



Statement on Water Security

We are about to enter the hurricane season once more, when we traditionally expect rains to give us some respite from the heat of the dry season and bring much-needed rains to our gardens and crops. But climate change is real.

A worrying trend seems to be emerging worldwide, and that is the fact that the planet is experiencing longer spells of drought conditions and less precipitation during the rainy season. Although, when we do get rain, we see enormous amounts of torrential rainfall in short periods of time – this contributes to tremendous damage to livelihoods and Infrastructure.

This year's dry season has been quite severe, and is reflected by the fact that we have all experienced water shortages at some time this year so far. Water shortage affects every aspect of life. When combined with a two-year pandemic that has caused a massive reduction in productivity, resulting in reduced production of all items, plus a hit to the essential supply chains that transport these essential goods globally, the impending disaster is imminent.

Every week we see food prices rising and the calls for food security becoming louder, but there cannot be food security without water security. If there is no water to irrigate crops, there will be no crops.

I received a disturbing call from a young farmer on the east coast yesterday, telling me that their irrigation pond has dried up for the first time ever and that the levels in the river nearby are at the lowest ever seen and, as a result, he spends his entire day bucketing water just to keep his crops alive. I, too, am struggling to keep my crops going and have had to reduce production as a result; multiply this scenario by one thousand-fold, as all farmers must be experiencing this daunting situation. This means that the water tables are falling and the capacity of water catchment areas are decreasing year after year.

The NGP's main slogan during the last election season was "Agriculture first – Food & Water Security". Since the passage of hurricane Tomas over ten years ago, which reduced the capacity of the dam by one-third, our only attempt to increase the water storage capacity of the island was to commence de-silting just two years ago. Yet, consider the amount of development that has taken place over the last ten years in all sectors, whether it be construction, tourism, manufacturing, or agriculture, they all require water; not to mention the super-hygienic conditions required to tackle the pandemic, with everyone washing their hands much more than they ever did.

Yet there is little or no conversation at all by any of the two traditional parties or, in fact, anyone else regarding this dire situation. What is of even more concern is that large wheat producers like Russia, Ukraine, and India have either reduced production due to war, or are beginning to hoard because they too face a growing food crisis. Imagine Lucians living without bread?

The NGP presented several solutions to tackle the problem of increasing the water storage capacity of the island, such as:

- the construction of micro-dams;
- investing in a national desalination plant;
- requiring hotels with beach access to install their own desal. plants;
- encourage water harvesting by all;
- requiring farmers to stop overhead sprinkler systems and only use drip irrigation.

We have little time to deal with this water crisis, and we encourage all parties and stakeholders to come together to develop a plan so that we will be able to institute the necessary changes, upgrades, and new infrastructure needed just to survive the near future.

The challenges are real and we need leaders to act and focus on the needs of the people instead of the constant political bickering.

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