

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS B/244/B245

B/244 The Honourable Third Member for La Caverne and
24.04.07 Phoenix (**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun**)

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

Whether, in regard to the projects for the derocking and land preparation for the benefit of small planters, he will state, since July 2005 todate (a) the regions where such projects have been undertaken, indicating the extent of land involved and the cost in each case (b) the total amount of funds disbursed (c) the cost accruing to the small planters for the projects per acre and (d) the plans and the time frame for future derocking and land preparation projects, indicating the estimated cost per region?

REPLY

Mr Speaker, Sir,

With your permission, I am tabling the information requested by the Hon. Member for PQ B/244 and PQ B/245 together as they relate to the same matter. I would also refer the Hon. Member to replies made to Parliamentary Questions B/1295, B/1451, B/1593 and recently, on 10 April 2007, PQ B/88 concerning derocking and land preparation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to emphasize that everything is being done in all transparency. The project is being implemented by a Project Implementation Committee comprising representatives of the Farmers

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Service Corporation, Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute, Irrigation Authority, Mauritius Sugar Authority, the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development and my Ministry, in consultation with the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association. All procedures are being followed and I can assure the House that the accounts for this project will be scrutinized by the Director of Audit.

I must also, again, point out that the contribution of the planter will vary between 7% and 38% of the total project cost. And if we were to take into account the discounted value of money for the seven year period, this percentage is much less. Thus the cost is site specific. In Queen Victoria, for Blocks 2 and 3, the planter will be charged Rs 500 per arpent per year for seven consecutive years whereas for L'Etoile, the contribution is Rs 4,500 per arpent per year. In the case of L'Etoile, a difficult site, the planters had requested for full and semi-mechanization. This required extensive derocking and field engineering thus resulting into a higher contribution from the planters.

The contribution by the planter is therefore site specific, and also depends on the level of mechanization the planters request for.

By joining the regrouping project, the planter benefits not only from a reduction on the cost of production and an increase in yield, but from a capital appreciation of his property.

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The above is being facilitated through the creation of a synergy between the planters and the miller/corporate planters with the planters entering into cane cultivation/harvest agreements. The miller planters have agreed to put their expertise and know how at the disposal of the small planters free of charge. Regrouping has thus been found to be essential for survival in the small planter sector.