

4. COMMISSION FOR AGRICULTURE, FOOD PRODUCTION, PLANT AND ANIMAL QUARANTINE, COOPERATIVES, FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND MARINE PARKS

- 4.1.1 The Commission for Agriculture, Food Production, Plant and Animal Quarantine, Cooperative, Forestry, Fisheries and Marine Parks is responsible, among others, to: boost crop and livestock productivity as well as local production; preserve and protect forest ecosystems; facilitate the promotion of diversified, emerging and innovative Cooperative Societies; and ensure the safeguard of marine resources through the protection of marine parks and marine reserves.
- 4.1.2 Its activities are organised under seven portfolios namely: Agriculture, Food Production, Plant and Animal Quarantine, Cooperatives, Forestry, Fisheries and Marine Parks.

4.1 Agricultural Research and Extension Services

- 4.1.3 The Agricultural Research and Extension Services (ARES) is the main technical arm of the Commission for Agriculture and is composed of several Units. Its main functions are, *inter alia*, to: disseminate good agricultural practices; ensure the compliance and dissemination of appropriate bio security measures; oversee the management and conservation of natural resources; and implement climate change programme to support risk and disaster management, among others.
- 4.1.4 The ARES is currently manned by a Manager who is assisted by officers at various levels including employees of the Workmen's Group.
- 4.1.5 A few common proposals have been made by the Unions and Management which include, among others: a re-organisation of the activities of the ARES comprising creation of a few grades; restyling and/or merging of some existing ones; and filling of posts.
- 4.1.6 The Union proposed for the creation of a dedicated grade of Scientific Officer/Senior Scientific Officer (Laboratory) which would be responsible to run tests on food, soil and crop samples. It is considered that since a grade of Scientific Officer/Senior Scientific Officer already exists, an incumbent in the latter grade could be entrusted laboratory-related duties. The Bureau has been apprised that presently an Agricultural Support Officer is performing related tests.
- 4.1.7 In many cases, additional information was sought from parties concerned to enable the Bureau to carry out a proper assessment. In sum, we are reinforcing the structure of ARES through the creation of two professional levels, namely Agricultural Engineer and Biometrician, while consolidating the Extension Services with a supervisory level of Senior Field Support Officer.

Agricultural Engineer (New Grade)

- 4.1.8 The Maintenance and Infrastructure Unit of the ARES is presently staffed by officers in the grades of Agricultural Superintendent and Senior Agricultural

Support Officer. However, it has been submitted that the current staffing structure does not include officers with specialised technical expertise required for infrastructure design and execution of engineering works. As a result, delays have arisen in the implementation of key infrastructural projects of the Commission. To address this gap, a demand has been made for the establishment of a dedicated grade of Agricultural Engineer to oversee engineering-related tasks of the ARES. We are, thus, recommending accordingly.

Recommendation 1

4.1.9 We recommend the creation of a grade of Agricultural Engineer. Appointment thereto should be made by selection from among candidates who are registered as a Professional Engineer in the field of Agricultural Engineering or Mechanical Engineering or Civil Engineering with the Council of Registered Professional Engineers of Mauritius.

4.1.10 Incumbent would be responsible to the Manager, Agricultural Research and Extension Services and would also be required to, among others; plan, execute and oversee all engineering works assigned to him; organise and supervise the work of Technical staff in the Agricultural Research and Extension Services; design farm structures, irrigation and drainage system in connection with agriculture; supervise the Mechanical Workshop; and design the Land Rehabilitation and Mechanisation projects as well as water structures and greenhouses.

Biometrician (New Grade)

4.1.11 Management informed that currently there is no grade on its establishment with the responsibility to analyse and interpret data collected by officers of the extension services. Resultantly, officers cannot advise farmers on production trends. To address the issue, request has been made for the creation of a grade of Biometrician. In view of its functional need, triggered by an evolution in the agricultural services, we are making an appropriate provision.

Recommendation 2

4.1.12 We recommend the creation of a grade of Biometrician. Appointment thereto should be made by selection from among candidates possessing a Degree in Biometry or Statistics or Mathematical Statistics or Mathematics with Statistics or Agricultural Statistics or an equivalent qualification.

