SPEECH BY MR A. GOOLAUB, AG CEO of FAREI on behalf of

THE HONOURABLE MANEESH GOBIN, ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER OF

AGRO INDUSTRY AND FOOD SECURITY

Distinguished Guest,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with much pleasure that I am addressing you all on the occasion of the African Statistics Day 2022 with the theme "Strengthening data systems by modernizing the production and use of agricultural statistics: informing policies with a view to improving resilience in agriculture, nutrition and food security in Africa".

This year's theme is aligned with the African Union theme, "2022, the Year of Nutrition: strengthening resilience in nutrition and food security on the African continent", and is intended to be a call to modernise data systems for the production, dissemination and use of agricultural statistics.

The purpose of statistics in Agriculture is to serve the information needs of different stakeholders in agriculture: farmers, decision makers, other stakeholders. Reliable and quality statistics are needed as the government and the agricultural sector depend on this for planning and other decision making.

Resilience in Agriculture should be built in the face of adversity and agricultural statistics is vital in building that resilience. The Covid -19 pandemic was a wake up call. There was a lot of nervousness as regards to

food availability, accessibility and stability in the face of restriction imposed world wide. The Russia- Ukraine war is also having a destabilising effect on food prices and agricultural inputs (fertilisers).

One of the most prominent challenges is the adoption of cutting-edge technologies by farmers that would drive towards a food-secure future. In that regards, it is a challenge for small farmers to get reliable weather and market information in real time that can help with decision-making with regard to agricultural production.

By having access to data about farmers will make visible the challenges they face and enable researchers to design targeted solutions. Having access to on-farm data generated can enable farmers to have targeted production information, be it alerts on risks (weather and pests) or extension information such as crop husbandry.

Also, cooperation between different Ministries and NGOs, international partners, neighboring countries are important to provide statistics for the benefit of the Sector. The need for information by farmers is growing very quickly and consequently, it has become necessary to modernise the data systems through digital technologies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Modernisation in the collection, storage and utilisation of agricultural data will assist farmers, researchers and policy makers to address today's unprecedented challenges, such as climate change and repeated disruptions in global supply chains. Mauritius is not spared from the negative impact of climatic changes. Weather patterns are changing, altering where and how

crops can be grown. Flash floods and prolonged droughts are already impacting heavily on the production and availability of agricultural produce. Prices of fruits and vegetables are rising. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine have made production and trade of fertilisers somewhat uncertain throughout the world leading to all-time highs in the fertiliser prices.

In that regard, data-driven decision is crucial for strategic planning, making and reviewing laws, providing subsidies and grants and protecting our agricultural sector from diseases, pests and other calamities, developing schemes for farmers, one-off importations of certain foods (after a cyclone, flood) and setting prices of certain commodities.

Through use of statistical data, we should be able to introduce modern agricultural techniques leading to smart agriculture (high tech agriculture) with increased productivity. We should also be able to tap on modern technology, such as remote sensing, to get real time data on present conditions and at the same time promote good agricultural practices.

This modernisation process needs to be strengthened appropriately and sustainably to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The implementation of the road map for the transformation and modernisation of official statistics in Africa, 2023–2030, is expected to bring about significant improvements in the efficiency of all data processes for monitoring and reporting on the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for your attention.

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