



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

WELCOME REMARKS

BY

Senator the Honourable Ravi Ratiram

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, LAND AND FISHERS

AT

*Opening Ceremony of the
Regional Consultation Meeting of CABI's Member Countries in The Americas
and The Caribbean*

ON

TUESDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER, 2025

AT

Hilton Trinidad & Conference Centre, Port of Spain

SALUTATIONS:

Dr. Daniel Elger, Chief Executive Officer, CABI

Ms. Michelle Anne Thomas, Acting Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

Representatives of Regional and International
Organisations

Representatives of CABI Member Countries

Senior Government Officials

Specially Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

It is a privilege to welcome you all to our beloved country for this year's Regional Consultation Meeting of CABI's Member Countries in the Americas and Caribbean and to extend warm greetings on behalf of the Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are honoured to host this important gathering which brings together voices from across our region to deliberate on some of the most pressing issues confronting agriculture today.

As the global population moves towards an estimated 10 billion people by the 2080s the demand for safe and sustainable food production continues to rise. Farmers in Trinidad and Tobago and across the region face the challenge of protecting crops from pests, diseases and invasive species while at the same time safeguarding human health, the environment and biodiversity.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago recognises that “working in partnership for a safe and sustainable future” is essential. In line with this theme, we are taking decisive steps to strengthen food safety and sustainable agricultural practices. The Research Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries will soon introduce Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) testing, with newly acquired equipment to carry out pesticide residue testing for a wide range of chemicals. This initiative demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that agricultural produce meets the highest safety standards.

Additionally, in collaboration with CABI, our Ministry has adopted the use of Novacrid, a bio-pesticide, for locust control. This sustainable approach exemplifies the kind of innovation and partnership needed to reduce reliance on chemical pesticides while protecting both crops and ecosystems.

Chemical pesticides have played a role in increasing yields yet their risks to health, trade and ecosystems are well recognised. The international community including

governments, civil society and the private sector is now committed to reducing these risks through innovation, stronger policy frameworks and sustainable alternatives.

CABI has been a trusted partner of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries for many years. Through collaboration on plant health, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and capacity building CABI has supported our efforts to strengthen food security and agricultural trade. In this new and expanded offering on pesticide risk reduction we see further opportunities to deepen this partnership by developing practical solutions that safeguard our farmers, protect consumers and ensure that our produce meets the highest international standards.

We recognise that the task before us cannot be undertaken in isolation. Partnership between regulators, researchers, the private sector, financial institutions and our farming communities is essential. By working together we can design and implement solutions that protect livelihoods, strengthen resilience and support the sustainable transformation of our food systems, truly reflecting the

principle of working in partnership for a safe and sustainable future.

I extend best wishes for the discussions ahead and look forward to the insights and commitments that will emerge from this consultation. I also encourage you to enjoy this beautiful country and take the opportunity to experience its unique natural heritage. I understand that a field trip is scheduled for Thursday to the Nariva Swamp, the largest freshwater wetland in Trinidad and Tobago and also a designated Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. I am confident that this experience will not only provide valuable technical learning but also allow you to witness firsthand the importance of preserving ecosystems for future generations.

Thank you.