



## Media Release

### FARMERS EAGER TO INCREASE FRUIT CULTIVATION

*Welcome TOPCO's Expansion*

**DIAMOND, EAST BANK DEMERARA, GUYANA, DECEMBER 27, 2019:** Some 40 farmers who currently supply fruit to Demerara Distillers Limited's TOPCO juice operations are eager to increase their cultivation of required fruit to meet the company's ability to in turn increase its supply of a range of juices for local consumption and for export. This is as TOPCO has embarked on a multi-billion dollar expansion project which would initially require over two million pounds of fruit annually.

These farmers met on Friday with officials of Demerara Distillers Limited (DDL) and representatives of a number of agencies including the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Agriculture Research and Extension Institute (NAREI), the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA) and the Institute of Private Enterprise Development (IPED) to discuss issues which would help ensure that they successfully expand their cultivation. This included assistance with the provision of agriculture extension services which would deal with cultivation best practices, soil testing, treatment of infestation and advice on measures to reduce post-harvest losses.

The issue of pricing for their fruit was also raised and DDL's chairman Komal Samaroo informed the farmers that another price increase will be effective in February 2020, one year following the last price increase. Samaroo also advised the farmers that arrangements would be put in place to ensure they are paid within three days of their supply of fruit. He said that payments would be made electronically to farmers' bank accounts.

"This is a serious partnership between TOPCO and you the farmers. Arrangements are for the guaranteed purchase of your fruit at a guaranteed price. So, when the market price goes down you will still be receiving the price upon which we agreed. This is a contract between you and us. We need each other and must address all the issues that will make this partnership mutually successful," Samaroo told the farmers at the meeting held at Diamond. Farmers from as far as the Pomeroon were among those participating in the meeting and tour of the expansion project.

The farmers also heard presentations by Ms. Rebecca Rampher-Adams, TOPCO Plant Manager, Benjamin Frank of NAREI and Kaimlall Chattergoon of IPED and engaged in lively question and answer sessions following each presentation.

Ms. Rampher-Adams in her presentation emphasized the critical importance of quality, pointing out that the fruit supplied must be ripe, must be free of any pests, worms and insects that could cause contamination, must be free of dirt and animal dung and the crates, bags and containers used to

transport the fruit must be clean. She also advised that a number of agencies will provide technical advice and assistance to help ensure these standards are met. The farmers identified the need for specific assistance in dealing with the carambola fruit fly which according to some farmers the solution implemented by NARI has not been effective.

In response to the farmers request Mr. Benjamin Frank of NARI indicated that the problem might be with the application of the material provided to deal with the problem and it was agreed that this issue will be immediately followed up to ensure a successful solution.

IPED's Kaimlall Chattergoon outlined the services from which farmers could benefit which include the development of business plans, financial management and loans which are not subject to the credit ratings of the farmers.

Friday's meeting and tour of the expansion works followed one by representatives of a number of related government agencies recently and a meeting last week with Finance Minister Winston Jordan who was updated on the progress of the project which will include the production of pasteurized milk.

The new TOPCO plant is expected to be commissioned in July 2020. Contact:

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