

**SPEECH OF THE HON. D.GOKHOOL,
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND
RESEARCH**

**ON THE OCCASION
OF THE
ACCREDITATION CERTIFICATE AWARD
CEREMONY
TO THE PLANT PATHOLOGY LABORATORY
OF THE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND
EXTENSION UNIT (AREU)**

THURSDAY 05 NOVEMBER 2009

AT 14.00 HRS

Farmers Training School,

Wooton

My colleague Hon Satya Veyash Faugoo, Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production & Security

Permanent Secretaries

Chairperson and Members of the Boards and Councils falling under the aegis of both Ministries,

Mr Teeluck, Acting Director, AREU

Mr Gopee, Acting Director, MAURITAS,

Directors and Chief Executives of laboratories,

Members of the planting community

Members of the Media

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon

It gives me great pleasure to be among you for this accreditation certificate award ceremony of the Plant Pathology Laboratory, one of the divisions of the ISO/IEC 17025 Accreditation Certificate Award Ceremony for AREU Plant Pathology Laboratory.

I thank my colleague Minister Faugoo and AREU for inviting me

Milestone

The ceremony being organized today marks an important milestone and a significant achievement of the Plant Pathology Laboratory of AREU with respect to the quality of its testing services.

It represents one of the most critical steps towards moving for excellence in laboratory testing services in the agro industry sector at national, regional and international level.

We would certainly not have been here today, if there were no commitment, leadership, hard work and dedication from the Plant Pathology Laboratory. Therefore, I would like to congratulate all those who are behind this achievement and in particular the dynamic team of the laboratory.

I also take the opportunity to congratulate MAURITAS, which falls under the responsibility, for its dedicated work in the field of accreditation

I sincerely hope that such a glorious achievement serves in fact as a role model for all the other laboratories, in particular those operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security, to tread on the path of accreditation.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Accreditation

Accreditation is the process by which an authoritative body like MAURITAS gives formal recognition that a body (for example a laboratory) is competent to carry out a specific task (for example a test).

Many other countries have adopted **accreditation** as the tool/mechanism for ensuring that the test results issued by laboratories are reliable. We are no different. Government has adopted the Mauritius Accreditation Service Act 1998 with the main objective of providing a national unified service of accreditation to all conformity assessment bodies.

The AREU Plant Pathology Laboratory was the seventh Laboratory to be accredited by MAURITAS earlier this year and it is the fifth accreditation certificate that I am handing over to a testing laboratory since my appointment as Minister of Industry, Science and Research in September 2008.

The image most of us have of laboratories today are premises, where scientists wearing white coats, analyze or test various samples using sophisticated pieces of equipment.

I would probably be more inclined now to reflect on the interaction of our population with laboratories and to share with you the impacts and importance of testing laboratories on our daily lives.

To do this, I've drawn out a few questions for your reflexion:

Laboratories and Health

How many of us, here, have tested our blood in a medical laboratory to know the level of haemoglobin, blood sugar-glucose, cholesterol and other parameters?

Laboratories and Environment

Does the water supplied by our reservoirs, aquifers and boreholes for drinking and domestic purposes meet the relevant standards?

The following question will be of interest to the members of the planting community: Is the water or recycled water supplied for irrigation purposes safe for growing the plants that we will eventually consume?

Laboratories and Food

Do you know that all imported and locally produced foods must be tested before being put on the market?

Exported foods must also be tested before they can enter the market of foreign countries.

Laboratories and Law & order

How do we ensure that criminals and other law defaulters involved in bank notes counterfeit or drunken driving are given the appropriate penalty?

Laboratories and Construction Industry

What is the guarantee that the steels bars and concrete used for building your house or even this training centre will not collapse one day?

Ladies and Gentlemen

The above list of questions are only a snapshot of some of the main laboratories operating in the country. They are not meant to frighten you but to make you realize that many things that we use on a daily basis are subject to laboratory tests at one stage of their life cycle.

Bearing in mind the previous questions, could you just for one second imagine the consequences if the results issued by a laboratory could not be trusted?

You will therefore agree with me that there is a need for the ***results issued by a laboratory to have a certain credibility or reliability or validity.***

Accreditation & Trade

Ladies and gentlemen,

Mauritius has progressed a lot in the last 20 to 25 years by relying on the foundation pillars of the sugar, textile, tourism and services industry. With the erosion of trade preferences, countries are now called upon to trade with their partners via a system based on competition. This paradigm shift implies that now as a country, we have clear appreciation of the need to deliver quality goods and services for all markets. You are probably aware that as from today, the country will only export refined sugars to the European Union.

Accredited test reports accompanying goods and services will open up market access as accreditation is the apex component in the conformity assessment infrastructure and is also recognized by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Accreditation process - AREU Plant Pathology Laboratory

I am pleased to learn that the AREU Plant Pathology Laboratory has successfully undergone the process of accreditation with MAURITAS and the South African National Accreditation System (SANAS) through the steps of document review, pre-assessment and initial assessment. The process was not easy and gave rise to non-conformances that were eventually cleared.

The Plant Pathology Laboratory of AREU is vital for the country in the protection of our agro industry against destructive pests. I sincerely hope that the laboratory will extend its scope of accreditation to cover the detection and identification of a larger number of viruses and bacteria so as to better service the planters' community. This is one of the numerous examples to illustrate the vision of this Government to build up a an agro industry supported by Science, Technology and Innovation (STI)

A piece of advice to the laboratory: **do not rest on your laurels** - obtaining accreditation is one thing and maintaining it is another thing: the hardest task now lies ahead with the maintenance of the management system that will be monitored by regular surveillance visits of MAURITAS. I am informed that the first surveillance of your laboratory will be done in two weeks time.

MAURITAS- Achievements

The accreditation programmes for laboratories and certification bodies have yielded a total of 8 accredited laboratories and 1 certification body in various areas supporting the economy such as textiles, sugar and jewellery.

MAURITAS-Future projects

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In our ambition to be globally competitive, environmentally sustainable and socially responsible, I would like to inform you that MAURITAS is planning to embark as from later this month in the development of a new accreditation programme for inspection bodies and

will also accelerate work towards becoming a signatory to mutual recognition arrangements at international level.

Before concluding, I take this opportunity to invite all the laboratories to embark on the path of accreditation and I also invite all regulators to make use of laboratories that have been deemed competent i.e accredited.

I also take the opportunity to invite AREU to sustain its campaign of awareness about destructive pests so that the farming community is better informed and can participate in government's effort to protect the country's agricultural economy

With these concluding remarks, I thank you for your attention

DG