicles was enforced in accordance with provisions of the Animal Diseases (Swine Fever) Regulations;
- (iii) an operation for the stamping out of pigs on infected farms has been conducted and is on-going;
- (iv) vigilance at the Port entry (Ports and Airport) has been re-inforced and passengers arriving from suspected countries are being checked;
- (v) dead pigs are being disposed on three sites, namely, two incineration sites at La Chaumière and Bassin Requin and one burial site at St. Martin;
- (vi) virucidal agent is being used at the Abattoir and on pig farms and vehicles for disinfection purposes;
- (vii) the Livestock Feed Factory at Richelieu has been isolated and access thereto to pig breeders and persons having access to pig farms is not authorized;

Mr Speaker, Sir,

8. Government is very much concerned regarding the difficult times through which the pig breeding community is going and in order to alleviate their hardships, the following measures have been taken:

- (i) freezing of payment by breeders of loans contracted with the DBM as well as interest payable thereon (some 60 breeders are concerned with this measure);
- (ii) free provision of pig feed including transport ;
- (iii) supply of protective equipment, i.e 2 pairs of gloves and 1 pair of boots to every breeder;

- (iv) setting up of a special loan scheme at the DBM with a maximum ceiling of Rs 200,000 per breeder at 5% interest rate repayable over a period of 7 years including one year moratorium;
- (v) payment of a monthly income support to pig breeders as follows:
 - (a) Small breeder (1-20 heads) : Rs 4,000
 - (b) Medium breeder (21-50 heads): Rs 5,500
 - (c) Large breeder (more than 50 heads): Rs 6,500
- (vi) supply of day old chicks and ducklings to pig breeders willing to engage in a new activity to earn some revenue pending the re-launching of their pig breeding business;
- (vii) extension of facilities under the Empowerment Programme to breeders wishing to move to new economic activities.

Mr Speaker, Sir,

9. A total of 496 pig breeders are registered with the Agricultural Research and Extension Unit of my Ministry. The population of domestic pigs before the outbreak of the African Swine Fever was estimated at 17,000 and that of wild pigs in forests and chassées at 6,000.

10. As at today, 1,324 pigs have died of the disease and 2,297 stamped out bringing the total number of death to 3,621. The bulk of the death has been registered at Bassin Requin, St. Martin and Abercrombie 138 pig breeders have encountered losses of animals due to the disease including one breeder of wild boar at Case Noyale.

11. It will take around nine months to one year for pig breeders whose farms have been infected to re-launch their business. My Ministry will ensure that piglets are made available to such breeders free of charge to re-start their activities. In that context, necessary precautions are being taken to preserve the pig farm at Palmar Livestock Unit as well as the pig

population in Rodrigues. I have also approached the FAO and the French Embassy in Mauritius for technical assistance.

12. We have paid a special attention to Rodrigues, with a view to preserve it from the African Swine Fever. Authorities in Rodrigues were invited to inform the Veterinary Services of all abnormalities in the pig population on that island. One Veterinary Officer was delegated to Rodrigues at the request of Rodrigues Regional Assembly, to provide technical assistance.

13. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already established an Emergency Committee on the same line as the Disaster Management Committee and the Avian Flu National Crisis Committee to monitor the situation closely and to take prompt remedial action for any problem that may crop up. I would finally wish to reassure the House that the African Swine Disease unlike the Avian Flu, is not transmissible from pigs to other animals and to human beings.

Pig Breeders

Small breeders 261

Medium breeders 121

Large breeders 114

Total **496**