**Special Rapporteur on the right to food – *“Food systems and Human Rights”***

1. The State of Mauritius is a small island of 1,965 square kilometres (186,475 hectares) tucked in the South West Indian Ocean. The agriculture occupies around 44 % of the arable land area.

**Challenges faced by the food systems**

2. The country is not spared from the brunt of the negative impact of climatic changes. For example, flash floods can heavily impact on the agricultural products and cause vegetable prices to soar. The low income consumers tend to suffer the most and consequently, they may be deprived of essential nutrients by not consuming adequately which ultimately have a harmful impact on their general health and well-being. Prolonged dry spells are also a major emerging constraints that are being encountered by the food sector.

3. The State of Mauritius is a net importer of most of the foods that are consumed. Moreover, since Mauritius is tropical country, agricultural production varies with the seasonal changes which make the country rely on importation to sustain. Consequently, it was seen that the recent disruption in the food supply caused by the Covid-19 pandemic impacted heavily on the distribution of food.

4. Shortage of labour in the market concerning manual workers which has heavily impacted on the agricultural production. There is also an unavailability and shortage of planting materials, scarcity of raw materials for agro-processing and limited access to land for agricultural activities that is coupled with land degradation.

5. The agricultural producers face persistent difficulties in obtaining agri-inputs as the prices are prohibitively expensive. This is a huge set back to sustain agricultural production.

6. Another constraint include the lack of storage facilities, failure of farmers to regroup themselves and low farm productivity. The livestock sector also faces numerous constraints such as lack of good breeding animals and inadequate veterinary services, insufficient fodder and low adoption of good animal husbandry practices.

7. In addition, there is a lack of coordination among value chain actors, inadequate infrastructure for slaughter and inadequate food safety system.

**Adverse impact on human rights**

8. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the fragility of our food systems. Beyond a health calamity, it has caused economic hardships, severe disruption in services, restrictions on movement. The poor and vulnerable ones faced serious threats in their immediate food security, health and nutrition. The food system, health systems and economic system have all been under threat and the weaknesses have been highlighted.

9. During the challenges of the pandemic, a mechanism of distribution of basic food commodities was set up to cater to the needs of the vulnerable groups of the society. Non-Governmental Organisations and private organisations have been involved in distribution of food to needy people.

10. However, the population having a relatively lower income do face difficulties to cope with the increasing costs of foods due to various reasons like shortfall in supply, increase in freight and climatic conditions. In this regard, it is worth noting that the State of Mauritius subsidises an array of staple foods like rice and flour that ensures an affordable price to consumers, especially to lower income groups.

**Efforts to adopt a right-based approach**

11.The intensification of agriculture has caused a decline in crop diversity in agricultural landscapes. Three major crops wheat, rice and maize provide more than 50% of the calories consumed globally. There is a need to diversify the food based and product nutritious food.

Countries must also be encouraged to work together to provide access to food for the group of the society. A major shift in approach is needed to make the food systems more sustainable and resilient.

12. There is also a limitation to finance in implementing specific programmes for providing food to the vulnerable, including financial limitations of Agro Research Institutions. In addition, farmers are reluctant to change the traditional ways of cultivation. Protocols and Principles must be established to ensure more efficient Food System Worldwide.

**Obligations of States and Responsibilities of Businesses**

13. A Food Security Programme inclusive of a crop production program to ensure an all-year-round supply of vegetables in the market is being envisaged. The agriculture business is supported through investment in Value Chain from production to transformation (processing).

14. Production of a larger volume of quality food - crops to meet the increasing demand of fruits and vegetables due to healthier life style being adopted by the population.

15. Promotion of sustainable agriculture/ production of food through sensitization programmes to farmers and planters.

16. Promotion of healthy consumption of food to avoid health issues linked to malnutrition.

17. Ensuring continuous checks and balances regarding the production and supply of food, especially to the needy is essential to provide subsidies on basic food items for the poor and vulnerable.

18. The State of Mauritius has initiated several actions to encourage the farming community to adopt sustainable farming practices to ensure long term environment stability and health benefits.

19. Food loss and food waste is a major concern. Postharvest treatment to improve shelf life of fresh produce to improve their marketability and reduce postharvest losses are being developed.

20. Support is being given to agro-entrepreneurs in the development of value-added products from local fruits and vegetables.

21. The State of Mauritius is encouraging planting of melliferous crops to encourage bees and border crops to curb the effects of heavy rains on soil erosion. The use of compost is being encouraged. The biological control of pests and diseases is being promoted and several bio-insecticides and bio-fungicides are being evaluated and recommended.

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