4.1.13 Incumbent will be responsible to the Manager, ARES and will be required, *inter alia*, to: undertake the statistical design of experiments, sample surveys, case studies and other data collection operations; analyse and process data and assist in the interpretation of results; assist in the development of statistical tools for the monitoring and forecasting of agricultural production and development; and produce scientific papers, technical and administrative reports.

Extension Services

- 4.1.14 Currently, extension services such as collection of agricultural data; training of farmers; providing technical advices on best agricultural practices to farmers; and monitoring of agricultural land to prevent its wearing away, among others, are being carried out by officers in the grade of Technical Officer (Agriculture) (Personal), Agricultural Support Officers and Field Assistants (Rodrigues), who are in turn supported by manual grades' employees.
- 4.1.15 In the 2016 PRB Report, the Bureau recommended for the phasing out of the grades of Technical Officer and Senior Technical Officer in the context of a restructuring of the agricultural services and in line with structural changes brought at the then Ministry of Agro Industry.
- 4.1.16 For this Report, the Union requested for the grade of Technical Officer to be no longer evanescent, so that same be a promotional one for the Field Assistants (Rodrigues), who do not have a proper career path.
- 4.1.17 Upon obtention of additional information from the RRA and further views of the Union during a meeting held at the Bureau, we carried out an in-depth study on the issue. While we acknowledge the importance of extension duties in boosting the agricultural services in the RRA, yet, it would not be appropriate to address the issue by reinstating the grade of Technical Officer, particularly as Agricultural Support Officers and Senior Agricultural Support Officers have taken over most of their duties.
- 4.1.18 On the other hand, we hold that it would be more appropriate for duties related to extension to be devolved on specific grades, namely Field Assistant (Rodrigues), among others, bearing in mind, however, the specificity in the RRA. In this context, we are revamping the extension services by providing a two-level structure, comprising an enhanced grade of Field Assistant (Rodrigues) under a reviewed appellation and a new supervisory and promotional level for the Field Assistants (Rodrigues).

Field Support Officer

formerly Field Assistant (Rodrigues)

- 4.1.19 At present, the grade of Field Assistant (Rodrigues) is filled by appointment of Agricultural Trainees who have successfully completed training in agricultural work. As part of the restructuring exercise, we are reviewing its mode of appointment which has become obsolete. We are also reviewing its appellation to reflect the duties currently being performed by incumbents.

Recommendation 3

- 4.1.20 We recommend that the grade of Field Assistant (Rodrigues) be restyled Field Support Officer. Appointment thereto should, henceforth, be made by selection from among candidates possessing a Cambridge School Certificate with credit in at least five subjects.**

Senior Field Support Officer (New Grade)**Recommendation 4**

- 4.1.21 **We recommend the creation of a grade of Senior Field Support Officer. Appointment thereto should be made by promotion, on the basis of experience and merit, of Field Support Officers, *formerly Field Assistants (Rodrigues)*, who reckon at least four years' service in a substantive capacity in the grade.**
- 4.1.22 Incumbents would be responsible to the Technical Officer (Agriculture) (Personal) and be required, among others, to: supervise and coordinate the work of Field Support Officers; record attendance and distribute work; prepare claims for workers; assist senior officers in crop or livestock extension work; and provide information and services to farmers.

Scheme of Service**Agricultural Support Officer****Senior Agricultural Support Officer**

- 4.1.23 During consultations, Union deplored the fact that the schemes of service of the grades of Agricultural Support Officer and Senior Agricultural Support Officer, created in the 2016 Report, have still not yet been prescribed, thus hampering the smooth conduct of activities at the agricultural services.
- 4.1.24 The grades of Agricultural Support Officer and Senior Agricultural Support Officer are among the core ones at the Agricultural Services. In a bid to address this situation, **Management should carry out a close monitoring with the MPSAR for the timely prescription of the schemes of service.**

Specific Provisions for Movement Beyond Top Salary**Field Support Officer,*****formerly Field Assistant (Rodrigues)***

- 4.1.25 Presently, Field Assistants (Rodrigues), now Field Support Officers, are allowed to move incrementally in the Master Salary Scale up to salary point Rs 39350 upon satisfying certain criteria. Subsequent to the creation of a supervisory level, the provision is no more appropriate and is, therefore, being waived. However, we are maintaining that regarding movement beyond top salary for the Field Support Officers, *formerly Field Assistants (Rodrigues)*, in post as at 31 December 2025.

Recommendation 5

- 4.1.26 **We recommend that Field Support Officers, *formerly Field Assistants (Rodrigues)*, in post as at 31 December 2025, should be allowed to proceed incrementally in the Master Salary Scale up to salary point Rs 51200 subject to satisfying the performance criteria set out in the Chapter on Observations and General Provisions of this Volume. This recommendation, however,**

does not preclude the Field Support Officers, *formerly Field Assistants (Rodrigues)*, to be promoted to the grade of Senior Field Support Officer.

Agricultural Support Officer

Senior Agricultural Support Officer

4.1.27 Presently, Agricultural Support Officers and Senior Agricultural Support Officers, are allowed to move beyond the Qualification Bar in their salary scale, upon possessing the prescribed qualification. Moreover, specific provisions exist for these officers to join at a higher initial point in their respective salary scale, subject to possessing the relevant diploma. We are reiterating same whilst reviewing the salary points.

Recommendation 6

4.1.28 We recommend that:

- (i) Agricultural Support Officers and Senior Agricultural Support Officers possessing a Diploma in Agriculture or Sugar Technology or related field, should be allowed to move beyond the Qualification Bar (QB) inserted in their respective salary scale;**
- (ii) newly recruited Agricultural Support Officers should join the recommended salary scale at salary point Rs 31365, whereas those Agricultural Support Officers in post as at the eve of the publication of the 2021 PRB Report, that is, 13 October 2021 and possessing the relevant Diploma, should draw salary point Rs 31365 in the recommended salary scale; and**
- (iii) newly appointed Senior Agricultural Support Officers who possess the relevant Diploma should join the recommended salary scale at salary point Rs 43990.**

Technical Officer (Agriculture) (Personal)

4.1.29 Technical Officers (Agriculture) (Personal) are allowed to move incrementally beyond their top salary in the Master Salary Scale up to salary point Rs 54200, subject to satisfying certain criteria. We are maintaining the provision whilst reviewing the salary point.

Recommendation 7

4.1.30 We recommend that Technical Officers (Agriculture) (Personal) should be allowed to move incrementally in the Master Salary Scale up to salary point Rs 67900 on the same conditions previously applicable and subject to satisfying the performance criteria set out in the Chapter on Observations and General Provisions of this Volume.

Posting of a General Worker at Port and Airport

- 4.1.31 The prevailing provision provides that a General Worker be posted at the Port and Airport, whenever required, to assist the Technical Officers (Agriculture) (Personal) and Senior Technical Officers (Agriculture) to dispose plants and animal products that are seized. **This provision, being fit for its purpose, is being maintained.**

Allowance when posted to Crab Islet

- 4.1.32 A monthly *ad hoc* allowance is paid to certain employees who are required to work regularly on Crab Islet. We are maintaining the allowance as this arrangement is still prevalent.

Recommendation 8

- 4.1.33 **We recommend that the employees in the undermentioned grades, who are required to work regularly on Crab Islet should be paid a monthly *ad hoc* allowance equivalent to one and a half increments at the initial of their respective salary scale.**

- (i) Senior Agricultural Support Officer
- (ii) Agricultural Support Officer
- (iii) Field Support Officer
formerly Field Assistant (Rodrigues)
- (iv) Senior Livestock Attendant (on shift)
- (v) Livestock Attendant (on shift)
- (vi) Boatman
- (vii) General Worker

Flexitime

Recommendation 9

- 4.1.34 **We recommend that Management should continue to apply the recommendations regarding flexitime laid down in the Chapter “Working Week, Flexitime, Workers on Shift/Roster/Staggered Hours and Overtime” of Volume 1 of this Report, as deemed practicable in respect of officers working in the Extension Unit of the Agricultural Services.**

4.2 Veterinary Unit

- 4.2.1 The Veterinary Unit is mainly required to provide quality veterinary services to breeders in order to ensure healthy and disease-free livestock as well as control importation and exportation of live animals. Its activities are carried out by Senior Veterinary Officers and Veterinary Officers, who are supported by incumbents in the grades of Agricultural Support Officer, Agricultural Laboratory Technologist,